



The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

Raising Standards, Protecting Patients

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Media release

Call for Australian Government to Strengthen Guidelines on Cosmetic Surgery

Australia's peak body for cosmetic surgeons, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS), has called on federal and state governments to strengthen its guidelines to protect the thousands of Australians seeking cosmetic procedures each year.

The call to introduce a national accreditation system for any practitioner undertaking cosmetic surgical procedures, follows revelations made on Channel Nine's A Current Affair program on 24 November 2020, highlighting how some practitioners are putting patients' lives in danger.

Les Blackstock was commonly referred to as a 'cosmetic surgeon'. He was a registered medical practitioner but never a Fellow of the ACCS. Dr Ron Bezic, Censor in Chief and past President of the ACCS gave expert evidence to the Tribunal in the matter.

ACCS President Dr Patrick Tansley said the case highlights a matter the College has been campaigning upon for some time.

"There are up to five types of medical operators calling themselves 'cosmetic surgeons', leading to confusion among patients and regulators," Dr Tansley said.

"Almost anyone on the medical practitioner spectrum can call themselves a cosmetic surgeon, from registered GPs and plastic surgeons, right up to the highest standard of Fellow of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery. "Patients have no way of knowing whether their surgeon is properly qualified and has undergone specific training in cosmetic surgery.

"Australia's most highly trained cosmetic surgeons are usually ACCS Fellows. They are regularly called upon to correct botched procedures performed by untrained and inexperienced practitioners.

“The current system is a complete lottery for patients. There is no simple, national and easily recognisable way for patients to know whether they are in safe hands.

“ACCS Fellows usually have the strongest credentials in the practice of cosmetic surgery, including two years of mandatory dedicated cosmetic surgery training, following 4-6 years earning a medical degree, and a further five years surgical experience. No other body has the same degree of rigour and standards for cosmetic surgery.”

Whilst the ACCS acknowledges there are some talented plastic surgeons in Australia, the country’s peak medical training regulator, the Australian Medical Council (AMC), found plastic surgeons trained by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons had a ‘deficit’ in their experience of aesthetic surgery and a ‘gap’ in this area of practice.

In comparison, only Fellows of the ACCS have mandatory two years specific cosmetic surgery training.

The ACCS is calling on national regulators to bring together the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, state ministerial colleagues and other stakeholders to develop a competency based system of national accreditation to provide better and safer outcomes for patients.

Table 1: Types of practitioners performing cosmetic surgery in Australian in 2020

	Type of practitioner	Minimum years of training	Detail
1	Cosmetic surgeon (ACCS Fellow)	12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 5 years postgraduate surgery experience • Mandatory 2 years ACCS dedicated cosmetic surgery training
2	Plastic surgeon (RACS Fellow and Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) Member)	12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 5 years postgraduate surgery experience • Optional six months ASPS dedicated cosmetic surgery training
3	General practitioner (RACGP Fellow)	7-11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 3-5 years postgraduate study • Zero dedicated cosmetic surgery training
4	Registered medical practitioner	5-7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery 4-6 years • 1 year internship • Zero dedicated cosmetic surgery training
5	Fly in fly out practitioner with no qualifications	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero dedicated cosmetic surgery training

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About the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

Established in 1999, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) is a not-for-profit, multi-disciplinary fellowship-based body of Cosmetic Surgeons, cosmetic physicians, plastic surgeons, general surgeons, maxillofacial surgeons, ear nose and throat surgeons, ophthalmologists and other doctors and health care practitioners who practice in cosmetic medicine and surgery. The primary goal of the ACCS is to ensure the safe provision of cosmetic medicine and cosmetic surgical procedures to the Australian community through the supply of appropriately trained and certified health care practitioners. The ACCS is the only medical college which provides education and training leading to fellowship specifically in cosmetic medicine and surgery. Fellows of the College are medical doctors who have completed post-graduate education and training and demonstrated competency specifically in cosmetic medicine and surgery. To become an ACCS Surgical Fellow, doctors must typically complete a minimum of 12 years of medical and surgical education and training. For additional information about the ACCS, please visit: <http://www.accs.org.au/>