

Media Statement

28 September 2015

EAG delivers final report to RACS

The Expert Advisory Group (EAG) has delivered its final report on discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

The final report includes some minor amendments and points of clarification, informed by feedback on the draft report published on 10 September 2015. A list of changes follows this media release.

The report reflects the findings and feedback from five major pieces of work commissioned by the EAG in 2015, all of which are published on the -RACS website and include quantitative, qualitative and organisational research.

The EAG's focus was on providing strategic advice to the College to support future change.

"The College has shown courage and commitment in establishing the EAG and in accepting in full the findings and recommendations of the draft report," said EAG Chair, the Hon. Rob Knowles AO.

RACS has committed to publishing an Action Plan in November 2015, that will introduce more transparency and independent scrutiny and drive changes in the three core areas identified in the EAG report: Culture and leadership, surgical education and complaints management.

Mr Knowles said the College's apology to those who have suffered discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment was fitting and just.

"We recognise the College's commitment to action that will create the change necessary to address and prevent these problems into the future," Mr Knowles said.

The term of the EAG concluded on 21 September 2015.

"As individuals, we will watch with interest as the College, the Specialty Societies, the Training Boards, as well as Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates, work effectively together and with others in the health sector to achieve lasting change," Mr Knowles said.

RACS President, Professor David Watters OBE, thanked members of the EAG for the commitment, intellect and heart they brought to their task.

"The EAG Report is an important historical milestone for this College - it presents us with a challenge to act, which we will do decisively," Professor Watters said.

"We know we will be judged on our ability to make the profound changes needed to make discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery problems of the past," Professor Watters said.

"Change will take time, but we have made a commitment to it that we will honour," he said.

The EAG set a direct challenge for the College, hospitals, governments and other partners in the health sector to work together to address these shared problems.

RACS will now be working with Specialty Societies and Training Boards, and seeking external partners, to make sure these issues are addressed effectively in the short, medium and longer term.

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List of updates to Draft Report

The following changes were made to the Draft Report, published on 10 September 2015.
Deletions are marked with ~~strike through~~.
Additions are marked **in bold**.

Page number	Amendment
5	There was strong participation in all consultations and surveys and the research results are statistically valid robust and valid.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 71% of hospitals reported discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment by a surgeon in their hospital in the last five years, with bullying the most frequently reported issue
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 39% of Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates report bullying, 18% report discrimination, 19% report workplace harassment and 7% sexual harassment (some also reporting more than one behaviour)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the problems exist across all surgical specialties, in both countries, and all regions and
6	There was significant substantial participation in all forms of research and consultation and the research results are statistically valid robust and valid:
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with employers, Medical Colleges and governments (bi-nationally, State and Commonwealth) to foster partnerships and develop joint approaches to ensure these issues are addressed and standards are upheld Support individual Fellows to change their behaviour and lead behaviour change in others by establishing mentoring and coaching programs at the College, and working with hospitals to support and share knowledge and expertise about these programs in the workplace.
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide coaching and mentoring services for educators who seek additional support
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Increase neutral and independent oversight of IMG assessment, to-ensure through external, independent participation in training and assessment Work with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Trainees Association (RACSTA) to better understand what resources would help RACSTA to effectively support and advocate for trainees Improve gender equity in surgery by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> removing barriers to participation providing flexible training options promoting diversity and having targets of for the number women on Training Boards and in College leadership roles.¹
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblower protection protection for those who make complaints (within the limited powers of the College), and prevention of victimisation
18	<p>This is the EAG's final report to the College. It includes some minor amendments and points of clarification, informed by feedback on the draft report published on 10 September 2015.</p> <p>The EAG welcomes the response from the College to the Draft Report, and is pleased RACS has accepted the report findings and recommendations in full. The EAG believes the apology to everyone who has suffered discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment by surgeons, made on behalf of the College by its President, Professor David Watters OBE, was fitting and just.</p> <p>The EAG recognises and values the strong support and commitment to</p>

¹ Formatting change only

Expert Advisory Group

on discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment
Advising the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons



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dealing with these problems shown by the College Executive and its senior management team. We recognise the College's commitment to action that will create the change necessary to address and prevent these issues. As individuals, we will watch with interest as the College, the Specialty Societies, the Training Boards, as well as Fellows, Trainees and International Medical Graduates, work effectively together and with others in the health sector to achieve lasting change.

~~In the brief time available before the EAG concludes its work, we are open to comment on this Draft Report. We invite advice about errors of fact or suggestions for action that will strengthen our recommendations by email to eag@surgeons.org.au by 18 September 2015.~~

~~The EAG will provide a final report to the College by the end of September 2015, when our work will be done.~~