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Statement by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS), and the Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgeons (ASOHNS).

Specialist surgeons are calling for prompt action by the Australian health regulator following Channel 9's 60 minutes story on the ongoing expose of the cosmetic surgery sector.

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) President Dr Sally Langley said the College was appalled that practitioners with general registration who have not completed surgical training in Australia are still able to perform surgical procedures on unsuspecting patients.

"The footage shown in the 60 Minutes joint investigation with *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* has demonstrated a health system where conduct that does not meet Australia's surgical standards is allowed to thrive.

"Australians rightly expect all surgical procedures to be performed to the highest possible standards. They expect those carrying out procedures to meet nationally established educational standards, undertake regular training and be registered in an appropriate specialty.

"We do not wish to see patients suffering harm, having incorrectly assumed that the person carrying out the procedure had completed accredited specialist surgical training from RACS." RACS and the professional societies representing surgical specialty societies deliver Australian Medical Council (AMC) and Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) accredited training programs which enable surgeons to become recognised specialists.

By the time they are accredited, registered surgeons have undertaken a minimum of 12 years medical and surgical education, including at least five years of specialist postgraduate training, and are formally recognised as Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS).

Dr Robert Sheen, President of Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS), said most practitioners who use the title 'cosmetic surgeon' are not registered surgical specialists.

"Many of these so-called 'cosmetic surgeons' use various training programs as proof of their expertise, but these programs are yet another way to bamboozle patients with some requiring almost no specific surgical training.

"Australians should be able to trust that anyone in Australia who call themselves a surgeon is committed to rigorous assessment and continuous education, as well as scrutiny from Australia's health regulator.

"What we see instead is a lack of regulation, transparency, and action. And patients are paying the price. Our nation's health regulator must do just that: regulate."

Professor Ray Sacks, the President of the Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgeons (ASOHNS) and the RACS Chair of the Court of Examiners said that while complications can result from any surgical procedure, FRACS surgeons are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with these scenarios.

"FRACS surgeons are trained to determine any factors that might place a patient at particular risk. Furthermore, hospitals and RACS continually monitor complication rates to measure surgical performance, and to identify any potentially underperforming surgeons.

"FRACS surgeons must also commit to ongoing learning and maintenance of knowledge and skills demonstrated through various continuing professional development programs. This ensures our specialist surgeons not only maintain competency, but also continuously build on and improve their clinical knowledge and skills in order to provide high-quality contemporary healthcare to the public."

Associate Professor Nicola Dean, President of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), said specialist plastic surgeons within ASPS are genuinely concerned about the issues of patient harm from cosmetic procedures being performed around Australia.

“ASPS is committed to patient safety and transparent education of the community about the standards they should expect, the facilities they should be treated in and the credentials of the proceduralists who are treating them. All ASPS members are Fellows of RACS. RACS training is the bedrock of core surgical skills training, surgical conduct and perioperative care for all surgical specialties and no doctor in Australia should be allowed to carry out cosmetic surgery without it.”

Ends.

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RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic Surgery, General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck Surgery, Paediatric Surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Urology and Vascular Surgery. www.surgeons.org