



Ms Angela D'Castro
State Manager WA/NT
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
Email: Angela.D'Castro@surgeons.org

Dear Ms D'Castro

Thank you for your email of 8 February 2021 in relation to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' (RACS) 2021 WA State Election statement.

Data sharing

The McGowan Government appreciates the need for efficient data sharing in maximising the benefits of medical research and we also recognise the need that such sharing be cognisant of privacy concerns. I appreciate the input from RACS to our consultation on Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing and you are correct that the second stage of consultation has been disrupted by the impacts of COVID-19 and the need to allocate resources to the Government's response to the pandemic.

As we emerge from the effects from the pandemic the McGowan Government's consultation process will continue. The timing of any legislation will be dependent on a number of factors, including the completion and reporting of the consultation process.

Waiting lists

The McGowan Government is committed to reducing waiting times for health services and is changing the way outpatient appointments are delivered to improve the patient experience as well as reduce waiting times.

For example, in March 2020, the South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS) implemented a 'digital first' approach to outpatient appointments, asking clinicians to use telephone or video as the usual practice. SMHS established a Digital Outpatient Team to support patients, clinicians and clerks and purchased additional equipment for computer-based video consultations.

In March 2020, 25,000 outpatient appointments transitioned to a digital approach. By April 2020, a peak of 67 percent of outpatient appointments were delivered digitally, compared with the usual 15 per cent. By the end of June 2020, 1 in 3 outpatient consultations at SMHS were being delivered digitally, with some speciality areas, such as Urology, Neonatal, Endocrinology, Renal medicine and Immunology Services sustaining 50 to 75 per cent digital consultations.



walabor.org.au



fb.com/walabor



[@walabor](https://twitter.com/walabor)

COVID-19 response

A re-elected McGowan Government will continue to follow advice of the Chief Health Officer (CHO) of WA with respect to planning for and responding to outbreaks, as it has throughout the response to COVID-19.

We will ensure that the CHO and WA Health have access to adequate resources to plan for, monitor, advise and direct responses to future outbreaks and that the CHO has a forum and ever present access to provide information and advice to the WA Government.

The McGowan Government has ensured that the Department of Health, Health Service providers, WA Police and other agencies involved with management of the COVID-19 pandemic have had access to the full capacity of the WA Government – this includes personnel and financial resources.

A re-elected McGowan Government will continue a comprehensive communications strategy, ensuring that the community are well informed with respect to timelines and access to COVID-19 vaccines, the need for continued measures such as hygiene, physical distancing and restrictions, while risk of infection remains. We will continue to inform the community with evidence-based communications that seek to provide advice on the actions of government and recommendations for personal measures.

A re-elected McGowan Government will ensure continued access to PPE deemed suitable by clinical decision makers. Under the McGowan Government, WA Government Agencies will continue to pursue all avenues to ensure adequate and abundant supplies of PPE through arrangements that include procurement from overseas, interstate and Western Australian suppliers and support for local manufacturing, where possible and appropriate.

A re-elected McGowan Government will continue to take PPE advice provided by the CHO. This will be informed by national bodies including the Australian Health Protection Principal's Committee (AHPPC), the Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

WA Audit of Surgical Mortality

The McGowan Government appreciates the role of RACS in managing the WA Audit of Surgical Mortality (WAASM) and recognises the invaluable service the WAASM provides in improved health outcomes for patients.

I understand the contract for RACS to manage the WAASM runs through to June 2021 and built in is the option for two further 12 month extensions.

Public/Private re-admission

As you have noted, the McGowan Government supports a process to address the anomaly around patients who have had surgery at a private hospital, re-admitting to a public hospital but, as you also noted the complex consultation process has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. I look forward to a re-elected McGowan Government resuming the process to address the anomaly and develop a practical solution.

Use of the title 'surgeon'

The McGowan Government recognises that the title 'surgeon' is not protected by legislation and agreed with other State, Territory and Commonwealth health ministers to investigate the impacts of legally protecting the title 'surgeon.'

I understand a project group in Victoria has drafted a consultation regulation impact statement (RIS), which is currently being reviewed by the Office of Best Practice Regulation to ensure compliance with COAG guidelines and is due for release in March or April 2021. When the RIS is released, a re-elected McGowan Government will be in a position to consider the options presented in the statement.

There is always more to do for our health system and a re-elected McGowan Government will continue to work with all public health stakeholders to continually improve the health of Western Australians.

Thank you for raising your concerns with me and I look forward to a re-elected McGowan Government working with RACS in the future.

Yours sincerely



Mark McGowan MLA
PREMIER; WA LABOR LEADER

02 MAR 2021