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# ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

## MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Patient care at risk for defence force personnel – surgeons**

**Monday 29 October, 2012**

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has expressed concerns over a federal government decision to allow a private health insurance company to become involved in the actual delivery of patient care, particularly in circumstances where individual patient choice is eliminated.

College President, Associate Professor Michael Hollands said the College strongly believes that doctors, particularly surgeons, should be free to act in the best interests of their patients. “This is a principle of professionalism that underpins the delivery of medical care in Australia,” he said. “The College believes that the principle of patient choice should be protected and valued whenever and wherever possible.

“It is for these reasons the College is concerned about the recent federal government decision to contract the provision of health care for Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel to a health insurance company – a major departure from traditional models of care in Australia.

“This decision immediately deprives ADF personnel of choice. In addition, their healthcare options will potentially be decided by an insurance company whose interests may not always be in accord with those of the patient.

“The College holds the view that serving men and women in the nation’s defence forces deserve the best available medical care. They also deserve certainty that they will be looked after.

“This is an issue we intend to pursue with the federal government as a matter of urgency,” Associate Professor Hollands said.

“In the meantime, the College urges its Fellows to carefully consider the appropriateness of entering into any contractual arrangement with the exclusive provider.”

**Media inquiries: Michael Barrett, Manager Media & Public Relations  
0429 028 933 or (03) 9249 1263**