
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE



RACS apologises for discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01am Thursday 10 September, 2015

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) today accepted in full, the draft report and the recommendations of its Expert Advisory Group (EAG) into discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

The College has apologised, on behalf of all Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates, to everyone who has suffered discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment by surgeons.

The apology from RACS President, Professor David Watters, is publicly available on the RACS website.

“These behaviours have been too long tolerated and have compromised the personal and professional lives of many in the health workforce,” Professor Watters said.

“It is time to bring about meaningful cultural change and address the problems caused by some members of our profession,” he said.

RACS established the EAG in March 2015 to find out the scope of these problems in the practice of surgery and to get advice about what to do.

“The EAG Report has identified that many of those affected have not felt they could trust the College to complain.

“We must now earn that trust by fairly and effectively addressing these problems,” Professor Watters said.

RACS will prepare and publish an Action Plan by the end of November that addresses the issues raised and recommendations made in the report.

Critical areas for action include increasing transparency and external scrutiny in College processes, making it safe for people to make a complaint and end bystander silence, and improving surgical education and training.

Professor Watters called on all College Fellows to reflect on how they treat colleagues and other health workers.

“All Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates (IMGs) will need to champion and model the high standards of behaviour we expect of others,” he said.

“There is no place for discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment in surgical practice, surgical training or the health sector more broadly,” Professor Watters said.

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“The College will not tolerate these behaviours and we will not tolerate the abuse of power and authority by surgeons,” he said.

The draft EAG report and reports of commissioned research are published on the College website at www.surgeons.org

MEDIA NOTE: A Media Conference has been scheduled for 10.30am (AEST) in the RACS Melbourne head office at 250-290 Spring Street, East Melbourne. Please advise if you wish to attend.

ABOUT RACS

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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