



Northern Territory Government Pathology Service

C/-Pathology Administration, Building 13
Royal Darwin Hospital Campus
Rocklands Drive
Tiwi NT 0810



Northern Territory Government
Department of Health and Community Services

PO Box 41326
Casuarina NT 0811
Australia

Dr Gary Lum, AM (B.Med.Sc.[Dist], MASM, M.B.,B.S., FRCPA, FACTM, MRACMA, AFCHSE) **Director**
Vice President, Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
Chair, Australian Public Health Laboratory Network
Chairman, Proficiency Testing Australia
Telephone +61 8 8922 8034 ■ Facsimile +61 8 8980 0714 ■ www <http://gazpath.com> ■ Email Gary.Lum@nt.gov.au

Standards and Accreditation Study
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2617

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Standards and Accreditation Submission to the Productivity Commission

Qualifications and Experience

1. I am a registered medical practitioner¹ (Northern Territory) and a Specialist Pathologist². I have been practising as a Specialist Pathologist in Microbiology in the Northern Territory since February 1996.

Declaration of Interest

2. I am the elected member representative on National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia (NATA) Council for the Northern Territory³.
3. I am Chairman of the Board of Proficiency Testing Australia (PTA)⁴.
4. I am Vice President of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA).
5. I am a volunteer Medical Testing assessor in the NATA/RCPA accreditation program.

Background

6. My main experience with the NATA is through the Medical Testing accreditation program conducted jointly between NATA and RCPA according to National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council (NPAAC) standards.
7. I have read the *Issues Paper* for the Standards and Accreditation commissioned study.

Response to Draft Report

8. On reading the Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Standard Setting and Laboratory Accreditation (July 2006), I am reassured by the Commission's findings in regard to NATA's effectiveness, the significance of NATA's involvement with government, the importance of development and maintenance of international links for national and international credibility, and the need to more fully reflect NATA's public and national benefit roles in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Government and NATA.

¹ University of Queensland 1989.

² Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia 1995.

³ I receive no remuneration from NATA for this involvement.

⁴ I receive no remuneration from PTA for this involvement.

9. Importantly the objectives of NATA's accreditation activities are wholly for the Australian public benefit. In Medical Testing and other areas, NATA provides community confidence in the proficiency of bodies whose business affects decisions made across the whole extent of Australian society. Most importantly (from my perspective), the public health of Australians is benefited by having what can best be described as a world class accreditation process in Medical Testing. This may not be obvious to everyone but NATA and RCPA Medical Testing accreditation underpins the confidence Australians can have in their diagnostic pathology services.
10. With respect to Australian Government support of NATA's involvement with ILAC, APLAC and ISO, active participation in these groups is vital to Australia having input in to the criteria that affect its laboratories. What we cannot have is a situation where Australians are muted and beholden to others in most important area of business and health-care. Reducing the support to NATA would be a false economy.

Final Comments

11. I believe Australian Government support through financial funding must remain for the public good of all Australians.

Yours sincerely

[Submitted electronically]

Gary Lum, AM
Director, NTGPS

Wednesday, 23 August 2006