

March 26, 2018

Ms Harriet Wild  
Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer  
NZ Policy and Advocacy  
The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

By email: [harriet.wild@racp.org.nz](mailto:harriet.wild@racp.org.nz)

**Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) consultation on position statement and evidence review on obesity**

Dear Ms Wild

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Royal Australasian College of Physicians' position statement and evidence review on obesity.

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), including the Faculty of Pain Medicine, is committed to high standards of clinical practice in the fields of anaesthesia, perioperative medicine and pain medicine.

RACP is to be commended on its efforts in producing a highly relevant and strong position statement. Obesity is a relevant issue to anaesthetists from a safety and quality perspective. As well as increasing the need for surgery, obesity increases the complications associated with having anaesthesia for surgery.

The theme for National Anaesthesia Day 2015 was 'obesity complicates anaesthesia'. More than 800 anaesthetists across Australia and New Zealand responded to a questionnaire distributed on October 16 2015 that showed 64 per cent of anaesthetists believe obesity is the most common pre-operative complication. Most respondents (70 per cent) also agreed that obesity increased risks before, during and after operations and only three per cent strongly disagreed. We also note that the CPMC had a Summit on Obesity in 2016, with a subsequent policy statement, again recognising the importance of this issue to the health of the community.

RACP's evidence review is comprehensive and supports the statement. There is clear consideration of similarities and differences between Australia and New Zealand and these appropriately inform recommendations.

There are a number of strengths in the document, including that it:

- Recognises the social and environmental determinants of obesity
- Links well to WHO expectations and recommendations
- Promotes collaboration with Maori and Pacific communities

"To serve the community by fostering safety and high quality patient care in anaesthesia, perioperative medicine and pain medicine."

The increasing prevalence of obesity and its significant health implications provides strong grounds to support promotion to government of primary prevention strategies such as regulating promotion and sale of food and beverages with high sugar content or added sugar. Improving equitable access to healthcare initiatives that are shown to reduce obesity and its complications is also important.

ANZCA also notes the specific actions called for such as better front-of-pack labelling on food, stronger regulations for the food industry, better access to the living wage and a sugar tax.

Should you require any further information, please contact Jo-anne Chapman, General Manager Policy, Safety & Quality via email [policy@anzca.edu.au](mailto:policy@anzca.edu.au) or telephone (03) 8517 5341.

Yours sincerely



Dr Phillipa Hore  
Chair, Safety & Quality Committee  
Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists