

11 November 2016

Ms Jeanette Radcliffe  
Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs References Committee

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### **Inquiry into the medical complaints process in Australia**

Questions taken on notice  
Public Hearing, 1 November 2016, Sydney

*Question: 1*

*Hansard page reference: 51*

### **RESPONSE Re TRAINEES LEAVING TRAINING**

Dear Ms Radcliffe,

Thank you for your letter of 7 November requesting a response on questions taken on notice during the Public Hearing. I am pleased to provide the following information.

The RACS Surgical Education and Training Program was evaluated in late 2014. In relation to surgical trainees who commence and drop out of training, the evaluation was helpful in assisting with the planning of strategies to identify and remove any barriers. The evaluation demonstrated that, during 2007-2014, 13% (337) of trainees did not complete their training. Of these, 52% (177) resigned from the program ("dropped out"), 40% (130) failed to complete early examinations (within the first two years), with the remaining 8% not completing for other reasons which included dismissal for poor performance, financial issues, and poor physical health.

Trainees who resigned from training left because of one or more of the following reasons:

- "inflexibility" (for just under one-third) meaning that training rotations were difficult for personal/geographic reasons and/or were unable to be suitably adjusted, noting that most specialties have a national or bi-national training program;
- "Discrimination, bullying, and sexual harassment (DBSH)" was a factor for about one-third of those trainees in this group, this being considered a representative sample, and consistent with the Expert Advisory Group into DBSH;

- “complexity”, being the demands of technically complex work, sometimes with imperfect patient outcomes and demanding of long hours, with the personal demands demonstrated of (supervisor) surgeons, meant that some did not wish to continue a surgical career. About one-quarter found this area significant.

It was agreed during 2015-16 that all surgical trainees resigning and leaving would be offered exit interviews and reasons for leaving would be recorded.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr Philip Truskett AM**  
President