



The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery

Raising Standards, Protecting Patients

MEDIA RELEASE

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HALF A MILLION AUSSIES AWAIT HEALTH MINISTERS' VERDICT

THE safety of more than 500,000 Australians seeking cosmetic surgery each year is in the hands of the Federal and State health ministers as a decision looms over who can perform cosmetic surgery.

And if the politicians and regulators get it wrong, patients will suffer.

The number of Australians seeking cosmetic surgery is expected to snowball in the next few months as we emerge from COVID-induced lockdowns with heightened disposable income and weight fluctuations from lockdown. Already, Australians spend more per capita on cosmetic surgery than in the US, generating an industry worth more than \$1 billion per year.

The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS), the peak body for cosmetic surgery, considers the system needs a complete overhaul because it is currently unclear who should and who should not perform cosmetic surgery.

The ACCS President Dr Patrick Tansley said there are three types of medical practitioners calling themselves 'cosmetic surgeons', leading to confusion among patients and regulators.

"Any medical practitioner can currently call themselves a cosmetic surgeon, including general practitioners, plastic surgeons and Fellows 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. Regrettably, there are numerous cases of Australians who have had inadequate cosmetic surgical outcomes, or even lost their lives, because their practitioner was not adequately trained or qualified in cosmetic surgery.

"ACCS Fellows are highly trained in cosmetic surgery and are regularly called upon to correct botched procedures performed by untrained and inexperienced practitioners.

“They usually have the strongest credentials in the practice of cosmetic surgery, including two years of mandatory dedicated cosmetic surgery training, following 4-6 years of medical training and a further five years of post-graduate surgical experience. No other organisation provides this standard of cosmetic surgery training.”

Whilst the ACCS acknowledges there are some talented plastic surgeons in Australia, the specialist 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 qualify with ‘a gap’ in this area of practice.

PATIENT SAFETY MUST COME FIRST

The ACCS is calling for State and Federal Health Ministers, COAG Health Council, Regulators and other relevant stakeholders, to develop a competency-based National Accreditation Standard in cosmetic surgery to provide better and safer outcomes for patients.

“We are calling on the Australian Federal and State governments to provide a single accreditation process so that Australian patients can be assured their surgeon is properly trained in cosmetic surgery.” Dr Tansley said.

“This would ensure that all doctors, including plastic surgeons, who call themselves cosmetic or aesthetic plastic surgeons would need to have achieved an independently assessed benchmark of relevant training, qualifications and experience specifically in cosmetic surgery. They would also be subject to ongoing recertification requirements.

“The ACCS has also proposed an AHPRA-Register of all medical practitioners performing cosmetic surgery who have met and maintain the Standard. Only those on it would be able to use the title ‘cosmetic surgeon’ or ‘cosmetic or aesthetic plastic surgeon.’

“This would enable consumers to easily identify practitioners who are trained, accredited and safe to practice cosmetic surgery from those who are not.”

THE WORST TYPE OF CARTEL

But many plastic surgeons are resisting this proposal, preferring to protect their own \$2 million plus incomes by seeking to bar properly trained surgeons from practising in this country.

“This is the worst type of cartel behaviour, that puts their own incomes ahead of the safety of patients. We must protect Australian consumers, not the plastic surgeons’ \$2m club.”

Table 1: Types of doctors performing cosmetic surgery in Australia in 2021

1. Almost 50 Fellows of the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) who have up to 12 years dedicated medical training, including two years mandatory cosmetic surgical training. This is arguably the finest standard of cosmetic surgical training in the country.
2. Approximately 500 plastic surgeons who may, or may not, have any specific cosmetic surgical training whatsoever. This was confirmed as recently as December 2017 by the specialist regulator, the Australian Medical Council, which found specialist plastic surgeons have ‘a deficit’ in their experience of aesthetic surgery and qualify with ‘a gap in this area of practice’.
3. A group of 113,000 other fully registered medical practitioners with no specific cosmetic surgical 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/>