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# ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Surgeons condemn tax move as a threat to education and professional development**

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Australian surgeons have condemned as short-sighted a federal government proposal to place a \$2000 cap on the tax deductible costs of self-education, including the continuing professional development which is required to maintain medical registration.

The President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Associate Professor Michael Hollands, said the College strongly opposes the proposed move as it threatened to compromise patient safety.

“Continuing medical education is vital to ensuring Australian surgeons remain at the forefront of surgical techniques and technologies,” he said. “Without Fellows and Trainees being able to claim a reasonable level of tax deductibility, fewer will attend courses and Australia runs the risk of seeing its standards of surgical care diminish commensurately.”

“The proposed cap will predictably limit participation in educational activities for all surgical staff – surgeons, operating room nurses, and other related surgical health professionals. The College fears that this will translate into relative de-skilling of a workforce that is currently and justifiably a source of national pride, which in turn will compromise patient safety.

“Many basic courses exceed the proposed cap. There is no recognition of the cost of travel, some of it to international courses and conferences, nor of the cost of accommodation or meals. Nor is there recognition of the fact that surgeons attending these events are not in their rooms or operating theatres, thus adding lost income to the often hefty cost of course registration.

“Accordingly, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons calls on the government to reconsider the self-education cap. If a cap is required, then consideration should be given to industry specific caps or a sliding scale more closely related to the costs of education in specific professions,” Associate Professor Hollands said.

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