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## **Rushed cosmetic surgery reforms risk doing more harm than good**

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Medical groups have warned that much needed reforms to the cosmetic surgery sector risk doing more harm than good unless the proposed unacceptable downgrading in training standards for practitioners performing cosmetic surgical procedures is addressed.

It is anticipated that a new 'endorsement' training model will shortly be introduced into Australia by Ahpra and the federal Department of Health, creating a dangerous system where the benchmark in skills and capabilities required to perform cosmetic surgery will be lower than that required for other forms of surgery.

This has alarmed the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), as well as surgical specialty societies, including the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons, the Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Society, General Surgeons Australia, Breast Surgeons of Australia and New Zealand, and the Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand.

The organisations said that while reform to the sector's regulation is much needed, the rushed and ambiguous nature of the endorsement model and consultation process has resulted in an unsatisfactory policy framework that will almost certainly lead to undesirable and negative outcomes for patients and the health system.

Cosmetic surgery is like all other forms of surgery. It is significant surgery, and it carries risk. These risks can be minimised when the surgeon is properly trained to the existing national benchmark that mandates a comprehensive knowledge of anatomy, surgical skill, and additional competencies such as a strong moral and ethical framework that puts patient interests first. Like all other forms of surgery, these skills take a minimum of five years to learn and are not taught as part of a basic medical degree. Cosmetic surgery should be held to the same standard as any invasive surgery to keep patients safe. The only safe standard for cosmetic surgery is a FRACS, with training and required continued learning to be overseen by RACS.

The organisations welcomed the recent decision by the Honourable Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care and state and territory health ministers to restrict who can use the title of 'surgeon' and agreed that further changes to the sector are necessary.

The organisations also collectively agreed that if the issues of standards, training and training standards are not addressed, we could be in a position of 'one step forward, two steps back'. As a result of which, safety and welfare of patients could continue to be at risk.

Any endorsement model for cosmetic surgery must uphold the highest standards of training and practice to protect patient safety. RACS and the specialty groups called on the federal and state and territory ministers to ensure that due consideration is given to the concerns raised to avoid potential adverse consequences for patients.

Ends.

Media enquiries: Abderazzaq Noor (0429 028 9330); Lucy Clark (0420 872 102) or Sandra Renowden (0403 823 218).

**Notes to editor**

*Surgeons from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) are highly trained and undergo five or six years of surgical training that is certified by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) or Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ). This training is in addition to their medical degree and prevocational training in a hospital.*

*By the time they have finished their surgical training, our surgeons will have completed more than a minimum of 12 years of rigorous training and acquire the post-nominal of FRACS – Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.*

*FRACS surgeons are also trained to provide the physiological, ethical, psychological, pharmacological, surgical and medical expertise to safely diagnose, treat and manage surgical patients. Their training and practice put patient safety at the forefront during consultations, surgery and post-operative care.*

RACS: <https://www.surgeons.org/>

ASPS: <https://plasticsurgery.org.au/>

ASAPS: <https://aestheticplasticsurgeons.org.au/>

ASOHNS: <https://asohns.org.au/>

GSA: <https://www.generalsurgeons.com.au/>

BreastSurgANZ: <https://www.breastsurganz.org/>

USANZ: <https://www.usanz.org.au/>

