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## **AMA welcomes health ministers' plan on cosmetic surgery, but devil is in the detail**

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has welcomed the commitment for action on cosmetic surgery regulation agreed by health ministers yesterday saying it has been a long time coming, but if implemented urgently will go some way in protecting the public from harm from unscrupulous, unqualified practitioners.

While promising, the plan as presented is open to interpretation. We need the Health Ministers to quickly and clearly articulate who may call themselves a surgeon and what the appropriate qualifications are. This must ensure consumers have a clear understanding of the training and experience of the provider of surgical procedures, and that these practitioners have appropriate training and experience in performing them.

AMA President, Professor Steve Robson said the AMA is ready to work collaboratively with health regulators to realise the commitments as soon as possible to protect the public.

“After prevaricating for more than four years on this, health ministers have finally seen the light and taken the action we’ve been calling for, and it’s a shame it took media exposure of some of the horrific outcomes for patients we’ve seen happen under the misleading term ‘cosmetic surgeon’.

“The AMA has been fighting to preserve the use of the title ‘surgeon’ only for practitioners who have undertaken significant, accredited surgical training, such as plastic surgeons,” Professor Robson said.

One of the key recommendations is banning doctors using patient testimonials for cosmetic surgery including on social media. The AMA supports this, however all health professionals are currently banned from using testimonials under the Health Practitioner National Law. It brings into question the proposed amendments to the National Law currently before the Queensland Parliament which will allow testimonials.

This shows that the Health Ministers, who led the crafting of the amendments, have rushed through poorly crafted legislation without fully understanding the impact it will have on patient safety and on doctors.

“The Queensland parliament must now back in yesterday’s agreement by ministers and withdraw the National Law amendment bill.

“There are many details in the release that will require further scrutiny. We have some concerns about the potential impact of introducing an “area of practice” to general registration and will be discussing this with the Medical Board in the near future,” Professor Robson said.

These recommendations also largely overlap with the report released by Ahpra earlier this week.

The AMA supports restricting the use of title “surgeon” to the surgical fields of practice approved by the Ministerial Council. This would include the 10 RACS fields of practice, Ophthalmology and fields of practice within Obstetrics and Gynaecology that are surgically based. Additional areas of practice may be added in the future, for example “rural generalist surgeon”, subject to recognition of this field of practice by the Australian Medical Council (AMC). The AMA does not support non-medical practitioners using the title, in particular podiatric surgeons.

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