

Western Australian mortality audit released

8 October 2019

The number of deaths from a surgical admission in Western Australia has reduced considerably over the past two decades, according to the Western Australian Audit of Surgical Mortality (WAASM) report released today by RACS.

The report provides detailed data across the seventeen years since the audit's inception. The data shows that the number of deaths per 100,000 population dropped from 34.7 per 100,000 in 2002, to 21.2 per 100,000 in 2018. This is a relative decrease of 38.9 per cent in the rate of deaths per 100,000 population over the past seventeen years.

Audit Clinical Director, Mr James Aitken said the reduction highlighted the value of the audit. "The audit is an educational process that provides an independent appraisal of the care provided and informs and educates surgeons, hospitals and the WA Department of Health which leads to continuous improvement. For example, this report documents the increased adverse impact of obesity as a risk factor. Decreasing obesity is a major focus identified by the Government of Western Australia's Sustainable Health Review.

"This year's report is slightly different to previous reports in that it has compared data from every year since the audit commenced. I think the results speak for themselves and demonstrate that we are achieving exactly what we set out to do," remarked Mr Aitken.

The WAASM was the first audit of its kind in Australia when it was initially piloted in 2001 under the management of the University of Western Australia. In 2005, management of the WAASM transferred to the RACS, with funding provided by the state government.

Audits now take place in every Australian state and territory and have continued to evolve and improve over time.

"Western Australia was the first state to introduce a mortality audit and with the national audit, Australia now has a unique process in which it has been a global leader for a number of years. It is an excellent example of how a relatively modest investment can lead to considerably improved outcomes. It is to the great credit of the audit staff, the surgeons, RACS and the ongoing support of successive governments that we have been able to achieve what we have," stated Mr Aitken.

The [2019 WAASM Report](#) is available on the RACS website.

Managed by the RACS and funded by the Western Australian Department of Health, the WAASM involves the clinical review of all cases where patients have died whilst under the care of a surgeon, and is aimed at the ongoing improvement of surgical care. External peer reviews are conducted by surgeons who practice in the same specialty but are from a different hospital.

**Media inquiries: Mark Morgan, Policy and Communications Officer
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About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

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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