



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Surgeons ready to assist in implementation of health and hospital reforms

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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has welcomed the commitment of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to improve the funding and performance of healthcare in Australia.

College President, Professor Ian Gough said the COAG agreement has many positive features including additional funding for immediate needs and future growth. “We particularly welcome the promise of more hospital beds, although there will still be a need for more, and the promise of more training places for healthcare professionals,” he said.

“While the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement sets the framework for the funding and management of hospitals, the proposal is complicated. The Commonwealth will fund 60% and the states and territories 40 per cent, with the states and territories having responsibility for the establishment and management of the local hospital networks.

“This complexity raises questions over whether the model will really end the blame game, which was one of the major objectives of the reform process,” Professor Gough said.

“The agreement commits the Commonwealth and state governments to ensuring that there is no net increase in the number of ongoing health bureaucrats. This is very important and everyone in the country will be watching to see if this is achieved.

“The College is pleased to see the commitment to improved targets for timely patient care in regard to emergency departments and elective surgery, and has the experience to advise on practical solutions in these areas.

“The focus on quality outcomes of care is to be applauded, including the intention to expand the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and the commitment to establish a new National Performance Authority. It is not yet clear what the responsibilities of these bodies and the existing COAG Reform Council will be or how they will interact. The College is particularly interested in quality and performance, and is ready to provide clinical advice at all levels as the reform process develops.

“There are many proposals yet to be clarified, including how clinicians will be incorporated into decision making processes, both nationally and locally. In the areas of funding, governance, health care delivery, and quality and performance monitoring there will obviously need to be much more consultation as the details of implementation are worked through, and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons is willing and able to assist” Professor Gough said.

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