

## MEDIA STATEMENT

3 May, 2022

### SENATE REPORT DETAILING ‘BOTCHED SURGERIES’ SHOWS URGENT NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH TO COSMETIC SURGERY.

On 28 April 2022, the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) announced that the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee had tabled the report of its 2021 Inquiry.

The Report detailed that over a three-year period to 30 June 2021, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) ‘...identified 313 notifications (complaints) relating to 183 practitioners that concerned ‘botched surgeries’ or a surgical outcome with a complication or resulting in injury’ and that ‘Of those notifications that specifically concerned cosmetic procedures, 52 per cent related to medical practitioners who are registered in a surgical specialty (mostly specialist plastic surgeons)’ [see here](#).

This is after Dr Anne Tonkin (Chair MBA) commented in November 2021 that ‘...the “cowboy” reputation of cosmetic surgeons was not reflected in AHPRA/board data’ and that ‘...complaints around cosmetic procedures were spread evenly among cosmetic surgeons, plastic surgeons and other specialities, so there was no simple dichotomy between “bad” cosmetic surgeons and “good” plastic surgeons.

Accordingly, ACCSM President, Dr Patrick Tansley, said there was an urgent need for a new approach, incorporating national standards, in the cosmetic surgery industry.

“Cosmetic surgery in its modern form has existed for only a few decades in comparison to the traditional surgical specialties which have a much longer history. As cosmetic surgery does not address a burden of disease, it is not able to be recognised as a specialty and has no associated protected title. Under current legislation, it is therefore legal for any medical practitioner to call themselves a cosmetic surgeon. This means that any doctor can infer expertise in cosmetic surgery and even use such a title, whether or not they have had the necessary training. It is a critical problem for patient safety, as the industry looks after an estimated half a million Australians spending \$1 billion per year on cosmetic surgery, more per capita than in the United States.”

Amongst 14 recommendations, the Senate Committee stated that ‘proposed reforms to the National Law to regulate the use of the title ‘surgeon’ undergo broad consultation and be progressed as a priority by the Ministerial Council.’

Dr Tonkin said subsequently “We will consider the recommendations directed to AHPRA and National Boards and contribute to the Australian Government response, as requested” and reminded readers of the AHPRA website of the “...thought-provoking recent discussions on the Taking Care podcasts about cosmetic surgery.”

In the podcast, forty-year-old, mother of three, ‘Kate’ speaks of her positive experience, performed by a Cosmetic Surgeon, that provided her with an outcome ‘absolutely beyond what I expected – I was ecstatic.’

She also highlighted the trauma associated with a procedure performed by an board-certified Australian plastic surgeon, that resulted in depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

'Kate' said *"I had surgery here in Australia – it was a traumatic experience which has changed my life – I have got PTSD from it."*

*"It's important that you do your research. You don't follow social media, you don't follow these influencers that are getting paid or getting discounted surgery to boost the profiles of these surgeons."*

*"I think money grabbing is huge in the industry and some surgeons are saying that they can do an operation, and they just can't do it, it's beyond their capacity...there's a lot of plastic surgeons that will work 5 days a week doing emergency surgery which could be an amputation or a workplace accident of a limb...I think aesthetics is a totally different ballgame..."* 'Kate' said.

You can listen to the podcast in full here: [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency - Podcasts \(ahpra.gov.au\)](https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Podcasts)

In its 2017 report, the Australian Medical Council, the independent national standards body that assesses and accredits specialist medical education and training, stated in relation to cosmetic surgery that plastic surgical trainees have a *'lack of training'*, a *'deficit'* in experience available and qualify with *'a gap in this area of practice'*.

AHPRA recently commissioned an 'Independent review of the regulation of health practitioners in cosmetic surgery.' Dr Tansley said he welcomed the AHPRA review and in particular, its inclusion of the **Endorsement model** as first proposed by the ACCSM. This solution would be applicable to **ALL** medical practitioners wishing to undertake cosmetic surgery in Australia.

He said *"**Endorsement** would allow patients to be able to identify those doctors who **are** trained, competent and safe to perform cosmetic surgery from those who are not. It is a readily available solution under section 98 of National Law – created to accommodate new areas of practice not fitting the criteria of new medical specialties, yet still requiring protective regulatory restriction. This reflects precisely the situation regarding cosmetic surgery.*

*Such Endorsement of medical practitioners would indicate them having met and maintained an agreed National Accreditation Standard comprising core surgical competence with additional training and competency specific to cosmetic surgery, regardless of a practitioner's other competencies and provenance. By this means, competent medical practitioners of cosmetic surgery would then be easily identifiable and its application would make AHPRA's register of practitioners useful, thereby protecting patients."*

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### **About the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery & Medicine**

Established as the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery in 1999, the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery & Medicine (ACCSM) 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 ACCSM is to ensure the safe provision of cosmetic medical and cosmetic surgical procedures to the Australian community through the supply of appropriately trained and certified health care practitioners. The ACCSM 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. For additional information about the ACCSM, please visit: <http://www.accsm.org.au/>