
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE



A surgeon's perspective on the weakening of gun control laws

Tuesday 30 October, 2018

Dr Stephen Wilkinson, a Visiting Medical Officer general surgeon at the Royal Hobart Hospital will be arguing against any weakening of the current gun control legislation in Tasmania and encouraging others to think about ways it can be strengthened, at this year's RACS Combined Tasmanian Annual Scientific Meeting & Trauma Symposium being held on 9 -10 November in Hobart.

Dr Wilkinson, FRACS was Divisional Director of Surgery at the time of the Port Arthur tragedy and was involved in rewriting the Disaster Protocol for the Royal Hobart Hospital a few weeks before the massacre. He oversaw the implementation of its surgical component on the day of the tragedy, and became the Hospital's surgical spokesperson in the following week when the international press descended on Hobart.

Dr Wilkinson is a Course Director for the RACS Early Management of Severe Trauma (EMST) program, and was coincidentally teaching an EMST course in Hobart on the day that the Port Arthur massacre occurred.

Stephen also teaches the Process Communication Model (PCM) Courses for RACS, and holds a Doctorate in Medicine, as well as Masters degrees in Law, Medicine and Astronomy.

He has been a strong advocate against the weakening of gun control legislation which was introduced after the tragedy in 1996.

"The gun control legislation and gun buy back negotiated by then Prime Minister John Howard received multi-partisan support. In the eighteen years prior to the introduction of these laws, there were 13 fatal mass shootings in Australia. Since Port Arthur, there has only been one mass shooting event. The statistics speak for themselves, but on that basis, the laws should be maintained, and if anything, strengthened," he said.

RACS recognizes the seriousness and frequency of trauma associated with firearms in Australia and New Zealand and recommends that strict gun control including the compulsory national register of all firearms, the banning and prohibition of importation by individuals of semi-automatic and pump-action rifles and shotguns and compulsory training, education and licensing measures in Australia that have been in place since 1996, should continue.

Dr Wilkinson will be joined by local and national trauma specialists and medical professionals who will provide presentations on paediatric trauma, chest and abdominal models of care and advances in resuscitation along with a host of other topics aimed to stimulate and inspire delegates to think more broadly about trauma management.

The meeting, to be held at the University of Tasmania in Hobart on 9-10 November themed *Regional Trauma in Australasia: What is possible and how far can we reach?* will attract medical professionals, traumatologists and emergency services personnel, all eager to weigh in on the discussion of effective trauma and emergency management processes.

This event is hosted by the Tasmanian branch of RACS, and is supported by Bongiorno Group and the Tasmanian government.

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RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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