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ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Surgeons welcome assurances from both sides of Territory politics**

**Wednesday 22 August, 2012**

Surgeons have secured assurances relating to important issues of public health from both major political parties in the lead-up to Saturday's Territory election.

The Northern Territory Regional Committee of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons wrote to both the Labor Government and Country Liberal Opposition asking questions relating to three key issues: the cause and effects of alcohol abuse; road safety; and the shortage of surgeons at Alice Springs Hospital.

The College's Regional Chair, Mr Patrick Bade said the response from Chief Minister Paul Henderson reflected his collaborative and consultative approach, and noted that the Health Minister had met with surgeons in the past to discuss problems and implement solutions.

"We respect the fact that the Government's response to our concerns about road safety was detailed and action oriented. We also endorse their support for a volumetric tax on alcohol. Territorians have the highest rate of alcohol consumption in the nation, with the highest rates of harm, and it is time for whoever wins government on Saturday to accept this fact and do something about it," Mr Bade said.

"The College also notes that the Government has consulted closely with the College to try and address the shortage of surgeons at Alice Springs Hospital. A team from the College undertook a site visit to the hospital and recently prepared a report suggesting ways to ensure the attraction and retention of General Surgeons. To its credit the Government has endorsed the recommendations of the report and these are being implemented by Alice Springs Hospital management."

Mr Bade said the reply from the Opposition Leader, Mr Mills, was considerably less detailed than Mr Henderson's but that he was pleased that Mr Mills had explicitly stated that, if elected, the Country Liberal Party would continue working with the College to recruit and retain more surgeons in Alice Springs.

Mr Bade said the CLP's proposal to utilise fly in fly out surgical teams to address shortages in surgical care had not been discussed with the local surgical community and was not what the College would advocate as a primary response. "This is more of an ad hoc response to the effects of a problem rather than an attempt to address its causes," he said.

"Similarly, the CLP lacks a policy to address the incidence of excessive alcohol consumption, and is focussed only on cleaning up the mess once the alcohol abuse has occurred. With regard to road safety the College notes and regrets that the Opposition did not explicitly endorse the recommendations of the Road Safety Taskforce," he said.

Mr Bade thanked both parties for responding to the College's questions.

Northern Territory Fellows of the College, or indeed all interested Territorians, can read the responses of the parties on the Northern Territory page of the College's website (<http://www.surgeons.org/about/regions/northern-territory/>).

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