



## Why collaboration is essential to surgical excellence

The ASC opened on Friday morning with a plenary that set the tone for this year's theme: *The art and science of collaboration*. Conveners Associate Professors Mary Theophilus and Rob Love acknowledged that collaboration has not always been widely embraced, but said resistance to shared practice is increasingly out of step with modern care.

"The idea that excellence sits within silos no longer holds sway," said Associate Professor Theophilus.

Plenary speakers Dr Rowan Gillies and Professor Annie Sparrow turned to *The politics of professionalism*, exploring the role of surgeons in a complex global landscape.

When the challenges facing conflict zones can feel intractable, what difference does speaking up make? Professor Sparrow conceded it may not always achieve much — but not talking about it is guaranteed not to help.

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## Day two highlights

### Laparotomy launch

Friday afternoon marked the official launch of a new national standard on emergency laparotomy care. Launched by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, it builds on and aligns with the work of RACS' Australian and New Zealand Emergency Laparotomy Audit – Quality Improvement (ANZELA-QI).

Despite emergency laparotomy being one of the highest-risk surgical procedures, urgent abdominal conditions have not been consistently embedded in practice to date. The Emergency Laparotomy Clinical Care Standard provides that consistency, with an evidence-based clinical pathway for care.

### The future of FRACS: evolving, not diminishing

Dr Damien Fry from Toowoomba Hospital helped make the case for the affirmative in this afternoon's debate *Will my FRACS mean as much in 20 years as it did 20 years ago?* Dressed as the Purple Wiggle, his argument was that 20 years on - just like the long-running children's music act - FRACS "won't be the same but it'll still be important." Happily, the crowd agreed and the affirmative took the win.

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## Fast facts

- Once controversial, exenteration has made cure possible for up to 40 to 60 per cent of patients with recurrent rectal cancer.
  - Middle-aged men account for the majority of trauma cases—73% in Australia and 70% in Aotearoa New Zealand—with a median age of 53 and 49 respectively.
  - Robot-assisted surgery is on the rise, with more than 3.2 million procedures performed using Intuitive systems in 2025.
  - Emergency laparotomy has the highest mortality for any surgical procedure. There are 15,000 performed in Australia each year, with a mortality rate of 6-8 per cent.
  - There is no word for "goodbye" in Noongar, the local language of the owners of the land on which we are gathering for this Congress. Farewells are expressed more as "see you later", reflecting ongoing connection.
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## Quote of the day

*"I am a fully trained general surgeon, but I was not fully prepared for major trauma."*

- Dr Yuni Ongso, recently graduated Fellow, speaking on trauma training in the modern world.

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## In pictures



Friday started on a Zen note with a yoga session for Trainees at The Bell Tower.



Surgery built different...and a little smaller than usual in the Exhibition Hall.



Here are some docs with some crazy socks.



Test driving the latest in Medtronic surgical robots.



The art of collaboration in action.



Continuing the purple theme: Dr Fry, a.k.a. the Purple Wiggle, making the case for the value of FRACS.

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## Upcoming highlights

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

### Saturday 2 May

- 1:30-2pm - The ANZJS Lecture: Professor Christobel Saunders (Riverside Theatre)
- 2-3pm - Plenary session: *Collaborating with Patients and Industry* (Riverside Theatre)
- 5:30-6:30pm - RACS AGM (Riverside Theatre)
- 7-10:30pm - [Congress dinner](#)

### Sunday 3 May

- 7-8:20am - Women in Surgery breakfast and annual business meeting (River View Room 4)

8:30-9am – The President’s Lecture: Professor Brendan Murphy AC (Riverside Theatre)  
9-10am – Closing plenary session: *approaching 100 years, what is RACS' future* (Riverside Theatre)  
10:30-12:30pm – *Innovation in Ear Surgery and Indigenous Health* (Bellevue Ballroom 2)

**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

We're continuing to interview Fellows, Trainees and Jdocs at the RACS booth today (Saturday 2 May). Share your views on the College, our centenary, and your FRACS post-nominals in a 20-minute filmed interview. [Book your spot now](#) or come and speak to us at the booth.



*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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