



Canberra Health Services Consultation Paper

Expansion of Phlebotomy Ward Service Hours of
Operation at The Canberra Hospital

ACT Pathology

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1. Introduction

Canberra Health Services (CHS) is focussed on the delivery of high quality, effective, person-centred care. It provides acute, sub-acute, primary, and community-based health services to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT)—a catchment of approximately 400, 000 people. It also services the surrounding Southern New South Wales (NSW) region.

CHS administers a range of publicly funded health facilities, programs, and services.

ACT Pathology is a part of CHS and is responsible for providing specialist pathology services to all CHS facilities as well as services to private hospitals and patients in the community who are referred by GPs and specialists.

Pathology is a medical specialty that determines the cause and nature of diseases by examining and testing body tissues (from biopsies and aspirates, for example) and bodily fluids (from samples including blood and urine). Pathology is essential to the prevention, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of many clinical disorders.

2. Purpose

To broaden our service to provide weekend and public holiday phlebotomy services to wards at The Canberra Hospital to further support the clinical areas to deliver care to the community.

Consultation is required due to the proposed new weekend shift and public holiday roster for phlebotomists at ACT pathology.

ACT Pathology is seeking further input from staff and unions regarding this proposal, prior to any final decisions being taken.

3. Current model

ACT Pathology currently services wards at The Canberra Hospital, Monday to Friday from 7:30am to 12:30pm.

ACT Pathology phlebotomists have patients designated to them via the Digital Health Records (DHR) Rovers. Upon entry to each ward, the phlebotomist works through the list of patients who require blood collection until the list is complete. Sometimes patients are not able to have their blood collected due to cannulation or the patient not being in bed for example. These collections are performed by clinical staff on the ward. Once a ward has been collected by an ACT Pathology phlebotomist, any subsequent pathology orders are also collected by the clinical staff on the ward.

ACT Pathology has provided a weekend / public holiday service in the Acute Medical Unit (AMU) since August 2023 and more recently to other wards due to bed block. This service has been staffed by volunteers.

Feedback that has been received from the wards since we have started the weekend phlebotomy service has been positive. Nursing teams are grateful for the service provided by our team of ACT Pathology phlebotomists. While the ACT Pathology phlebotomists are focussing on their role in patient care, the nursing staff can perform their duties attending to patient care. These tasks

include monitoring equipment, patient positioning, providing medication, assisting with toileting, attending to phone calls, changing IV fluids, attending bed management meetings, checking blood results and assisting doctors with discharge planning.

A weekend/public holiday phlebotomy service already exists at North Canberra Hospital.

4. Rationale for change

The clinical areas of The Canberra Health Service benefit from the support of the weekday phlebotomy service. This allows team members with expertise in blood collection to perform this duty, freeing up clinical staff to focus on other elements of patient care.

Using pathology phlebotomists results in early, efficient sample collection and receipt into the testing laboratory. The ability to perform most sample collections early in the day means that pathology results are available earlier. Timely pathology resulting is important for patient management and patient flow.

As noted above, this service is already provided to North Canberra Hospital, therefore expanding the service to The Canberra Hospital will provide consistency of service across both health facilities.

The current position description for phlebotomists at ACT Pathology includes the ability to work shifts on weekends and public holidays. This consultation aims to bring all phlebotomists at ACT Pathology onto the same position description.

See Attachment A – Phlebotomist Position Description

5. Future model

5.1. Scope of the future model

ACT Pathology proposes changes for phlebotomists to work on a rotating roster servicing wards at The Canberra Hospital, 7 days per week (including public holidays) from 6:30am with rostered days off.

It is envisaged that these changes will apply to all current ACT Pathology phlebotomists as there may be operational requirements to move team members to different locations (TCH/NCH/outpatient collection centres) at times. However, individual circumstances will be considered. Most phlebotomists in ACT Pathology are Technical Officer Level 1, however there are three Registered Nurses.

It is anticipated that team members will be rostered on a weekend shift every three weeks on average.

See Attachment A- Example Rosters.

The future model would see overtime replaced with penalty rates and rostered days off.

See attachment B for the Consultation Presentation of what this change would make for wages.

5.2. Benefits of the future model

The phlebotomy service provided by ACT Pathology to wards in CHS has many benefits including:

- When collections are performed earlier, pathology results are received earlier so doctors can review the results and make decisions on how to treat the patients in a timely manner.
- Patients will be able to be discharged to go home earlier.
- Patients will have a decreased length of stay in the hospital.
- Frees up the ward staff so that they can perform other duties relating to patient care.
- Improves the patient journey.
- ACT Pathology will have oversight of more collections with less errors and need for recollections.
- A more consistent approach to blood collections following CHS policy.
- Consistency of service across The Canberra Hospital and North Canberra Hospital.
- Team members will have rostered days off during the week.
- Team members will be paid 50% penalty for shifts worked on Saturday and 100% penalty for shifts worked on Sundays or public holidays.
- Team members working the Sunday shift will be entitled to an additional 1 week annual leave per year if they work 10 Sunday shifts in the year (or fractional if working less than 10 Sunday shifts).

5.3. Implementation of the future model

Following the completion of the consultation process, all affected staff will have the opportunity to vote “yes” or “no” to introducing a weekend/public holiday roster. Two proposed rosters will be circulated during this consultation.

Further, they will have the opportunity to put forward individual matters effecting participating in the roster; however, this will be addressed separately.

Rosters will be published in line with Clause B6.8 and B6.9 of the ACTPS Technical and Other Professionals Enterprise Agreement 2021-2022. Which will be at least 14 calendar days prior to the commencement of the roster.

It is envisaged 28 days’ notice will be given prior to the commencement of the first roster, to allow staff to work with their families to set-up for working a rotating roster to include weekend/public holidays.

4	Decision paper to be circulated.	
5	Provided a majority yes vote, roster to be circulated and 28 days from circulation provided to staff until the first roster commences.	After circulation of final paper

For any further information relating to the expansion of the ACT Pathology phlebotomy ward service hours of operation at The Canberra Hospital and subsequent consultation process, please contact Fiona Webb on Fiona.webb@act.gov.au.

7. References

Document	Author
Consultation Guidelines for Managers	People & Culture, Canberra Health Services
ACTPS Union Engagement Policy	ACT Public Service
Technical and Other Professionals Agreement 2023-2026	ACT Public Service
Nursing and Midwifery Agreement 2020-2022	ACT Public Service