

SA Pathology Future Vision and Direction – Frequently Asked Questions – September 2017

On 8 August 2017, the Minister for Health announced that he had accepted the advice from the Pathology Director and Efficiency Improvement Program Steering Committee that the proposed reconfiguration of SA Pathology would be suspended, pending a refresh of the program, until mid-2018. Dr Glenn Edwards, Pathology Director, provided an update on 24 August 2017, which is available on the [SA Pathology intranet](#).

This Frequently Asked Question document has been developed to address some specific questions arising from this decision and to provide some more information about the next steps for SA Pathology.

Q: Why was the proposed reconfiguration of SA Pathology suspended?

A: Following review of the feedback about the 31 May 2017 proposed reconfiguration and workforce model for SA Pathology, it was clear that further discussion is required to ensure the best possible outcome for staff and patients. It was also clear that the timing for implementation of the changes proposed was not right - we first need to focus on the implementation of the Enterprise Pathology Laboratory Information System (EPLIS) and move to the new laboratory at the new Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH). We need to support staff to deliver change as part of these complex programs.

The feedback from the consultation process shows that staff agree that significant change is needed to modernise SA Pathology and we need to strike the right balance to deliver sustainable and high quality pathology services. In order to achieve this, we need to work together on our vision for the strategic direction of SA Pathology. We will move away from a change program based solely on efficiencies.

Q: What does “suspend and refresh” the Efficiency Improvement Program (EIP) mean? What is the process from here?

A: “Suspending” EIP means that we will focus on our core business and key immediate projects including the implementation of EPLIS and move to the new RAH. With these technologies in place, we will be in a better position to understand their benefits.

“Refresh” means that we will not simply revert to earlier proposed models. We need to “go back to the drawing board” – to design a modern and contemporary laboratory service, based on a vision for SA Pathology that aligns with our agreed purpose.

A significant amount of work has gone into EIP which should not be lost. Clearly some projects are continuing, such as new RAH and EPLIS. We will work closely with discipline leads to identify which projects will continue, which need to be closed down, and which need to continue as separate projects at a more local level. We need to be clear on what benefits these projects will deliver for our patients and staff, and how we will measure them. Staff and relevant stakeholders will be involved in defining this.

EIP will not continue in its current form. The Steering Committee, working groups and consultative committees have been disbanded. Meanwhile, we will soon start the process towards creating our vision for the future of SA Pathology as explained above.

There is further work to be done in relation to the next steps and we will be engaging with staff and stakeholders about this.

Q: Does this mean there will be no changes in SA Pathology until mid-2018?

A: The move to the new RAH, deployment of EPLIS and other new technology and equipment will inevitably change the way we work. We need to make these systems work well before we consider any large scale changes.

As part of our normal business, however, we will continue to review the way we do things to make these systems work well. If changes are proposed that impact staff, we will consult as required with staff and their representatives.

In the short term, we still need to progress a number of initiatives including:

- Enhanced clinical governance model
- Our ASO/OPS skill mix, to maximize benefits of EPLIS
- Multi-skilling, where there are benefits to be gained for our staff and the organisation.

Q: There were elements of the 31 May 2017 Consultation Paper that some staff supported. Does the suspension mean that these cannot be implemented?

A: Where there are elements of the 31 May 2017 Consultation Paper that staff support there is scope for this to progress. Again, any proposed changes will be the subject of a consultation process with staff and relevant stakeholders.

Q: Will services still be relocating as indicated in the 31 May 2017 Consultation Paper?

A: At this stage the only move that is occurring is the move to the new RAH. There is broad support for some of the other service relocations, however these will not be progressed until there has been further consideration and consultation about these changes. We will first talk to discipline leads about this to gauge a whole of SA Pathology perspective. We will then engage with staff and stakeholders.

Q: What will be happening with the space vacated at the Frome Road site, as a result of the move to the new RAH?

A: It is important that we start to think about how to best use our capacity at the Frome Road site given the advice that we will be occupying this facility for the foreseeable future. As outlined above, we will start to talk to discipline leads about this and then engage with staff and stakeholders. It is important that we have an open and transparent conversation about this before any decisions are made. Once we have discussed this, there will be a formal consultation process should any changes be proposed.

Q: There has been reference to a working group to report in mid-2018. What does this mean?

A: There likely will be multiple working groups, workshops, reference groups or other fora set up as a means of engaging staff and other stakeholders in the next steps of this process. More information about this and about how staff can be involved will be available in due course – we are keen to involve as many staff and stakeholders as possible in this process. We also need to consider how we involve relevant stakeholders in this process.

Q: What will the role of Ernst & Young be in the next steps of this process?

A: Resources for this new phase for SA Pathology are still being considered. There is a lot of work to do as we focus on immediate projects, and then ensure we fully engage staff and other stakeholders in designing the future of SA Pathology.

There will be the need for specialist skills in certain areas, and we will need to consider the best way to resource this.

Q: Will the original EIP benchmarking dictate the future vision of SA Pathology?

A: No. Staff and stakeholders will be integral in developing the future vision for SA Pathology.

Q: Are we still required to make savings?

A: SA Pathology, as with any organisation, needs to operate in a financially sustainable way. As per normal business process, managers will always be accountable for the financial performance in their areas. This includes an ongoing, rigorous approach to cost management, as well as looking for improvement opportunities.

However, as explained above, we will not be driving a change program based solely on efficiencies. We must ensure we deliver a safe, high quality service to the people of South Australia. Designing and implementing a modern, flexible Pathology service will improve quality, safety and financial sustainability – and achieving this will require the contribution of our staff and stakeholders.

Q: The transfer of staff to Local Health Networks was linked to EIP (also referred to as the “Brennan” transfer). Will this still proceed?

A: Yes it will. There was support for this change from staff and unions when it was originally proposed to address clinical governance matters. SA Pathology has been working with the Department for Health and Ageing to finalise matters associated with this change. Once this happens there will be further discussions with affected staff, unions and Local Health Networks as there have been a number of staff changes since the original proposal was made.

Q: During EIP there was a freeze on issuing permanent contracts in positions that may be impacted by EIP changes. Will staff on temporary contracts be converted to permanent? Will future contracts be offered on a permanent or temporary basis?

A: We are actively considering these questions now. There will be further advice to staff about this as soon as possible. Regardless of the outcome of these discussions, contracts that are for the purpose of backfilling leave, a specific project or are externally funded will remain temporary.

Q: Will there still be a call for Expressions of Interest for Targeted Voluntary Separation Packages as indicated in the 31 May 2017 Consultation Paper?

A: No, not at this time. Staff will be informed of any future call for Expressions of Interest for Targeted Voluntary Separation Packages (TVSPs). TVSPs will continue to be available in accordance with relevant Enterprise Agreement provisions and government policy.

Q: How will the feedback from the 31 May consultation process be used?

A: The feedback has been reviewed, and played a key role in the decision to suspend the proposed reconfiguration. A high level summary of the most common themes from the feedback has been prepared and sent to staff via email, and is available on the SA Pathology intranet site. This feedback is critically important to help guide future discussions with staff and stakeholders to ensure a positive vision for SA Pathology. Discipline leads have also be given the opportunity to review feedback relevant to their discipline as we move into strategic planning and other specific projects.

Q: Where can I find out more information or ask further questions about this matter?

A: Speak to your manager in the first instance. Members of SA Pathology Executive are also happy to answer any questions about this. Dr Edwards is attending local staff meetings to answer questions.

Q: Is the Employee Assistance Program still available to me?

A: The Employee Assistance Program is always available to staff. For more information speak to your manager or visit the [SA Pathology intranet page](#).