



Legacy and leadership at Convocation

There was a standing ovation for Professor Mark Edwards, Emeritus Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon at Royal Perth Hospital and Chair of the Medical Board of Australia, following his delivery of the George Adlington Syme Oration at Convocation.

His address, *The legacy you leave – a reflection for young surgeons from a cardiothoracic surgeon*, explored what it means to build a surgical legacy, challenging the notion that it is defined by perfection. Instead, Professor Edwards spoke to the importance of fearlessness, integrity, and honesty, and the willingness to ask for help or admit when you are wrong.

“Legacy is not built on victories,” he said. “It’s how you carry your failures.”

The Convocation also formally welcomed 103 new Fellows to the College.

In attendance were presidents from surgical colleges across the region and internationally, including Sri Lanka, Ireland, Edinburgh, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the Pacific, as well as presidents of the colleges of ophthalmologists, psychiatrists, and radiologists, and the specialty societies and associations.

In addition to welcoming the College's newest members, the ceremony was an opportunity to honour RACS prestigious medal winners.

Congratulations to:

- Associate Professor Peter Borzi – Sir Alan Newton Surgical Education Medal
- Professor Prem Rashid – Sir Alan Newton Surgical Education Medal
- Professor Helen O'Connell – ESR Hughes Award
- Dr Fiona Panizza – ESR Hughes Award
- Professor Richard Lewandowski – RACS Medal
- Dr Kilian Brown – John Mitchell Crouch Fellowship
- Dr Helen Buschel – John Corboy Medal.

Finally, congratulations to Dr Sashi Kumar, Professor Dame Valerie Lund, and Professor David Howard who were admitted to Honorary Fellowship of the College in recognition to their contributions to surgery, surgeons and RACS.

Day one highlights

The global fight against antimicrobial resistance

Paediatric intensivist and global health specialist Professor Annie Sparrow delivered the Rowan Nicks Lecture entitled *Germ wars: the real drivers of antimicrobial resistance and the real solutions to the AMR crisis*, bringing a global health lens to one of the most urgent threats facing modern medicine. Drawing on extensive field experience across conflict zones and outbreak settings, she reframed antimicrobial resistance as a consequence not only of clinical practice, but of disrupted health systems, conflict, and the wider “weaponisation of healthcare.”

Her address traced the real-world drivers of resistance and highlighted practical, system-level responses needed to confront the growing AMR crisis. RACS President Professor Owen Ung presented her with the Rowan Nicks Medal in recognition of her outstanding leadership in global health.

AI, robotics and the evolving role of surgeons

Borrowing from Star Wars, surgery is entering “hyperspace” as AI rapidly evolves from passive chatbots to agentic systems capable of executing tasks end-to-end, marking what many see as the most significant technological shifts in generations.

For surgery, the greatest opportunity lies in the convergence of AI and robotics, said Dr Bayan Minasian, an unaccredited Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Registrar at NSW Health, combining AI-driven perception and decision-making with the precision and execution of robotics.

Surgeons will remain central, with their role expanding to include oversight, data literacy, and shaping how these technologies are safely and effectively integrated.

Fast facts

- Two hundred and seventy-three new Fellows have been admitted into the College since last year's Convocation.
 - With 2780 operations performed by visiting teams between 2004 and 2025 versus 3328 operations conducted by locally trained surgical teams since 2022, Dr James Savundra highlighted the impact of building local surgical competency in his presentation on *Rafiki: establishing the East African Plastic Surgery Fellowship*.
 - About 30% of all hospital admissions worldwide require surgery and yet there are no surgeons at the senior leadership level at the WHO, said Professor Annie Sparrow during her keynote lecture *Missing in action at the World Health Organization*.
 - Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand face higher rates of stroke, cardiovascular disease and peripheral vascular disease than non-Māori, non-Pacific populations. Dr Ashton Arthur highlighted this stark inequity as evidence of persistent system-level barriers in vascular care across Oceania.
 - The RACS booth in the Exhibition Hall is ready to go big with 1000 gift bags and 1600 pairs of colourful "crazy socks" lined up and waiting for delegates to take home.
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Quote of the day

"Fellowship is more than a qualification, it's a public statement of trust."

- Professor Owen Ung, RACS President, congratulating new Fellows at Convocation.

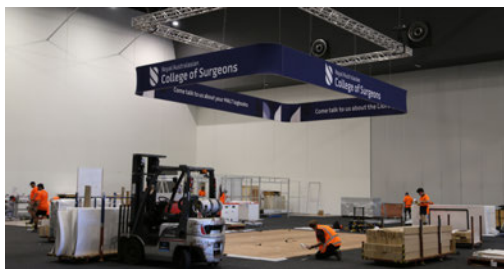
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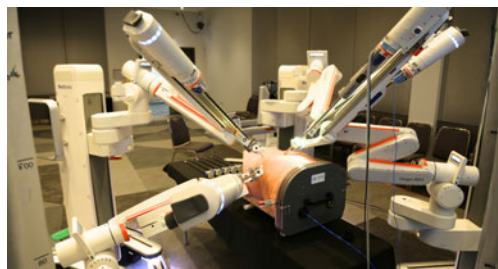
RACS President Professor Owen Ung (far left) with (L-R) Simon Siu International Travel Grant recipient Dr Jugang Wu, Dr Rhea Liang and Dr Simon Siu.



Preparing the gowns ahead of Convocation, where 106 new Fellows are formally welcomed into the College.



The RACS booth comes together in the Exhibition Hall.



A sneak peek at what's to come from Medtronic over the next few days.



New Fellows arrive with friends and family ahead of Convocation.



Family sharing the excitement of Convocation.

Upcoming highlights

These are our top picks for the next 24 hours at the ASC.

Friday 1 May

12:30-1:30pm - RACSTA lunch session - How to talk to patients about sex and what you need to know (M2)

1:30-2pm - Archibald Watson Memorial Lecture - Professor Spencer Beasley (M7)

2-3:30pm - The Mark Killingback research paper presentations (M6)

4-4:30pm - Launch of the Emergency Laparotomy Clinical Care Standard (Riverside Theatre)

5:30-7pm - Women in Surgery networking function (Bellevue Lounge)

[Section dinners](#)

Saturday 2 May

8:30-10am - Plenary session: AI Future - I'm a surgeon, will I still have a job in 10 years? (Riverside Theatre)

10:30am-12:30pm - Kids in the adult pool: when trauma systems forget the shallow end (M3)

[Congress dinner](#)

Wish to add a function to your registration? Please visit the team at the registration desk.

Missed a session? Don't forget your registration gives you access to on-demand presentation content for 12 months post-Congress.

[View the full program](#)

Lights, Camera, RACS

On the Friday and Saturday of ASC, we're interviewing Fellows, Trainees and Jdocs at the RACS booth. Share your views on the College, our centenary, and your FRACS post-nominals in a 20-minute filmed interview. [Book your spot now.](#)



ASC on Socials

Stay updated on all things RACS ASC by following us on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn.

When posting about the Congress, tag us with #RACS26. Share your excitement and be part of the convention



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