



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

SA surgeons alarmed by proposed changes to outpatient services

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South Australian surgeons have expressed profound concerns about changes to outpatient services due to take effect early next year.

Speaking after a briefing provided by the Department of Health, South Australian Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Mr Greg Otto said the proposed privatisation of outpatient services would significantly limit public access to high quality specialist surgical care.

“The costs associated with seeking private specialist surgical care will deny access to a substantial element of our community,” Mr Otto said. “Achieving economies in our health system should not come at the cost of people’s access to surgical care. This measure is an irrational cost saving because it defeats the very purpose of having public hospitals.”

“By effectively abandoning the principle of free healthcare being available at our state’s public hospitals, the state government is disadvantaging some of the most vulnerable members of the community.”

Other concerns raised by the surgeons were the impact of the privatisation on the training of surgeons.

“The opportunity to examine patients in the setting of outpatient services in our public hospitals is a core element of the training of medical students, junior doctors and trainee surgeons. This proposal will therefore have a significant and detrimental effect on healthcare into the future,” Mr Otto said.

“The proposed reforms will also undermine the quality and continuity of care. The risks of adverse outcomes are significantly higher when the patient is seen in one location but definitive care occurs in another. It is inefficient and dangerous to see an outpatient in one place, and then have to transport that patient if hospitalisation is deemed necessary” Mr Otto said.

Mr Otto called on other medical groups including the AMA and other specialty colleges to revisit the proposed reforms.

The planned privatisation of outpatient services is scheduled to occur in February and March 2011 and will affect a range of specialty surgical services.

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