

MEDIA RELEASE – 4 NOVEMBER 2021

### **ELECTIVE SURGERY IN VICTORIA**

The Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA) and the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons are calling on the Victorian Government to lift its ban on elective surgery in the state effectively immediately. Surgeons are concerned about the impact of a continued ban on elective surgeries in Victoria and the risk of a catastrophic backlog.

As schools, businesses, bars and restaurants open around the state, day surgeries are not open for many elective surgeries leaving many patients in considerable pain and discomfort and economically disadvantaging many healthcare professionals.

“It makes no sense to allow dozens of people to dine together unmasked in a restaurant while banning small teams of surgical teams in PPE from working together,” says the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons president, Dr Dan Kennedy.

“We believe this ongoing ban is not just unnecessary, but places an unfair and unreasonable burden on patients, surgeons, and the smaller day hospitals that depend on elective surgeries for their revenue.

AOA President Dr Michael Gillespie said, “Some patients in Victoria have been waiting at home, enduring all the disability that comes with a chronically stiff and painful weight-bearing joint, who have had their planned surgeries cancelled due to the unnecessary restrictions enforced by the Victorian Government.

“We recognise that safety of patients and the health workforce is paramount, particularly during the pandemic, however, the COVID risk is minimal to both patients and staff and the current ban on elective surgeries is inconsistent with other restrictions being lifted in Victoria.

“Wait times for joint replacement elective surgery in Australia’s public hospitals were already unsustainable prior to the current COVID-19 outbreak, thanks to a national health category system that is not fit for task.

“Some joint replacement wait times, like total knee replacements, have more than tripled compared to the same time last year, yet the impacts of COVID haven’t been the sole reason for the increase,” Dr Gillespie said.

While elective surgeries are not life-saving procedures, they nonetheless can provide tangible functional and emotional benefits for patients.

“An example of this would be abdominoplasty for repair after pregnancy to alleviate ongoing pain,” says Dr Kennedy.

“While this is currently deemed a ‘cosmetic’ procedure the MSAC recently recommended that an item number be granted for this procedure in recognition of the functional benefit to post partum women.

“We do not believe that allowing elective surgeries on fully-vaccinated patients would place an unsafe burden on the hospital system dealing with Covid-19 patients.

These surgeries are typically performed in smaller private hospitals and place a lower burden on the facilities, PPE and rarely impact ICU capacity.

We urge the Victorian Government to give urgent consideration to lifting the current ban.

Ends.

Media enquiries:

Edwina Gatenby

M: 0402 130 254

E: [edwina@maxicom.net.au](mailto:edwina@maxicom.net.au)