



PUBLIC STATEMENT - Regarding the reliability of pathology test results in relation to blood tests, including HbA1c and Cholesterol

---

Health & Community  
Services Complaints  
Commissioner

PO Box 199  
Rundle Mall Adelaide 5000

p 08 8226 8652  
1800 232 007 (toll free)  
f 08 8226 8620  
w [www.hcsc.sa.gov.au](http://www.hcsc.sa.gov.au)

I, Steve Tully, Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC), make the following statement in the public interest.

After conducting an investigation into related matters, I have determined that:

1. There are appropriate standards that apply to the work carried out in registered pathology laboratories in South Australia. These standards are documented in international and national standards; and are monitored and audited by NATA (the National Authority of Testing Authorities). Each operational pathology laboratory in South Australia, registered with Medicare Australia, is regularly audited by NATA to ensure that the services they provide, meet the relevant standards.
2. Biological tests, such as the blood tests for HbA1c and Cholesterol, are vulnerable to variations that occur in the process of testing. It is therefore accepted that it is impossible to calculate the results with 100% accuracy. The standard for measuring results of biological tests is therefore determined as a range; with the results expected to meet the standard if they fall within the expected range, 95% of the time.
3. All the pathology services investigated in relation to this complaint were found to have provided services that met the generally accepted standards. This was found to be the case because each test result, from each laboratory, was deemed to have fallen within the expected range for results of the specific blood tests done. This was the case, even though the results, for the same kind of blood test, were different from each pathology laboratory.
4. As this was the finding in this case; and from this case it can be derived that this will generally be the case, HCSCC is under an obligation to bring this to the attention of the general public who may be seeking blood test results from pathology laboratories.
5. **There are better health care outcomes when the service user and/or their health service provider/s choose to use the same pathology provider, and not more than one pathology service provider, when obtaining blood test results.**

Using just one pathology service provider will provide results that can be more easily compared, will reduce the number of variations that may be involved in the process and will provide a more consistent basis on which to rely when making treatment decisions.

This statement is made in the public interest and as part of the section 54 of the Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004 report (s54 report) recommendation for action by HCSCC. If you would like to view the full, de-identified version of the relevant s54 report, it is available on the HCSCC website at [www.hcsc.sa.gov.au](http://www.hcsc.sa.gov.au).