Surgeons back rejection of liquor store expansion

Wednesday 15 March, 2017

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has written to the Northern Territory (NT) Government to offer its support for the rejection of a 1200 square metre ‘superstore’ proposed by Dan Murphy’s.

RACS Councillor, Associate Professor Phill Carson who co-signed the letter with several of his colleagues, said that the proposal was not in the best interests of Territorians and that the right decision had been made.

“There is very strong evidence that excess alcohol consumption is directly related to the density of liquor outlets, exposure to alcohol advertising and availability of cheap bulk alcohol.

“High volume warehouse type stores, such as the proposed Dan Murphy’s store, tick all the above boxes and have the potential to lead to an increase in alcohol related harm in our community,” the RACS councillor said.

A/Prof Carson said that RACS’ position was not driven by a desire to ban the sale and supply of alcohol, but rather to maintain the current restrictions on maximum outlet sizes (400 square metres), and to promote a safer drinking culture within the Territory.

“We recognise that the consumption of alcohol is an integral part of our lifestyle and can contribute to the quality and enjoyment of life.

“We also acknowledge that each of us have the right to make personal decisions about the amount of alcohol we purchase and consume.

“However, there needs to be a balance. Harm minimisation must be the central consideration when assessing any liquor licensing application.

“There is no question that health, social services and policing resources all face significant pressures as a consequence of alcohol related harm and misuse.

“As medical professionals we are very aware this is not a level playing field. Skilful advertising and the aggressive promotion of alcohol by the liquor industry is not done with the primary intent to increase the wellbeing of Territorians.

Media inquiries: Mark Morgan, Policy and Communications Officer
(08) 8219 0922 or 0488 218 009
“Therefore, any economic reasoning for granting a license to sell alcohol must be measured against the associated economic and social costs, as well as the message we are sending to the community about the responsible use of alcohol.

“The current stand of the Territory government in balancing commercial interests of a retail giant and the overall wellbeing of Territorians is to be applauded,” A/Prof Carson said.

About 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 7,000 surgeons and 1,300 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.

www.surgeons.org