



MEDIA RELEASE

LET'S OPERATE WITH RESPECT

RACS committed to building respect and improving patient safety

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A study commissioned by The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has confirmed that concerns about the culture of surgery including bullying, discrimination and harassment are high on the list of reasons some surgical trainees had chosen to leave their training.

RACS commissioned the study in 2015 to better understand why some trainees left the program, as part of the work of the RACS' Expert Advisory Group into bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment.

The study was conducted by independent researchers in the same year the EAG was established. It surveyed and interviewed trainees who had withdrawn from surgical training between 2008 and 2015. The research found inflexibility in the specialty training programs, surgery being the wrong career choice (including for lifestyle reasons), and poor supervision were also significant factors in trainees' decision to leave, as well as concerns about the culture of surgical training.

Lack of academic success was ruled out as a factor, with about 80% of research participants continuing to work or train in medicine, almost all in other medical specialties.

RACS President, Mr John Batten, said the study results confirmed the importance of the College's commitment to building respect and improving patient safety in surgery.

"Sadly, these results are consistent with what we learned in 2015 from the EAG," Mr Batten said.

"They validate the work we are doing to build a culture of respect in surgery. We want to keep good, bright people like these former trainees in our profession," he said.

In early 2017, RACS published a [progress report](#) detailing what it has done to implement the 2015 Action Plan. As well:

- 57% of RACS Fellows, Trainees and IMGs have so far completed the Operating with respect eLearning module mandatory component of their 2017 Continuing Professional Development
- 50% of surgical teachers and trainers have so far completed the Foundation Skills Course for Surgical Educators (FSSE)
- 23 MOUs have been signed with health jurisdictions, hospitals and health agencies about working together on a culture of respect

Mr Batten said he hoped the research results would encourage surgeons to complete RACS' mandatory training *Operating With Respect* module & FSSE course.

"Cultural change takes a long time and is needed across the health sector, because these issues are not confined to surgery," Mr Batten said.

"But we are 100% committed and have a very clear path ahead to make sure we all operate with respect," he said.

In 2015, RACS established the EAG to understand the nature and scale of the cultural problems it faced. In September 2015, RACS published the [EAG report](#) and in November that year, RACS published its [Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety](#).

Media inquiries:

Nicole Newton | m: 0407 998 611