

## **RACS rises to EAG challenge: Now is the time for action.**

RACS has risen to the challenge set by an independent expert group and re-committed to building a culture of respect in surgery, shifting from raising awareness to supporting action.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) re-convened an Expert Advisory Group (EAG 2022) to review the progress made by the College community since 2015 to build respect and improve patient safety in surgery, and to recommend future actions.

The College Council has endorsed the recommendations of EAG 2022 and published a new five year plan for cultural change by investing in leadership, training and education, fostering diversity and strengthening a feedback culture in surgery.

“Now is the time for action. Six years has built awareness and understanding of the need to operate with respect. We are now looking for actions that encourage professional behaviour that keeps teams performing at their best and patients safe,” the EAG 2022 report states.

EAG was ‘struck by the seriousness of the College’s ongoing commitment’ and found it had ‘prioritised identifying and addressing a serious problem’ by rolling out an ambitious program of work.

EAG 2022 notes that a lot has changed inside and outside the College in the six years since RACS launched its *2015 Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety*.

‘Community dialogue and expectations about acceptable behaviour and culture have profoundly altered RACS operating environment and re-shaped the wider community,’ the report states.

“The College must now keep pace with community standards and expectations and keep striving to effect real change. Ongoing, concerted effort and a renewed commitment is needed to convert awareness to action and enable the profession to change and meet the expectations of the community it serves,” the EAG 2022 report states.

The report notes that ‘entrenched problems in healthcare will only be solved by cross sectoral commitment and collaboration’.

“Given the limits of RACS influence over workplace settings, our recommendations rely on collaboration, leadership and shared responsibilities,” EAG 2022 notes.

RACS President, Dr Sally Langley, said the College was energised and heartened by the EAG 2022 report.

“Cultural change takes time. We’re in this for the long haul because it’s best for our patients and will strengthen the whole surgical community,” Dr Langley said.

She said the RACS Building Respect Action Plan 2022 would require leadership, collaboration and a shared purpose with other health sector agencies.

“Agencies across the health sector in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand have embraced the need for cultural change. At different paces, we are recognising that this means disrupting the status quo and being open to new ideas and practices,” Dr Langley said.

“RACS’ focus is shifting from raising awareness, to supporting action. We will work with the College community as we build our skills and learn to lead compassionately and collaboratively,” she said.

RACS Building Respect Action Plan 2022 expands the College's focus to date on addressing bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment, towards fostering professionalism and civility in surgery.

The plan sets out a program of work that aims to strengthen leadership and professionalism, increase cultural safety and diversity, address racism, support speaking up and providing feedback, and leverage collaborations and partnerships.

You can read more about the EAG 2022 Report and the RACS Building Respect Action Plan: From Awareness to Action on [RACS website](#).