RACS elects new Tasmanian President and NZ Vice President

Thursday 23rd February, 2017

John Batten, an Orthopaedic Surgeon from Launceston General Hospital in Tasmania, with special interests in Paediatric Orthopaedics and Arthroplasty, has been elected the 47th President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

Mr Batten will officially become President on Thursday 11th May at the College’s Annual General Meeting, being held this year in Adelaide, South Australia, as part of the RACS 86th Annual Scientific Congress.

Currently the RACS Censor in Chief with overarching responsibility for the education and training of Fellows, Mr Batten was elected President following a vote of the RACS Council in Melbourne this afternoon.

A RACS Councillor since 2010, he has previously held the positions of Chair of the Court of Examiners and Chair of RACS External Affairs.

Mr Batten is also a Senior Lecturer at the University of Tasmania, and has formerly held many senior administrative positions including President of the Australian Orthopaedic Association and Chair of its National Joint Replacement Registry.

Mr Batten acknowledged the work of his predecessor, Mr Phil Truskett and undertook to continue this critical work.

“Phil has worked tirelessly over the past 12 months to combat discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment (DBSH) across the surgical profession, and in promoting the very important work RACS is doing on its Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety campaign.

“I commit myself to this process wholeheartedly and promise to focus on the key areas of cultural change and leadership, improving surgical education and strengthening the management of complaints,” Mr Batten said.

“We are now in the second year of a multi-year campaign to build respect and improve patient safety in surgery and I for one am very proud of what we have achieved and the fact that we now have a clear focus on what needs to be done this year,” he said.

Also elected this afternoon was the new RACS Vice President Dr Cathy Ferguson.

Dr Ferguson is a New Zealand Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgeon (OHNS) and was recently the president of the NZ Society of OHNS. She was also the first female Chair of the NZ National Board, Deputy Chair of the Peri-operative Mortality Review committee, Chair of three RACS boards of Fellowship Services, Professional Standards and Professional Development & Standards, and has also been a RACS Councilor since 2010.

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Dr Ferguson was also one of only two surgeons on the RACS Expert Advisory Group on Discrimination, Bullying and Sexual Harassment and she continues to advocate for cultural change within RACS, and serves as an excellent role model for many aspiring surgeons of both genders.

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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