



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

Media Release

Black day for health professionals

1 July 2015

Australia's health professionals will face the full force of the law if they speak out about poor conditions inside detention centres with the Australian Border Force Act taking effect from today.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) President, Laureate Professor Nick Talley said the legislation will make it illegal for health professionals to exercise their duty to advocate for best practice care while treating patients in detention centres.

"This law will not only impact on health professionals, it will also impact on society's most vulnerable individuals living in these detention centres," Professor Talley said.

"Restricting our ability to speak freely completely undermines our ability to work for our patients' health.

"This is a basic principle of healthcare, all healthcare professionals must be free to work for the best outcomes of patients regardless of the setting and where the patient is from.

"Against our will, this law attempts to tie our hands to prevent us from fulfilling our duty for a vulnerable group of children and adults with complex healthcare needs."

The RACP is outraged by the legislation and is repeating its call – made jointly across the health and medical community - for the government to repeal the secrecy and disclosure provisions of the Act.

"If we are forced to work within the confines of this legislation, we would essentially be denying our patients appropriate access to care," Professor Talley said.

"In a profession that works to achieve the best outcomes for an individual's health, it is an outrage to see the government attempting to force our silence."

Ends

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 14,950 physicians – often referred to as medical specialists – and 6,530 Trainee members across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents more than 34 medical specialties including paediatrics & child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology and public health medicine, occupational & environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. www.racp.edu.au