



Canberra Health Services Decision Paper

Structure Reform – ACT Pathology

- Laboratory Department Structures
 - Anatomical Pathology & Diagnostic Genomics
 - Specimen Reception & Customer Services
- Senior Leadership Role Requirements

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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 region.

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

ACT Pathology is a part of the Canberra Health Service and is responsible for providing specialist pathology services to all health facilities as well as outpatient services.

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

The purpose of this paper is to describe the changes being implemented following the Structure Reform: ACT Pathology consultation process.

The changes impact the department structure and senior leadership roles of the ACT Pathology team, in particular impacting Specimen Reception, Customer Services, Anatomical Pathology and Diagnostic Genomics.

The structure aims to:

- Adapt to significant changes in workflows that have been introduced by the new Digital Health Records (DHR) information system in some areas of Pathology;
- Embrace new opportunities afforded by convergent technologies such as DHR and genomics; and
- Ensure a sustainable workforce, and mitigate our significant recruitment risk, by transforming our senior leadership model and the organisational structure of these service departments.

3. Background

A public Pathology service is an increasingly complex operation providing critical health services, education and research. Innovations in medical care, diagnostic technology, rapidly developing digital capabilities, and growing expectations for rigorous clinical and financial risk management require agile and effective governance.

Other key issues specifically impacting ACT Pathology include the ACT Health culture review and Pathology's response to this; relationships with local and interstate stakeholders; the recent DHR implantation, together with an outsourced model for ICT support; the challenges and opportunities presented by rapidly emerging technologies, including digital pathology, genomics, and AI; and the newly announced new building for Pathology under the Campus Modernisation Plan, and a unique competitive landscape for community-based pathology services.

As ACT Pathology adapts to deal with these emerging challenges, expectations of senior leadership roles also are changing. Customer Services and Specimen Reception have both been profoundly impacted by DHR, with considerable overlap in some aspects of team members' roles. Experience over recent years has provided evidence that a new approach to senior leadership can be effective. And this effectiveness has been demonstrated in recent workplace culture survey results. Meanwhile the conventional approach to team structures is reliant on technical expertise as priority, and a largely inward-looking approach to leadership where inter-department collaboration is ad hoc and limited.

Therefore, a structure change with realigned leadership was proposed for four departments:

- Anatomical Pathology
- Diagnostic Genomics
- Specimen Reception
- Customer Services

This model comprised two core changes:

- Merger of four departments into two; and
- Creation of new senior leadership roles (Operations Managers) with priority given to contemporary leadership skills and experience, including people development and collaboration.

These changes were proposed through the formal Structure Reform: ACT Pathology consultation process.

4. Consultation

A consultation paper ([Attachment A](#)) was circulated to all team members at ACT Pathology, as well as relevant unions (HSU, CPSU, Professionals Australia) via email on 5 July 2023. This paper was open for feedback over a two-week period from 5 July 2023 to 19 July 2023. Feedback could be directed via email to ACTPathologyED@act.gov.au or a confidential and anonymous Survey Monkey link.

29 responses were received via the anonymous Survey Monkey and 5 were received by email.

The following also occurred:

- 5 July 2023: meeting with directly impacted individuals
- 5 July 2023: on-line Teams "town hall" presentation and Q&A with the Executive Director
- 14 July 2023: on-line Teams Q&A with the Executive Director
- 18 July 2023: in-person overview and Q&A with the Executive Director for the Anatomical Pathology laboratory team

A consultation summary of themes was collated which included the feedback received via Survey Monkey and email during the consultation period ([Attachment B](#)). Thorough consideration has been given to each submission received, and changes made where appropriate.

5. Feedback review

The most prominent issues raised during consultation were:

- Concerns regarding the level of supervision in the Pre-Analytical team, specifically for team members in Specimen Reception (SRA) roles;
- Concerns regarding perceived risks for Diagnostic Genomics (DG) within the proposed new structure – specifically that DG may in some way be diminished or constrained by the new model;
- Comments noting the significant interaction between DG and laboratory Haematology, and suggestions of either including Haematology in the combined structure with Anatomical Pathology, or DG remaining a standalone department;
- Concerns that the Operations Manager roles may be “over-stretched” given the broader remit for these roles;
- Concerns that additional new position titles and roles may create some confusion internally and negatively impact ACT Pathology reputation externally, especially where these may be perceived as similar to Chief Scientist HP5 roles;
- Comments challenging the commentary regarding workplace culture;
- Comments noting a requirement for admin support for various HP5 roles;
- Suggestions that the Operations Manager roles and merger of current departments be further applied to other departments across ACT Pathology;
- Concerns expressed (via the HSU) regarding the relocation of the current HP4 role in SRA to Level 1 of Building 10 (note that this is NOT accurate and has been clarified with the union – please refer to [Attachment B](#))
- Comments of support for the proposed structure, noting the need to address recruitment challenges, leadership and forward-looking strategy.

These issues and ACT Pathology’s responses are summarised in [Attachment B](#).

6. Decision

After careful consideration of the feedback received during consultation, it has been determined that ACT Pathology will proceed with the proposed structural change in a modified form. Note that the following amendments made to the original proposal, in response to feedback received:

1. A temporary supervisor role, at the HP3 classification, will be appointed under the Pre-Analytical team to provide ongoing support for team members with Specimen Reception roles;
2. The “Chief Scientist” title of the current HP4 role in Diagnostic Genomics will be changed to “Supervising Scientist” to align with the other HP4 roles in the new merged department.

7. Implementation of the Future Model

| | Action | Dates |
|---|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Meetings with impacted staff and letters provided at the meeting | 4 August 2023 |
| 2 | Meeting with all staff to share outcome | 4 August 2023 |
| 3 | Decision paper to be circulated to all ACT Pathology staff and Unions – HSU, Professionals Australia & CPSU | 4 August 2023 |
| 4 | Advertisement of new positions | As soon as practical |
| 5 | Appointment to advertised positions | As soon as practical |