

## Media Release

### New Chair for RACS New Zealand National Board

1 July 2020

Miss Philippa Mercer, a general surgeon based in Christchurch is, from today (1 July), the new Chair of the New Zealand National Board of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

The RACS New Zealand National Board represents New Zealand members, advocating on their behalf for quality surgical standards in the delivery of health care and training. The Board also contributes a New Zealand perspective to College matters.

Philippa is looking forward to working with her National Board colleagues, RACS staff and a range of health agencies and organisations to meet some significant challenges facing surgery in Aotearoa New Zealand. “The inequitable health outcomes for Māori are totally unacceptable. RACS is committed to health equity and I will fully support the mahi that’s under way to make our surgical profession in Aotearoa / New Zealand more culturally competent and safe.

“Through Te Rautaki Māori, our recently adopted Māori health strategy, I’m confident that we can make real progress in terms of attracting more Māori into surgical careers and, equally importantly, building a culturally safe surgical workforce so all patients receive the care they deserve.”

Philippa is particularly interested in promoting more mentoring among the surgical profession. “Surgical Trainees and newly qualified surgeons can gain so much from their experienced colleagues and it’s very satisfying for those who are mentoring to be able to give back some of the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their career.”

Philippa says one of the greatest pieces of advice she could give a newly qualified surgeon would be to continue on the acute (operating) roster where possible. “I have been involved in acute surgery all my career, up until the last two years. For medical students, working with the acute surgical team is a great introduction to the life of general surgery. You literally never know what will come through the door. You could be caring for patients with abscesses, abdominal pain, those in need of trauma laparatomies or suffering from complex bowel obstructions. Every hospital needs general surgeons; I wouldn’t have changed my surgical specialty for anything.”

Philippa is a surgeon at Christchurch Public Hospital and has two private practices in the city - a breast surgery practice and a general surgery and endocrine practice.

Her term as Chair of RACS New Zealand National Board is for one year, with the ability to be re-elected for another year.

#### **About RACS**

RACS is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates across New Zealand and Australia. It also supports healthcare and surgical education and the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. RACS trains in cardiothoracic surgery, general surgery, neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery, otolaryngology head and neck surgery, paediatric surgery, plastic and reconstructive surgery, urology and vascular surgery.

---

**Media enquiries:** Philippa Lagan, NZ Policy and Communications Officer    **Contact:** +64 272 279 7488

#### **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. [www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)*