

CALL FOR GP CHECK IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS



Hugh Bartholomeusz



Leith McMillan

A SENIOR QUEENSLAND SURGEON AND IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIRMAN OF THE QUEENSLAND STATE COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, DR HUGH BARTHOLOMEUSZ HAS CALLED ON GPs PERFORMING SURGICAL PROCEDURES IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS AND DAY SURGERIES TO CHECK THAT THEIR SURGICAL QUALIFICATIONS ARE VALID.

Dr Hugh Bartholomeusz told Private Hospital he believes there are "quite a number" currently working in the private sector that shouldn't be doing so.

"They're claiming a qualification called a Fellow of the Australian College of Cosmetic Surgery or FACCS, this is a fellowship that doesn't have any bon fides with the Australian Medical Council.

"The only surgical qualification in Australia that is recognised is a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons or FRACS" Dr Bartholomeusz said.

He said the practice is widespread.

"In Queensland it's across the board, in some private hospitals, mainly the smaller private hospitals

and now that there are so many Day Surgeries as well, it's in Day Surgeries as well" he said.

Dr Bartholomeusz said the College strongly supports State Government moves that require private hospitals or day surgeries to have a qualified surgeon sit on their Accreditation Committee or to consult the College of Surgeons before a GP is given surgical privileges.

However he now wants the Queensland Government to retrospectively look at the credentials of doctors performing surgery in private hospitals and day surgeries to make sure they are suitably qualified.

Dr Bartholomeusz said while some GPs are aware they are not suitably qualified to perform surgery, others might not be.

"There is an open and transparent process that the College of Surgeons has for accrediting people's credentials.

"As far as the College is concerned, they can be scrutinised by the College through this process, and if the college feels are they appropriately qualified, they will grant them an FRACS" Dr Bartholomeusz said.

The Chief Executive Officer of

Montserrat Day Hospitals, Leith McMillan said the Queensland Government is right to check the qualifications of general practitioners to perform surgical procedures in private hospitals and day surgeries.

"The move is to ensure that standards are going to be put in place, it may be a reaction to the Patel case, at Bundaberg Hospital, but an over reaction, no.

"I think there have been quite a number of outcomes that have been identified where there has been reason to create a safer health system and a more governed health system, it's slow to happen but there are systems being put in place.

"We've certainly seen that through legislation with Queensland health and the private hospitals and the systems in our sector are water tight" Ms McMillan said

She also rejected suggestions by Dr Bartholomeusz that other general practitioners are working in the private sector without the necessary qualifications.

"We are being inspected all of the time, so I don't see from a private perspective how that could happen" she said.

Australia has entered into a reciprocal health agreement with Belgium (beginning in 2008), allowing each nation's citizens to use the other's public health facilities while travelling or staying for a short period in the other country.

Australia has reciprocal agreements with the

United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Finland. Discussions are taking place with other countries. About 2.5 million travellers between Australia and these countries each year now have public health cover.