



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Parties endorse surgeons' stand on health issues

Wednesday 23 March, 2011

The New South Wales regional committee of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has welcomed commitments by both major political parties to several key initiatives proposed by surgeons in that state.

“The responses of both parties to our initiatives acknowledged the importance of issues we raised and endorsed the College’s proposed solutions,” New South Wales chair Mr Joseph Lizzio said.

“With regard to the fundamental issue of the training and supervision of junior doctors, both parties acknowledged its importance. While Labor has opted for a relatively modest investment of new money in training, the College notes Labor’s commitment to encouraging training in smaller metropolitan, rural and regional locations.

“In contrast, the Coalition has opted to incorporate training into a broader, 10 year *Health Professionals Workforce Plan* which will be developed and implemented should it win office on Saturday.

“The College is delighted that both parties endorsed our call for the establishment of acute surgical services in public hospitals, thereby allowing elective surgery to be carried out without interruption. Experience demonstrates overwhelmingly that the implementation of acute surgical units leads to more efficient use of resources, safer work practices and, most importantly, improved patient outcomes,” Mr Lizzio said.

“Similarly, on the issue of Australia’s worsening obesity epidemic, both parties agreed with the College’s proposition that while the long term emphasis should be on prevention, the most effective management model must include bariatric surgery. Both parties undertook to include surgery as part of their approach to this pressing public health issue.

“Our call for more specialist positions in public hospitals for newly trained orthopaedic surgeons was acknowledged, though both parties chose not to make a commitment on the matter, instead saying it will be considered as part of broader workforce plans.

“The College believes the provision of adequate orthopaedic services in the public health system is a fundamental responsibility of government. We will carefully monitor the process by which health workforce needs are measured and planned for, ensuring the government meets this key responsibility.

“The College is pleased that both parties gave clear cut commitments to retain the Medical Services Committee, which the College believes plays an important role in the consideration of health related legislation in New South Wales.

“On the issue of trauma care, and our call for clear and specific funding to ensure it is adequately resourced, Labor reaffirmed its commitment to the Trauma Plan it introduced in March 2010. It undertook to monitor the effectiveness of the plan and to make any necessary adjustments in consultation with doctors.

“The Coalition incorporated its response to this question into a broad undertaking to spend \$3 billion on hospital upgrades and redevelopments, including equipment and technology. While such an investment would obviously be welcomed by both clinicians and patients, we would have liked to see a specific commitment to clear and specific funding for trauma care.”

Mr Lizzio noted that the College has been involved in, and highly supportive of, NSW Health’s *Surgery Futures* project, a plan which to date has focussed on meeting the surgical needs of greater Sydney. The project is now turning its focus on the needs of regional and rural areas of the state. The College believes that the project is of great value and supports its retention.

Mr Lizzio thanked both parties for their responses to the College, which are publicly available on the College website: www.surgeons.org

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Attached – Labor and Coalition positions.