

Media Release

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Long COVID patients suffering as clinics shut down across the country

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) says that patients with long COVID in Australia are being left without necessary support with very few resources being invested in long COVID care despite the [Parliamentary report](#) on long COVID and repeated COVID infections.

Additional specific Federal and State/Territory funding for COVID ceased at the end of 2022, and funding from within existing hospital agreements has mostly ceased, resulting in clinic closures across the country as the long COVID clinics no longer have enough funding to operate.

The RACP is calling for an urgent re-investment in long COVID clinics around the country so that patients can continue to access treatment and care.

RACP President Dr Jacqueline Small says "There are no long COVID clinics operating in regional and rural areas of Australia, making it almost impossible to get help for these communities.

"We also know that nearly all the metropolitan long COVID clinics have since shut down after a funding cut off in June this year.

"Long COVID is a serious illness, and we must be ensuring that everyone has access to the multidisciplinary care that this illness requires.

"The height of the pandemic may be over – but that doesn't mean that people aren't still suffering with long COVID. It is a life-changing repercussion of COVID-19 and we must do better to support patients to manage it.

"It's time for Federal, State and Territory Governments across Australia to step up and increase the funding for long COVID clinics both in metropolitan areas but also in rural and regional locations, too."

A recent study by the Australian National University reported that nearly 5% of Australian adults who have had COVID experience symptoms lasting three months or more.[1]

The RACP is urging the government to consider the hundreds of thousands of potential long COVID patients and their need for the best service delivery possible.

Although mainstream services still play a role in providing care, long COVID clinics continue to be a much-needed resource for Australians.

"We are pleased the Government provided \$50 million earlier this year for research into long COVID, but there are no other safeguards to ensure funding will continue. And we also need to make sure that treatment is accessible and equitable for everyone" Dr Small says.

The RACP says that Governments need to:

1. Establish more multidisciplinary clinics, with virtual access, including to patients in rural areas and those being managed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services.
2. Develop coordinated tiered care including referral pathways, in which rehabilitation physicians, respiratory physicians and other acute physicians work together to provide optimum care.
3. Develop training resources and evidence-based living guidelines for General Practitioners, allied health professionals and medical specialists regarding the diagnosis and management of long COVID.

Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine President Dr Jennifer Mann states "Long COVID care is vital to the health and wellbeing of Australians, and in particular First Nations people and those in regional, rural and remote communities, where access to healthcare is an existing issue.[2]

"COVID-19 is not behind us. The longer-term health impacts of COVID-19 are being felt across our communities. That's why we need to prioritise multidisciplinary care and training programs for a future where world-class long COVID care is a reality here in Australia, including access to rehabilitation services.

"We're calling on a commitment from all levels of Government to increase funding and access to long COVID care, so no one experiencing long COVID is left with nowhere to go," says Dr Mann.

[1] https://csmr.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2022/10/The_experience_of_COVID-19_in_Australia_-_For_web.pdf

[2] RACP Submission [racp-submission—Inquiry-into-long-covid-and-repeated-covid-infections.pdf](#)