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Ms Caroline Johnson  
Board Chair, ACORN  
Email: [chair@acorn.org.au](mailto:chair@acorn.org.au)

Dear Ms Johnson,

**Re: Rostering of theatre nurses within NSW Health**

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to the Australian College of Perioperative Nurses (ACORN) as President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) in respect to a matter concerning the rostering of theatre nurses within NSW Health.

It has been drawn to RACS's attention that NSW Health has a common practice of rotating theatre nurses through specialties like pre-operative and recovery units. The practice is meant to create a flexible workforce to fill roster gaps whenever required. However, there are concerns that the strategy will discourage nurses from upskilling in their specialist areas, which can impact team dynamics and the delivery of optimal patient care.

Hypothetically instances where specialist nurses are being sent cross specialty operational wise could cause higher stress among the nursing staff and potential inefficiencies in surgical procedures. The impact is further amplified in rural settings and creates a cascading effect due to maldistribution issues that has become prevalent for both the surgical and nursing profession. While this query did originate from NSW, the chilling effect may well become a national issue of concern for both our professions impacting the clinical relationships within our operational theatres.

Having read RACS's current position papers and guidelines, we could not identify a specific position addressing the rotation of theatre nurses between a number of specialties of health services. Our current guidelines address more general areas of surgical practice and patient safety.

However, we do acknowledge the contribution of expertly trained and skilled perioperative nursing personnel to ensuring high-quality surgical results. We are therefore keen to obtain ACORN's perspective on this practice and explore potential mutual strategies to eliminate these issues. Your feedback would be incredibly valuable in advising any future stance or recommendation RACS might offer on this topic.

We look forward to your response and the opportunity to work together to enhance the professional development of theatre nurses and the quality of patient care within our health system.

Yours sincerely,

**A/PROF KERIN FIELDING**  
**PRESIDENT**  
**ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS**