

# TAMMY FRANKS.

## Member of Legislative Council

Dr David King  
Chair  
RACS SA State Committee  
Via email: [college.sa@surgeons.org](mailto:college.sa@surgeons.org)

Dear Dr King

### RE: RACS SA Election Statement

Thank you so much for sharing with the Greens SA your election statement, and for offering us the opportunity to respond. We really appreciate the time and effort that has gone into putting this document together, and into your ongoing advocacy.

We note that while the Greens SA will not hold Government following the 2022 State Election, we will likely hold balance of power in the Legislative Council – particularly if we elect our 2<sup>nd</sup> Leg Co candidate, Yesha Joshi. As such, this would put us in a strong position to negotiate with whoever is in Government for better outcomes in South Australia in line with the commitments we are making to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (SA), and to push necessary and important reforms.

Our responses to your questions are outlined before, but we do note that in some cases – due to being a minor party and not having the same information and resources as other parties – we might not be able to provide as much detail as we (or you) might like. In those situations, however, we do still try to make our commitments as clear as we can.

### Emergency Surgery and Ramping

#### **What is your party's strategy for ensuring adequate resourcing (and utilisation of resources) to meet demand and pressures on emergency surgery?**

The Greens believe that a key way of easing the pressures on emergency services is to prevent, where possible, people needing them. There is no single silver bullet for ending ramping and easing pressures on emergency surgery in South Australia, but there are things we can do such as funding Urgent Care Centres so that low acuity patients can go there instead of an emergency department; investing in community and preventative health, as well as health promotion; properly funding our hospitals; and ensuring we have enough health practitioners on hand to provide the quality and level of care needed. We know that there need to be more beds in South Australian hospitals, and support this as a priority, but we know that we need a strategy and approach that goes beyond beds. We know that our State can fund this: we have a plan that would require [big banks](#), [developers](#), and [mining companies](#) to pay their fair share of tax so that we can properly fund essential services, such as our hospitals and emergency surgery.

We know that we need to hire more health professionals across our health system. But we also need to ensure that we work on retaining the workers we have, and potentially bringing back those who have left the service over the past few years as well. Years of successive cuts, of stressful workplaces and poor management have seen many leave the health workforce. We want to work together with workers, unions, and SA Health to bring qualified health professionals back into the workforce by offering better

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conditions, hours, culture and pay. It is no less than what all health workers in our State deserve. The Greens want to work on retention strategies and to address the very real concerns that have been raised by health practitioners over the past two years. We need to work together to fix the pressing issues in our health system to ensure that we can provide care for those who need it in our State, and simultaneously ensure those in our health system have a healthy workforce as well. We also want to do what should have been done over these past two years, and that is to invest in the training and retention of more health professionals. Not everyone in the health workforce now is going to be there in a years' time, even if we work together to improve our health system and workforce - and given the past few years, even before the pandemic, that's understandable. But as we work to do better, we also need to work to ensure that we are supporting the future of this workforce, and that we have enough trained professionals to provide adequate and appropriate levels of care for South Australians.

A key part of the Greens' approach to Health policy is that we firmly believe that South Australia's approach to public health should be guided by the World Health Organisation definition of health as the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity - and therefore we should seek a holistic approach to health that includes an emphasis on disease prevention, health promotion and social and environmental determinants of health.

A holistic approach means that we actually value and invest in, for example, preventative health programs and measures. Prevention is better than cure – not to mention cheaper - and we must find ways to keep people healthier throughout their lives rather than just treating illnesses once people get sick. It is Greens policy to promote a model of health care delivery that is based on sustainable Primary Health Care centres (as opposed to GP super clinics) that have a more affordable and accessible staff and skill mix that includes doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and health promotion officers. By picking up and addressing health problems early on, or preventing them, we are keeping people out of emergency departments and reducing the load on hospitals.

It is a great shame for our state that a range excellent preventative health programs such as OPAL were cut under the previous Government's McCann review reforms. The Greens want them to come back – funded and resourced properly. Indeed, health promotion services should firmly be the responsibility of Government for the benefit of the health of all South Australians. We need to be taking an active role in ensuring that there is a coordinated, state-wide approach to health promotion services, and the Greens are deeply committed to such a vision. You can read our [full plan for ensuring we have healthy communities here](#), which includes a concrete vision for improving mental health services as well which we believe is vital to addressing ramping in our State.

The Greens are strongly committed to ensuring the South Australian community has access to quality, affordable health care – and we are particularly passionate about preventative and primary health care. You can read our [State health policy here](#), and our [national health policy principles here](#).

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**Will your party commit to ongoing monitoring and measurement of emergency surgery demand levels, and use this information to create emergency surgery performance targets?**

Yes, absolutely. The Greens are committed to evidence-based policy making and we endeavor to ensure that the best information is available for making these decisions.

### Clinician Engagement

**What is your engagement strategy to foster a culture of mutual respect and ensure that decision making is clinician-led?**

We are committed to working with clinicians, SA Health, and peak representative bodies to ensure that timely information across the surgery and health sector is being provided to decision-makers and their relevant networks. We would certainly support the continuation of consultation with both the Government and Opposition throughout the next electoral cycle, and would suggest the inclusion of members of the cross bench as well in those discussions due to the decision-making role smaller parties and independents also play.

**Will your party commit to regular meetings with RACS over the next four years?**

Yes. While we know that we won't be in Government, we will play a significant role on the crossbench – and could potentially hold the balance of power in our own right in the Legislative Council. We are more than happy – and indeed would appreciate the opportunity – to regularly meet with the RACS.

### Infrastructure and Surgical Technology

**Does your party support the development of a new Women's and Children's Hospital? If so, what is your strategy to ensure that the new hospital service meets the demand pressures of the SA health system?**

Yes, the Greens are committed to ensuring we have a Women's and Children's Hospital that is modern, future-ready and fit for purpose. We would want to work with clinicians and consumer advocates, as well as SA Health, to ensure that we have a new Hospital that is properly equipped and designed for our State's needs, both now and into the future.

**What will your party do to ensure that public patients have access to the highest quality surgical technology?**

The Greens are committed to working with clinicians and with SA Health to ensure that our health system has the highest quality surgical technology to ensure the best care we can for South Australians.

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**Does your party remain committed to the development of a hybrid operating theatre at the RAH, and if so, are you able to provide a timeline for when the facility will be available?**

The Greens support the development of a hybrid operating theatre at the RAH, though unfortunately since we are not in Government we are not in a position to provide a timeline for when the facility would be available. We can, however, commit to keeping the pressure on whichever party forms Government to carry out this development in a timely manner.

### Ongoing COVID-19 Response

**How will your party manage the issues around elective and outpatient waiting lists?**

The Greens would work together with both public and private providers to find a way to get through elective and outpatient waiting lists as efficiently and swiftly as possible. We recognise that people on elective surgery waiting lists have been waiting a long time for their respective surgeries and we don't want to see further delays where they are avoidable.

**What are your party's long-term Covid-19 management strategy?**

If the Government is expecting South Australians to 'live with Covid', then they have to provide the supports and measures we need to do so. This means at-home testing for those who can't travel. It means easy access to free RATs. It's making sure we have the resources to manage the long-term effects of Covid on our community, and more. Some people aren't able to go to their regular GP while they have Covid, and telehealth appointments aren't always available - and we know that if you hurt yourself, or have other health issues they don't go away just because you have Covid. People still need to be able to access health care, and as we continue to see large numbers of cases in SA we need to ensure there is ongoing and dedicated support for those dealing with the long-term impacts of Covid. We want to see dedicated Covid clinics, free and ready access to RATs, more support for people with COVID-19, access to air filters for classrooms and community centres that aren't properly ventilated, and presumptive COVID-19 cover under the Return to Work Act for frontline workers. Our full plan for responding to the pandemic is [available online here](#).

**How will your party ensure that the health system is adequately resourced in the event of future outbreaks?**

As outlined previously in our response, the Greens are committed to ensuring that our health services are properly funded and resourced. We are also committed to working with health practitioners to ensure we have suitable future planning – especially workforce planning – ongoing, to ensure that we are prepared for future outbreaks and pandemics.

**What is your party's telehealth strategy?**

The Greens support the ongoing provision and availability of telehealth services.

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**How will your party ensure that South Australia has adequate supplies of PPE and that these are made available and used appropriately by those working in close contact with Covid-19 patients?**

The Greens would seek to work with local manufacturers and suppliers to ensure that our hospitals have adequate and ready supplies of PPE, that it is distributed appropriately, and we would work with clinicians, SA Health and those in close contact with COVID-19 patients to ensure that PPE is being used and worn properly.

### South Australian Audit of Surgical Mortality

**The mortality audit program is part of an effective quality assurance activity aimed at the ongoing improvement of surgical care. RACS seeks a commitment from your party that support, and funding will continue.**

The Greens are committed to the ongoing support and funding of the mortality audit program. We recognise that this is vital to ensuring the ongoing quality of – and indeed, for improvements in – surgical care.

### Use of the title ‘Surgeon’

**Does your party support legislative change to protect the title of ‘surgeon’ and if so, will you commit to working with other Australian Governments to ensure that this is successful?**

Yes, absolutely. The Greens have previously worked and stood with other professional bodies to safeguard their professional titles – with the [registration of social workers being an example in SA](#). The difficulty, of course, is that advocacy and registration on a federal level can be a very long and difficult process – though sometimes reform is possible on a local (State) level, as we have seen with social workers.

I hope that you find these responses to your election statement comprehensive and useful. If you have any further questions regarding the Greens’ response, or would like any clarifications, please do not hesitate to contact my office on 8237 9296 or at [franks.office@parliament.sa.gov.au](mailto:franks.office@parliament.sa.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,



**Tammy Franks MLC**

**Greens SA Parliamentary Leader and Health Spokesperson**