

# **Baird Government response to Royal Australasian College of Surgeons 2015 Election Position Statement**

## **Specialist medical and surgical speciality training**

The Baird Government values the surgical trainees employed by NSW hospitals. Recognising the importance of having a well trained workforce across all specialties, we provide \$2 million for Surgical Skills Support networks that are co-ordinated by the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI). Staff Specialists are expected to undertake clinical, teaching, research, administrative, quality improvement and other responsibilities as part of their normal duties. To assist them in their training and career development, Registrars have access to study leave under the terms of the Public Hospital Medical Officers Award. VMOs are entitled to be remunerated for the time spent in participating in teaching and training.

The Baird Government is committed to addressing the need for more specialist positions in rural and regional areas. We have provided additional funding to establish a greater number of training positions for specialties that are considered a high priority. These are mainly in outer metropolitan and rural and regional locations where the need for specialists is greatest. Since 2011, the Baird Government has created 58 new specialty training positions including 5 surgical training positions in general surgery & paediatric surgery.

Junior Medical Officers, including RACS trainees, work 38 standard hours per week under the terms of the Public Hospital Medical Officers Award. Overtime hours are worked where necessary to deliver services and are paid for at rates consistent with the Award. The government is not proposing to extend the standard hours under the Award.

## **Alcohol abuse and related violence and trauma**

The Baird Government has developed a framework that enables targeted action to be taken in areas experiencing high levels of alcohol-related harm by applying precinct measures under the liquor laws. This precinct approach has been adopted in the Sydney CBD and Kings Cross precincts, where 1.30am lock out and 3am cease alcohol service requirements have been imposed. The future application of these types of measures will be informed by a review of the Sydney CBD and Kings Cross lock out and cease service requirements in February 2016.

The mandatory collection of alcohol sales data in NSW is an issue that is currently being considered by the Government. If re-elected, the Baird Government's decision will be made in regards to the outcome of retail alcohol sales data collection in Kings Cross that commenced in January 2014.

The Baird Government is also committed to reducing the health and harm impacts of the misuse of alcohol. I was pleased to announce today that the Baird Government will establish a \$2.3 million Centre for the Prevention of Harm to Children and Adolescents from Drugs and Alcohol at The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

Presentations to NSW's public hospital emergency departments in which alcohol use is the patient's primary reason for presentation is publicly reported by Health Statistics NSW. Health Statistics NSW also publishes information on alcohol drinking behaviour in NSW as

well as estimates of alcohol-attributable hospitalisations and deaths. The NSW Ministry of Health is examining ways to further increase the availability of information on alcohol harms.

The Baird Government notes that NAAPA, of which the College is a member, have advocated for a Community Defenders Office modelled on the EDO, funded through the introduction of an annual liquor licensing fee. This is not government policy.

### **Timely and safe access to surgical care in NSW**

Over the past four years, we have undertaken 16,763 more surgical procedures since Labor was in office and seen 610,632 more patients in our emergency departments. Despite these increases, NSW now leads the nation when it comes to elective surgery performance, with 97% of elective surgery patients cared for in a clinically appropriate timeframe. At the same time, Emergency Department performance has improved by 16% since 2010.

The Baird Government has also recruited extra 3,400 nurses, 1400 doctors, 980 hospital support staff and 205 paramedics (FTE) over the past four years.

When we came to Government in 2011 we inherited aging hospitals that had suffered 16 years of neglect – 40 per cent of public hospitals were more than 50 years old. The Baird Government has invested \$4.8 billion in upgrading and building new hospitals and health facilities. Furthermore, we have committed to a further \$5 billion worth of infrastructure projects, including the upgrade of equipment and technology, to begin if the Baird Government is re-elected. Planning for these projects will be undertaken with extensive consultation. For major redevelopments that include surgical services, project teams work closely with local clinicians and the Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI).

The ACI's Surgical Services Taskforce works closely with NSW Health, clinicians, professional bodies, academic and research groups, hospitals and Local Health Districts to map out, plan and deliver the delivery of surgical services across NSW.

Surgical planning for rare procedures in cancer care is undertaken in partnership with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the NSW Cancer Institute and ACI. NSW Health continually monitors data which examines variations in outcomes and the data is used by the partners for the planning of surgical services for rare procedures in cancer care to improve patient outcomes.

### **Commonwealth health budget funding changes**

The Federal Government has signalled its intention to continue to fund NSW on an activity basis up to 30 June 2017. The NSW Government intends to work constructively with the Federal Government to secure the best deal for patients beyond 30 June 2017.

NSW is engaged in the Reform of the Federation process. This offers opportunities to evaluate and improve Commonwealth-State relations (including future health funding arrangements) as they affect the health system in Australia. The Federal Government has signalled it will release the Green (options) Paper in the second half of 2015 for public consultation, which will provide key stakeholders such as the RACS a good opportunity to express their views.

### **Support for public hospital bariatric surgery services and multidisciplinary clinics**

NSW Health provides multidisciplinary bariatric clinics at Royal Prince Alfred and Concord hospitals.

It is a decision for each Local Health District as to whether hospitals provide bariatric surgery. If a LHD wishes to undertake this procedure they must establish a model of care that assists in appropriate patient selection, assessment and support and have appropriately contracted and credentialed clinicians. LHDs who wish to undertake this surgery negotiate appropriate activity and funding levels via the annual performance agreement process with the Ministry of Health.

This year, the Baird Government provided \$30 million to deliver the Healthy Eating and Active Living strategy through programs to tackle obesity and promote healthy eating and physical activity in children and adults. The NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy is a whole of government strategy to encourage people to make healthier lifestyle choices and be supported in their choices by health-focussed planning, built environment and transport initiatives, as well as improved access to healthier foods and improved labelling.

### **Integrated training pathway for clinical academics to meet the future healthcare needs of Australia**

Clinical academics are primarily employed by a NSW university's school of medicine and are under a separate contract of employment with NSW Health, under which they provide clinical and administrative services for public patients in public hospitals.

The Baird Government established the Office for Health and Medical Research (OHMR) to increase the state's medical research capacity. Under OHMR's Hub Strategy, released last year, eight research hubs have been created to drive collaboration and forge alliances between academics, clinicians, researchers and organisations in order to translate research from bench to bedside

These hubs will foster the development of research skills and qualifications among surgeons and trainees.

In addition to the Hub Strategy, the Baird Government has opened seven translational cancer research centres including the Kids Alliance, as well as in the Hunter, South Western Sydney and Illawarra, Western Sydney, Northern Sydney, Central Sydney and South East Sydney.

There will be further announcements made during the campaign about surgical research.