



LET'S OPERATE WITH RESPECT



## MEDIA RELEASE

### RACS and St Vincent's commit to respect in surgery

Friday 1 July 2016

St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to deal more effectively with reports of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the surgical workplace and improve patient safety.

"Hospital wards, operating theatres and outpatients are where surgical education and health service employment overlap," said RACS President, Mr Philip Truskett AM.

"It makes sense for employers and educators to look for new ways to improve the experience of surgical trainees, make hospitals a better and safer place to work and improve patient safety," he said.

"Research shows that bad behaviour has a negative impact on the whole team and not just the people at which it's directed. This MOU is an important step to improving patient safety by improving work environments," Mr Truskett said.

"St Vincent's Health Australia is serious about dealing effectively with these challenges and confident that our partnership with RACS will help us both improve outcomes for our patients and the well-being of our staff," said SVHA CEO, Toby Hall.

In 2015 – as RACS established its Expert Advisory Group to examine discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment (DBSH) in the practice of surgery – SVHA established an internal program to address the same issues across its organisation.

SVHA's Ethos program brings together an electronic reporting system, an accountability framework and a comprehensive peer training initiative. It is underpinned by the recognition of a proven link between poor behaviours and adverse surgical outcomes.

"We are determined to confront these issues and play a leadership role for the benefit of our staff and patients. This agreement with RACS is an important way to help us achieve that," Mr Hall said.

The MoU commits both agencies to a shared vision to provide high quality training, education and experience in the practice of surgery.

Specific initiatives include:

- aligning or developing policies and processes to deal with DBSH using the 'Vanderbilt Principles' as a foundation (See appendix two in the [RACS Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety](#));

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- ensuring that complaints about discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment involving trainees, International Medical Graduates or College Fellows employed at SVHA are managed fairly and expeditiously and that the outcomes of complaints are shared within an agreed framework;
- ensuring that surgical supervisors have the necessary skills and attributes and are supported to provide training, assessment, feedback and support to Trainees and International Medical Graduates without engaging in DBSH; and sharing information and resources for training programs to address DBSH.

Collaborating with employers to build respect in surgery is one of RACS' core commitments in its [Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety](#).

This MoU with SVHA is the first RACS has established with a national healthcare network and the latest in a series of agreements with hospitals and other agencies in healthcare, which employ surgeons or oversee health systems.

The Action Plan is the cornerstone of RACS' response to the recommendations of the 2015 Expert Advisory Group into DBSH in the practice of surgery.

In May 2016, RACS launched [Let's Operate With Respect](#) – a campaign to help deal effectively with discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in surgery. RACS has also published a dedicated new section of its website, About Respect.

### 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.

[www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)

### About SVHA

SVHA is Australia's largest non-profit provider of health and aged care services. A clinical, research and education leader working in private hospitals, public hospitals and aged care services in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, SVHA was established by the Sisters of Charity over 175 years ago.

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