



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Queensland surgeons secure undertakings on elective and emergency surgery

Monday 19 March, 2012

Queensland surgeons have welcomed undertakings from both major political parties that the measurement of patient load and the smoother flow of surgical patients will be a priority if they are elected to government.

The Queensland chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Dr Maurice Stevens, said the undertakings arose from the parties' responses to a series of questions posed by the College.

"These questions addressed key areas of concern to Queensland surgeons," Mr Stevens said. "These include the pressing need to measure the emergency workload in our public hospitals and to provide the necessary resources to enable the separation of emergency and elective surgical streams in these hospitals," Dr Stevens said. "Experience has established beyond doubt that such restructuring results in more efficient surgical services and better patient outcomes."

"The College is delighted that both the Labor government and the LNP have committed themselves to this separation of services. The LNP has stated that, should it win government, it will meet with representatives of the College to discuss ways of measuring the emergency workload.

"Another area of concern raised by the College was the rolling out of the Four Hour Rule, which requires all patients presenting at the emergency departments of public hospitals to be admitted, transferred or discharged within four hours. The College has always argued that the rule can only be safely implemented if there is investment in staffing and resources across the entire hospital. Failure to do this merely shifts problems and pressures to another part of the hospital, seriously compromising patient care.

"We are therefore pleased that both parties recognise the need for further investment in public hospitals," Mr Stevens said.

"Both parties agreed that more needs to be done to meet the surgical needs of those living in regional Queensland. Labor stressed its commitment to providing intern places for all Queensland medical graduates and noted its investment in the new medical school at James Cook University. The LNP was less precise, identifying the causes of the problem but restricting its commitments to 'proper workforce planning'.

"The same can be said of their responses to the College's call to address unacceptable waiting times for endoscopies. Labor detailed its investments to date and committed to developing an *Endoscopy Workforce Strategy 2012-2015*. The LNP grouped this together with regional services, and children's Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) services, as something to be addressed by better workforce planning.

"With regard to children's ENT services south of the Brisbane River, Labor referred to its commitment to increase outreach services and ensure additional capacity at the new Queensland Children's Hospital. It also undertook to expand ENT services at Logan," Mr Stevens said.

Mr Stevens said the parties' responses, which are available on the College website's Queensland page (www.surgeons.org), will enable Queensland surgeons to make a more informed choice at this Saturday's poll.

Media inquiries: Michael Barrett, Manager Media & Public Relations

0429 028 933 or (0 3) 9249 1263