

MEDIA RELEASE

Associate Professor, Nicola Dean elected President of Australia Society of Plastic Surgeons

Sydney. June 22, 2022: The Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) has announced the appointment of specialist plastic surgeon Associate Professor Nicola Dean as its new president; an elected role with a 2-year tenure. Dr Dean is the first female to be elected as President in the 50-year history of ASPS.

Adelaide-based, Dr Dean says she is honoured to take on the role and looks forward to continuing the ASPS' vital work advocating for the safety of patients and the future of plastic and reconstructive surgery.

Dr Dean said: "I am delighted to take on the role and continue ASPS' excellent work supporting high quality specialist plastic surgical care in Australia.

"I am passionate about doing all I can to ensure safe care for patients and access to functional plastic and reconstructive surgery procedures for all who need them. One of ASPS' highest priorities is helping consumers avoid the adverse outcomes in cosmetic surgery, that too many Australians have experienced from medical practitioners who mis-represent their skills and qualifications by using the title 'surgeon', when they have not had the formal surgical training recognised by the Australian Medical Council and carry out cosmetic procedures without proper care and protections from complication.

"Our members are highly trained Specialist Plastic surgeons* who can safely undertake complex procedures to repair, restore or enhance all parts of a patient's body. Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery is a broad specialty, encompassing cosmetic surgery, hand surgery, craniofacial surgery, burns, cancer surgery and trauma reconstruction. ASPS strives to develop and nurture all aspects of the specialty, supporting quality care for the benefit of patients in both public and private sectors."

Dr Dean has a long-standing interest in access to healthcare and over the last 2 years has been working to improve the services at the Royal Darwin Hospital, where around 70% of plastic surgery patients are indigenous.

She said: "I believe the communities of the Northern Territory have just as much right to proper high-quality services as anyone else and I am proud of what we have been able to achieve in Darwin".

Additionally, Dr Dean has campaigned for many years to improve access for women to have post-mastectomy breast reconstruction and breast reduction surgery, where heavy breasts are causing pain and functional problems. She is currently working to improve access for those seeking

gender affirmation surgery and plans to continue these equity-of-access projects during her term as President.

Born in Edinburgh Scotland, Dr Dean graduated in Medicine (1993) from the University of Leeds, England before going onto obtain FRCS (England) in 1997. In 1998 she moved to Australia, completing a PhD in the field of breast reconstruction after breast cancer with the University of Adelaide (2002) before joining the Plastic and Reconstructive training program and obtaining her FRACS in Plastic Surgery in 2007.

In 2014, Dr Dean was appointed Head of Unit for Plastic Surgery at Flinders Medical Centre, Adelaide where she leads a team of 25 staff, including seven consultant surgeons; she also holds an honorary academic appointment with Flinders University. She is now supervising her 6th PhD candidate, Dr Siobhan Fitzpatrick. Their research topic is the health effects of rectus diastasis (muscle separation) following pregnancy and the health benefits of its repair.

Since becoming a specialist, Dr Dean has developed a dedicated breast reconstruction clinic for women who have had breast cancer and is pioneering in her use of patient reported outcomes in breast reconstruction. "Patient reported outcomes allow the women to have a voice in their own treatment journey and this is so important".

"I have always thought undertaking academic research is an important part of becoming a good surgeon," said Dr Dean. "I would argue research is the fundamental basis of broad-minded thinking and every surgeon is responsible for evaluating their own practice. To do that in a robust and meaningful way you need to use the tools of research, so I believe all practitioners should be involved in research in some way. Her research is all about understanding the patient's perspective in surgical treatment and empowering patients."

Dr Dean has been pro-active in welcoming diversity in Plastic Surgery and mentors medical students and junior doctors considering a career in surgery. ASPS membership has seen gender ratios grow from 3% to 18% female members since it was established in 1971 and the proportion of women in training positions is now over 30%.

Dr Dean will be supported by three office bearers elected to the ASPS board including: Vice-President Dr David Morgan, Dr Brigid Corrigan as Treasurer and Dr Matthew Peters as Secretary.

The appointments are effective immediately.

Note to Editors

*All members of ASPS hold a Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, FRACS (Plast) or equivalent and have undergone a minimum of five years specialist training in plastic and reconstructive Surgery as well as the generic surgical training and rigorous examinations, which are a pre-requisite for entry into the program. All have at least 12 years of total medical and surgical education

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