

MEDIA RELEASE – 3 NOVEMBER 2021

A RESPONSE TO COMMENTS MADE BY DR PATRICK TANSLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE
AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF COSMETIC SURGERY AND MEDICINE

On 27 October 2021, Dr Patrick Tansley, President of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery and Medicine (ACCSM), appeared on the “Sunrise” morning programme to discuss the regulation of cosmetic surgery in Australia.

During the course of the segment, Dr Tansley made a number of comments about the qualifications and training of plastic surgeons to perform cosmetic surgery, which the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) would like to address and correct.

ASPS considers that the true position is as follows:

- In Australia, a recognised medical specialty training college is one that has been independently evaluated and accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC).
- The ACCSM fellowship has no standing with the AMC and so it is not an accredited qualification in Australia. The majority of “surgical” members of ACCSM do not have a surgical qualification.
- The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is the key provider of accredited training and education for nine surgical fields of specialty practice, including Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. Registration in an approved specialty is available to those who have been awarded Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS) in that particular specialty. [Only registered practitioners are permitted to call themselves plastic surgeons.]
- ASPS administers the surgical education and training in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery which is hands-on training that is supervised by accredited surgeons in accredited training posts and extends over 5 years of post-graduate, full time surgical training with multiple assessments, examinations, research and surgical training along the way. In the interest of public safety, there is an exit examination required before Fellowship is conferred. [Cosmetic or aesthetic surgery is core material in the plastic surgery training program administered by ASPS.]
- Once registered as a specialist, practitioners need to comply with the RACS program of continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain their specialist registration [, which includes cosmetic or aesthetic surgery topics]
- In 2017, the AMC assessed the RACS training program and raised a concern about the exposure of trainees to aesthetic surgery in the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery program. The AMC went on to say in its report (relevantly): "*The College and Specialty*

Training Boards are using a range of methods to offset these deficiencies, predominantly through simulations and skills courses. Yet the competence gained needs to match with performance in practice. The team recommends that the College find ways ... for plastic and reconstructive surgery trainees to meet their aesthetic surgery requirement...". This issue was caused by the fact that, at the time, Commonwealth government funding to several trainee positions was under threat. Subsequently all but one training position secured alternative funding and no compromises to training in cosmetic or aesthetic surgery occurred. The concern was fully addressed and resolved, and any suggestion that the concern remains current is inaccurate.

- No additional degree or qualification is required for RACS trained plastic surgeons to practice cosmetic surgery.

The ASPS wishes to make clear that registered plastic surgeons who have completed accredited specialist surgical training from RACS are appropriately qualified to perform cosmetic and aesthetic surgery.

Ends.

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