

The Parliamentary Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) review of the HCCC's 2021-22 and 2022-23 annual reports

Feedback Submission on behalf of the Rural Doctors Association of New South Wales (RDANSW)

The RDANSW is a member organisation representing rural doctors and the health of rural communities. Our members provide care in rural hospitals and as GPs in rural towns. We are well placed to understand the challenges of providing health care in regional and remote NSW

Benchmarks and performance measures

Q.1. Under section 22 (a) of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993*, the HCCC must carry out its assessment of complaints within 60 days after receiving the complaint.

- Is 60 days an appropriate timeframe for assessing complaints?

A. Yes

Q.3. Complaints are referred for investigation by the HCCC in situations where an initial assessment raises a potentially significant issue of public health or safety; significant departures from clinical treatment and professional conduct standards; and/or where there may be grounds for disciplinary action. The HCCC aims to complete all investigations within 12 months.

- Is 12 months an appropriate timeframe for completing of investigations?

A. Yes, 12 months is likely reasonable. It is important to note that while 12 months may be reasonable, it is well known that such investigations can have serious adverse harms on the clinicians under investigation and there should be some kind of service offered to said clinicians. The notification process to the clinician should also be reviewed and include a phone call to the clinician first, during business hours, prior to the clinician being sent an email regarding the complaint within the next 24hrs.

Q.4. In its 2020-21 annual report, the HCCC assessed its performance against a number of key indicators.¹ Some examples of indicators and targets listed in the report are contained in the box below.

- Should the HCCC report on additional performance measures? If so, what additional performance indicators are important to capture?

A. The following indicators should also be considered:

- Suicide or attempted suicide rates of clinicians under investigation
- Rates of Depression and Anxiety caused by such investigations involving said clinicians
- Matters inappropriately referred to the commission e.g. petty complaints
- Percentage of complaints that involve lack of resources. This is particularly important in rural areas where lack of resources is an ongoing issue and can result in complaints that are not the fault of the health providers.

Stakeholder engagement

Q.6. Do you believe there is wide and strong community awareness of the role and functions of the Commission?

A. No, the RDA NSW do not believe that there is a wide understanding of this in the community at large.

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President
Rural Doctors' Association NSW