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# ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Port Arthur... what a difference a day makes

**Tuesday 23 October, 2018**

Gun control laws in Tasmania, with respect to trauma and emergency management will be high on the agenda at the annual RACS Tasmanian Annual Scientific Meeting, which has combined this year with the RACS Trauma Symposium.

Mr Bryan Walpol, an emergency physician and who at the time of the Port Arthur massacre, was a staff specialist in the Emergency Department at the Royal Hobart Hospital, will be presenting *Port Arthur..what a difference a day makes*, at this year's event.

Mr Walpol will review the events of that horrific day on 28 April 1996, indicating how the trauma system in place and disaster plan were executed, making for a first class response. Martin Bryant took the lives of 35 tourists and locals, some children, and injured another 23. However, there were no deaths in those who reached hospital.

Gun violence prior to Port Arthur, and the role of automatic and semi-automatic firearms, are a picture of a lack of proper laws around registration, licensing and safe storage according to Mr Walpole.

"Then all of that changed, with uniform gun laws - what a difference that day made. There are probably more than 3,000 people alive now, who would have been shot if it had not been for the introduction of uniform gun laws," he said.

At a special summit convened by former Prime Minister Mr John Howard on 10 May of that year, federal, state and territory police ministers signed an agreement to introduce new uniform gun laws, including bans on types of semi-automatic and self-loading rifles and shotguns, and a stricter licensing regime.

Then on 15 August, Tasmania passed new federally aligned gun laws, and on 15 October the first 1,000 surrendered guns were melted down and destroyed under new state laws.

Mr Walpol will be joined by local and national trauma specialists and medical professionals who will provide presentations on paediatric trauma, chest and abdominal models of care and advances in resuscitation along with a host of other topics aimed to stimulate and inspire delegates to think more broadly about trauma management.

The meeting, to be held at the University of Tasmania in Hobart on 9-10 November themed *Regional Trauma in Australasia: What is possible and how far can we reach?* will attract medical professionals, traumatologists and emergency services personnel, all eager to weigh in on the discussion of effective trauma and emergency management processes.

This event is hosted by the Tasmanian branch of RACS, and is supported by Bongiorno Group and the Tasmanian government.

[Download the official program](#)

#### **About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (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)

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