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College of Surgeons' Gardens  
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## **Re: ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS VICTORIAN ELECTION PRIORITIES**

### **Victorian Greens responses to survey questions**

#### **Q1: How does your party plan to build the surgical workforce of the future to address Victoria's growing population and health needs?**

We are aware that population growth and ageing are already increasing demand for surgical services in Victoria. This – combined with heavy surgical workloads, safety considerations and the need to support a healthy work-life balance – means that we need to be graduating more surgeons than we currently are. The Greens will work with RACS and other stakeholders to understand these needs in detail, and develop and implement a plan to meet these needs, with a focus on building a diverse workforce that is representative of our communities.

#### **Q2: Will you work with hospital and health services to create an environment conducive to flexible training for surgical trainees?**

The Greens believe flexibility is key to developing a workforce that meets the future needs of our state, our health system, and of individual workers. We've long been advocates for a major re-think of how we work and train, with a particular focus on supporting families and women.

We support and would commit to reviewing options for flexible training models (for example part-time training) that enable trainees to balance child-raising, work and other commitments. We would also work with RACS and other health stakeholders to develop mechanisms to embed less than full-time work (LFTW) into workplace culture, with the aim of normalising flexibility and providing a supportive environment.

The Greens are fundamentally committed to ensuring that the diversity of our communities is reflected in the workforce of every industry and sector. Specifically in relation to health, we believe

that workforce diversity promotes the cultural competence of our health system and leads to better patient outcomes.

**Q3: What is your party's plan to support the medical research sector in Victoria over the next ten years?**

The Greens Respect Research plan will ensure researchers have the skills, technology and opportunities to unlock the secrets for better lives for Victorians. Our plan includes: Australia's first Drug Discovery Centre, support for researchers to turn discoveries into practical benefits and creating the Victorian Centre for Gender Equity in Science (as above).

The Greens will contribute \$29.8 million over three years to the construction of a world class Drug Discovery centre at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne. The first of its kind in Australia, the centre will empower researchers to take basic scientific discoveries and transform them into new medicines faster than before.

The Greens will provide \$56 million of funding over four years towards improving Victoria's medical research commercialisation and translation capabilities. This will allow researchers to bridge the funding 'valley of death' that research faces early in its development, and increase our skills and resources in translating research into better health for our community.

**Q4: Will you commit to greater investment in our public hospital system?**

The Greens are committed to increasing investment in our public hospital system, which is in many respects world class. Our focus is on ensuring that the process for planning and allocation of funding is transparent and based on future needs. Investment is too often influenced by marginal seat votes rather than according to need. The Greens are also committed to increasing investment in preventative and primary care to reduce demand for emergency services.

**Q5: How will your party manage the issues around elective and outpatient waiting lists?**

As RACS acknowledges in its election commitments, the size of waiting lists are only a problem if they preclude timely treatment. Moreover, we know anecdotally that waiting lists for certain procedures – for example colonoscopies – may be larger than necessary due to patient demand for procedures that may not be absolutely necessary. Understanding and reducing waiting lists isn't straightforward, and the Greens would look to working in cooperation with the sector to identify and address issues such as efficiencies, suitability for procedures, and investment gaps.

**Q6: How will your party work to address inequities in access to care and quality of care across the state?**

Avoidable differences in health outcomes between different groups, whether defined by race, gender, income, sexuality, or geography, are unjust and must be eliminated. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – and all Victorians facing disadvantage – should have health outcomes and life expectancy equal to other Australians.



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An open, transparent and accountable planning and funding system for hospitals – and the health system as a whole – will make substantial inroads in addressing inequities of access to care. The Greens are also committed to increasing funding for preventative health, hospitals, and public dental – investments that explicitly aim to increase access to healthcare for the most disadvantaged Victorians.

**Q7: How will your party support and facilitate public access to bariatric surgery in Victoria?**

The Greens have led the policy debate on the obesity epidemic we face as a state, and as a nation. Richard di Natale was instrumental in pushing for a Senate Inquiry on this issue which he also chaired. The final report of the inquiry will be published later this month and we hope will act as a driver for more decisive action at both national and state level.

Victoria's current plan – our Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-19 – doesn't provide the overarching strategy, detailed plan and matched funding we need to effectively tackle this problem. Its successor must take a whole-of-government approach, it must be grounded in evidence and there must be a heavy focus on prevention.

We know that bariatric surgery is poorly funded in Victoria and access is limited and inequitable. We also know driving people to take out private health insurance in order to access surgery. These are clearly problems that need to be addressed within a wider obesity strategy.

**Q8: Will your party support the RACS on the Building Respect and Improving Patient Safety initiative, to show a commitment to improved workplace culture across the entire health system?**

We welcome the RACS initiative on Building Respect and Improving Patient Safety, particularly its focus on collaboration, respect, transparency and diversity. These are areas that can and should be addressed and improved right across the health system, and that's something the Greens are committed to.

**Q9: Will your party commit to engaging with the Victorian State Committee of RACS by meeting with members on a regular basis?**

The Greens have close and collaborative working relationships with stakeholders working in all parts of our health system, and we routinely undertake advocacy and campaigning in collaboration with those stakeholders. We would welcome regular engagement with the Victorian State Committee of RACS on an ongoing basis.

**Q10: The mortality audit program is part of an effective quality assurance activity aimed at the ongoing improvement of surgical care and RACS seeks a commitment from your party that at least further three years funding will be supported.**

The Greens will commit to funding VASM at a level of \$1.2 million per annum for at least a further three years.



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**Q11: Does your party support a ban on the use of quad bikes by children aged under the age of sixteen?**

Yes.

**Q13: What are your party's policies to address alcohol-related harm?**

The Greens are committed to identifying and implementing proven measures to reduce the promotion of alcohol and processed food and drinks across the population, and particularly to children. Specifically, the Greens are committed to phasing out:

- alcohol advertising on public transport and outdoor billboards and signs;
- sponsorship of community sporting organisations and venues by alcohol companies; and
- all alcohol advertising directed at young people.

**Q14: What will your party do to better protect health care workers inside hospitals, in community settings and in their office/consultation rooms from abusive and unacceptable behaviours?**

Healthcare workers should never be subject to aggressive and violent behaviour, and levels of this behaviour are currently unacceptably high. Calls for greater security are a knee-jerk reaction that fails to recognise that the majority of frontline health services already have adequate levels of security. We need to look closely at the drivers of aggressive and violent behaviour in healthcare settings – from long waiting times through to changing practitioner-patient relationships. And we need to develop strategies to tackle those drivers, not just in healthcare settings but in communities and in the media. The Greens will work with health providers to undertake this work; throwing more security at the problem will not provide a long term solution.

**Q15: Safer Care Victoria was an initiative of the last government to improve safety and quality in health care in Victoria. Do you intend to continue to fund this or do you have any other plans to address this issue?**

The Greens would review Safer Care Victoria to assess performance and understand value for money, and we would take a decision on future funding or alternative mechanisms based on that review.

**Q16: Victoria has historically been a leader on many issues traditionally viewed as national/federal responsibility. With this in mind how will your party:**

- **Advocate to control rogue cosmetic surgeons to protect patients from potentially catastrophic outcomes?**
- **Advocate to control the rising out of pocket costs of health care?**
- **Advocate to protect Victorians from unregulated companies who offer dangerous medical procedures overseas?**
- **Improve the response to and services for victims of domestic violence?**



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The Greens have a strong track record advocating across a number of these issues, and regardless of the outcome of the Victorian election, we will continue to do so at both state and federal level. We are particularly concerned about the rising costs of healthcare and health inequity and will continue to work closely with stakeholders to propose real solutions – our strong advocacy on removing subsidies for private health insurance and reinvesting these in the public system is a concrete example of that.

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