



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

# MEDIA RELEASE

## College of Surgeons to quiz major political parties on public health policy

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In the lead up to the 26 March state election, New South Wales surgeons have written to the major political parties asking key questions relating to a number of public health issues, including improvements to elective and emergency surgery, the training of junior doctors, access to bariatric surgery, and the enhanced resourcing of trauma care.

The NSW Regional Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Dr Joseph Lizzio, said the responses of the parties would facilitate the informed assessment of health policy by College Fellows, many of whom work daily in the state's hard pressed public hospital system.

"The College is not, however, merely asking questions of the parties," Dr Lizzio said. "The letters also suggest a way forward which, if accepted and pursued by government, would ensure more efficient delivery of services. This is a very positive exercise."

Issues addressed in the letters include:

### **Implementation of acute care model**

It has been shown that where an acute surgical service has been established that allows for the separation of urgent and acute surgery from elective surgery, there are fewer cancellations of elective surgery and greater supervision of surgical registrars.

### **Training and supervision of junior doctors**

The College of Surgeons is concerned about future funding for the training and supervision of trainee surgeons in New South Wales, and draws attention to the recommendations made by Peter Garling SC regarding this matter in the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in NSW Public Hospitals.

## **Bariatric Surgery**

Given the growing obesity epidemic, and acknowledging that in the long term emphasis should be on prevention rather than treatment, current evidence suggests the most effective management model must include consideration of surgery. Parties are asked what plans they have to introduce and support bariatric surgery in the public health system.

## **Orthopaedic Surgery**

The NSW branch of the Australian Orthopaedic Association requires sufficient specialist positions in NSW hospitals to adequately support a growing number of trainees. The creation of new specialist positions in public hospitals is also required to allow newly trained orthopaedic surgeons to provide care for patients in their local areas, rather than requiring patients to travel to other hospitals, away from family and local surgical support services.

The expectation that orthopaedic surgeons will provide emergency services without adequate local infrastructure for elective services acts as a continuing disincentive to provide public hospital services across the board. This represents a considerable waste of training resources.

## **Trauma Care**

Trauma is the leading cause of death in the first four decades of life. Every year in NSW more than 2000 people die as a consequence of injury. For every death, 4 – 5 people suffer severe injury that will significantly impact on their ability to return to pre-trauma life. The cost of this burden of injury to the state is enormous.

Trauma does not receive its own funding but must “make do” with money from the surgical budget which is already stretched to cover the needs of the surgical disciplines. Thus it is almost impossible to adequately resource trauma and buy essential equipment which has been documented to improve patient outcomes after severe injury.

Parties are asked what they will do to guarantee clear and specific funding for trauma care and to ensure adequate resources for the recruitment of trauma staff.

## **The Medical Services Committee**

The NSW Regional Committee of the College of Surgeons is concerned about the future funding of the Medical Services Committee. The parties are asked if they will continue to fund the Medical Services Committee, thereby enabling it to continue reviewing legislation in New South Wales.

“The parties have been asked to respond by 16 March, enabling NSW Fellows to consider the answers, and the broader health policies of the respective parties, before polling day,” Dr Lizzio said.

The letters from the College, and responses to them, will be made publicly available on the New South Wales page of the College website: [www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)

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