



# Chris Picton MP

Shadow Minister for Health and Wellbeing  
Member for Kaurua

Mr David King  
Chair, SA State Committee  
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

13 March 2022

Dear ~~Mr King~~,  
*David*

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' *2022 SA State Election: Election Issues* document.

I have very much appreciated the valuable ongoing dialogue enjoyed with the College over the past several years. I hope this will be able to continue in the future.

Please find our response to the College's identified key focus areas below:

## **Emergency surgery and ramping**

Labor has a comprehensive plan to address the ramping crisis including hiring 100 more doctors, 300 more nurses, 350 more ambos, and opening 300 more hospital beds.

We recognise the profound impact of delayed emergency surgery on bed block and ramping, and commit to working with the College to ensure both adequate and efficient resourcing to reduce these delays.

We know that accurate data and meaningful targets are critical to informed policy-making and better outcomes for patients.

If elected I will ask the Department to investigate establishing ongoing targets, measuring and monitoring of emergency surgery demand levels and timeliness.

## **Clinician engagement**

We know that hospitals function best when management regularly communicates and collaborates with clinicians on the ground, ensuring that clinicians are shaping decision-making regarding clinical outcomes.

Labor will expect Boards and Chief Executive Officers of Local Health Networks to foster a culture of cooperation between management and senior clinicians in the planning and execution of the delivery of health services.

We commit to ongoing frequent and constructive communication via regular meetings with the College over the next term of government, just as we've done over the last four years. It has been a very helpful process I have welcomed.

Labor commits to frequent communication with bodies representing clinicians, including the College, via a dedicated regular meeting with the Minister and highest government officials – and we commit to partnering with doctors and their representative bodies on long-term workforce planning.

### **Infrastructure and surgical technology**

Labor supports a new collocated Women's and Children's Hospital. We have committed to invest \$100 million to expand the planned new hospital by 50 more beds to help meet demand pressures.

This follows our commitment to hire an additional 48 doctors and 12 specialist nurses at the current Women's and Children's Hospital, to meet current demand.

If elected, we would welcome the College's advice regarding the implementation of an updated surgical service delivery model, accommodating new technologies that will lead to improved patient outcomes.

We further welcome the investment in a hybrid operating theatre at Flinders Medical Centre, and look forward to exploring opportunities to establish a similar theatre at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

We appreciate the College's cogent advocacy for such a theatre to be based on-site, and advice regarding the theatre's potential placement.

### **Ongoing COVID-19 response**

Labor shares the College's alarm regarding the record-high levels of overdue elective surgery we've seen over the past several months, and have widely condemned the Liberals' decision to not prepare sufficiently before opening the borders.

Our health system is currently not equipped to manage a major COVID-19 wave without effectively ceasing major components of our hospitals' normal functioning.

One of the urgent tasks of an incoming government will be to review plans for future waves of COVID-19, and ensure that there is sufficient planning to avoid the repeat of past issues. Likewise we will need to review plans to address the 'catch up' in elective surgery which has now reached concerning record levels of overdue patients, that similarly would likely be reflected for outpatient appointments and screening as well.

While we cannot remake the current government's past decisions, we can assure the College we will abide by the expert advice with regard to COVID-19 response measures and take proactive action to ensure that our health system is prepared in the future.

## **South Australian Audit of Surgical Mortality**

Labor understands the clear merits of SAASM in improving patient care, and we are in support of the audit's continuation.

### **Use of the title 'surgeon'**

Labor is firmly supportive of measures that reduce the risk of insufficiently-trained people performing poor-quality procedures on patients. We understand the College's concerns that education alone cannot prevent highly effective online marketing authored by such actors from reaching a broad South Australian audience.

We commit to exploring with the College options for legislative change to protect the title of 'surgeon', within the broader context of a national consideration on this matter.

Surgeon should be a title used by someone who has the requisite skills, education, professionalism and adherence to standards befitting such an important title.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a response, and thank you for your advocacy and advice over these past four years. We very much look forward to continuing this fruitful relationship after the election.

Yours sincerely,



**Chris Picton MP**

Shadow Minister for Health and Wellbeing