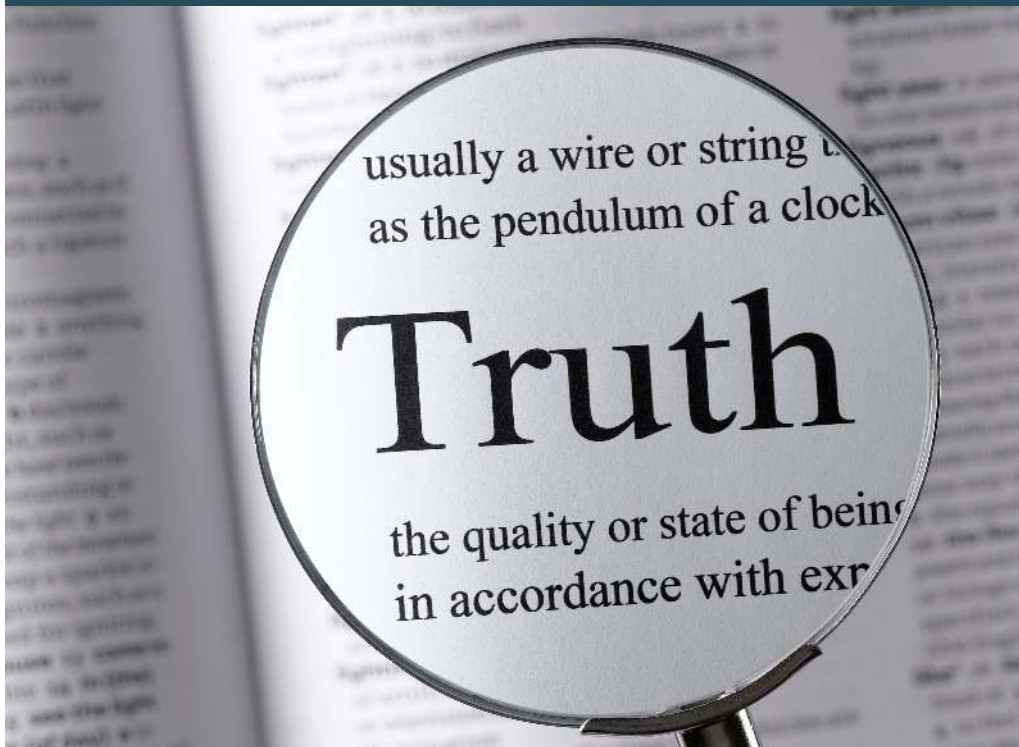


# ASAPS COSMETIC SURGERY GUIDE ON PATIENT SAFETY

## 7 QUESTIONS YOU MUST ASK YOUR SURGEON





## INFORMATION ASYMMETRY = COSMETIC SURGERY RISK

**“INFORMATION ASYMMETRY CREATES A POWER IMBALANCE WHICH PLACES THE CONSUMER AT A DISADVANTAGE.”**

- Medical Board of Australia, *Cosmetic Surgery Consultation and Regulatory Impact Statement*, 2015

### **What is Information Asymmetry?**

Information Asymmetry is the imbalance in any transaction due to one party possessing more information than the other with a potential to cause near fraudulent consequences. Information Asymmetry in cosmetic surgery is when the level of knowledge and information is higher with the surgeon, and the surgeon withholds or fails to disclose critical information that further reinforces this Information Asymmetry.

This Information Asymmetry, together with the patient’s lack of medical knowledge, impacts decision making.

### **Examples of Information Asymmetry**

- The decision of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal in [Health Care Complaints Commission vs Blackstock](#)
- [Class Action in the NSW Supreme Court](#) against doctors who practised cosmetic surgery while using the title ‘cosmetic surgeon’ despite not being AHPRA registered specialist surgeons.

To correct this Information Asymmetry and improve patient safety, ASAPS has listed 7 questions you must ask your surgeon before having any cosmetic procedure.

# 7 "MUST ASK" QUESTIONS

1

Helps you know if your Surgeon is Registered

2

3

Help you with information transparency

4

5

Help you with safety during Cosmetic Surgery

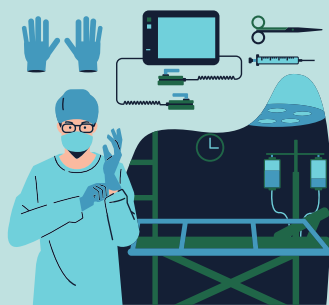
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7

Help you know your surgeon's experience to give you the results that you're after

1

Are you registered as a Specialist Surgeon by AHPRA or MCNZ?



5

Do you use the services of a Specialist Anaesthetist for cosmetic surgery?



2

Have you completed AMC accredited postgraduate surgical training?



6

How many of these procedures have you done before?

1

2



3

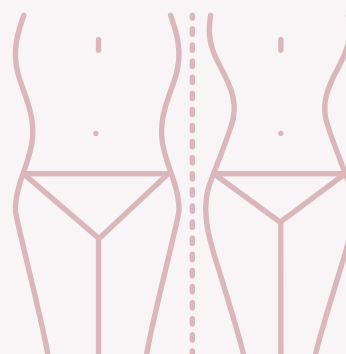
Is the title you use an official AHPRA title?

AHPRA



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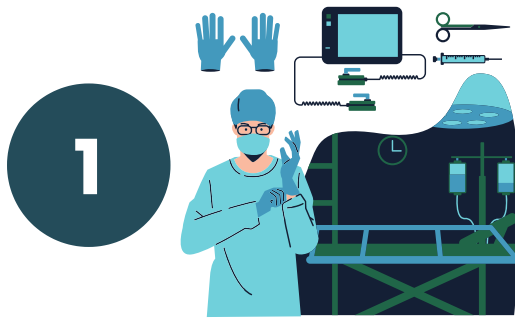
Can I see some Before and After images and reviews about your care?



4

Do you perform surgery in a hospital that is accredited and licensed for Cosmetic Surgery?





**ASK YOUR SURGEON IF HE/SHE IS REGISTERED AS A SPECIALIST SURGEON BY AHPRA OR THE MCNZ. IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

## There is a big difference between General Registration v/s Specialist Registration

You are eligible for General Registration once you have completed your basic medical degree MBBS.

However, to be eligible for SPECIALIST REGISTRATION you have to

1. Complete the AMC accredited postgraduate surgical training in addition to a basic medical degree MBBS
2. Meet all eligibility requirements and pass specialist exams of the specialist college (RACS) accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC)

### TIP: How to identify a Registered Specialist Surgeon

All Registered Specialist Surgeons in Australia and New Zealand will have FRACS after their name. e.g. John Smith, **FRACS** or Jane Lee, **FRACS**.

FRACS after the surgeon's name indicates that the surgeon is a **Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons** ([www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)).



**"I'M A DOCTOR; I DON'T NEED TO BE REGISTERED AS A SPECIALIST SURGEON."**

### WHY IS SPECIALIST REGISTRATION IMPORTANT FOR PATIENT SAFETY?

If your "surgeon" has General Registration only, it confirms that the surgeon does not qualify for registration as a Specialist Surgeon in Australia or New Zealand because the surgeon did not undergo AMC accredited surgical training beyond the basic medical degree.

**Are you okay with a doctor who is not registered as a Specialist Surgeon operating on your face or body or on that of your loved ones?**

Check your surgeon's registration at [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au) (Australia) or [www.mcnz.co.nz](http://www.mcnz.co.nz) (New Zealand).

2



**ASK YOUR SURGEON IF HE/SHE HAS COMPLETED THE AMC ACCREDITED SURGICAL TRAINING DELIVERED THROUGH THE ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS. IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

The Australian and New Zealand **National Standard of Surgery** including cosmetic surgery is:

1. The Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredited postgraduate surgery training.
2. This training is overseen by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons which is an AMC accredited organisation.
3. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons is the only organisation accredited by the AMC to provide accredited training in Cosmetic Surgery.

To be registered as a Specialist Surgeon by AHPRA in Australia and MCNZ in New Zealand, all surgeons must have completed the AMC accredited RACS surgical training program.



**"THERE'S NO NEED FOR ME TO COMPLETE THE AMC ACCREDITED RACS SURGICAL TRAINING."**

#### **WHY IS AMC ACCREDITED SURGICAL TRAINING IMPORTANT FOR PATIENT SAFETY?**

If your surgeon has not completed AMC accredited surgical training in surgery including cosmetic surgery through the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), your surgeon is not trained to the highest Australian or New Zealand standard on cosmetic surgery.

**Are you comfortable with letting a doctor who has not been trained to the highest Australian/  
New Zealand standard operate on your face or body or on your loved ones?**

3

AHPRA

**ASK YOUR SURGEON IF THE TITLE USED BY HIM/HER IS AN OFFICIAL AHPRA TITLE.  
IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

**"THE MEDICAL SPECIALTY OF PLASTIC SURGERY INCLUDES BOTH COSMETIC SURGERY AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY."**

**-Medical Board of Australia 2016 Guide to Cosmetic Medical Practice**

**'Cosmetic Surgeon' is NOT an approved AHPRA title**

In Australia, all registered specialists in surgery have an official AHPRA title linked to the Surgeon's registration and field of specialisation. There are 10 official titles for Registered Surgeons in Australia. While there are strict criteria and standards as to who can use the title Plastic Surgeons, the use of the title 'Cosmetic Surgeon' is a free-for-all.

**Cosmetic Surgeon is a misleading title**

Under Australian National Law it does not represent a recognised specialty, but when used, it misleads consumers. The title of Specialist Plastic Surgeon is a protected specialist title and it an offence under the National Law for a practitioner who in not registered under the recognised specialty of Plastic Surgery to use the term 'Plastic Surgeon' as part of their title (ss 113, 117-118).

As revealed in Health Care Complaints Commission v Blackstock, the title 'Cosmetic Surgeon' was used by a doctor who was not a Registered Specialist in Surgery. It misled consumers into believing that behind the title 'Cosmetic Surgeon' was a registered surgical specialist.



**"I DO NOT NEED AN OFFICIAL AHPRA TITLE TO PERFORM SURGERY."**

**WHY IS THE USE OF THE OFFICIAL AHPRA TITLE IMPORTANT FOR PATIENT SAFETY?**

Every surgeon has to use the official AHPRA Registration. You can only use the title of PLASTIC SURGEON if you are registered in the specialty of Plastic Surgery.

**Are you okay with a doctor who has neither specialist registration nor AMC accredited training in surgery but continues to use a title that has a potential to misrepresent that he/she is a specialist surgeon operating on your face or body?**

4



**ASK YOUR SURGEON IF A SPECIALIST ANAESTHETIST WILL BE PRESENT TO ENSURE YOUR SAFETY AND TAKE CARE OF YOUR POST-OPERATIVE PAIN. IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

Specialist Anaesthetists are registered specialists whose primary role is to evaluate, monitor, and supervise your care before, during, and after surgery by delivering anaesthesia and pain control. In addition, they optimise your post-operative pain control ensuring your comfort and the highest standards of safety.

Just as Specialist Surgeons have FRACS after their name to indicate they are a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, a specialist anaesthetist will have FANZCA after their name to indicate they are a Fellow of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists. Having a cosmetic surgery procedure without a Specialist Anaesthetist is a major detour from the accepted standards of surgical safety.



**"I DO NOT NEED TO USE THE SERVICES OF A SPECIALIST ANAESTHETIST; I CAN DO IT MYSELF."**

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR PATIENT SAFETY?**

Your anaesthetist is a specialist who is trained to keep you safe during the operation and comfortable, safe and pain-free in the post-operative period.

**Are you okay to have a cosmetic surgery procedure without a specialist anaesthetist to look after your safety?**

# 5



**ASK YOUR SURGEON IF YOUR OPERATION WILL BE PERFORMED IN A HOSPITAL OR DAY SURGERY CENTRE ACCREDITED AND LICENSED FOR COSMETIC SURGERY.  
IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

In 2015, media reports of patient harm caused by performing cosmetic surgery prompted the Government to introduce additional safety measures. Since June 2016, the Private Health Facilities Regulation 2010 was changed to add a cosmetic surgery class to the prescribed classes of health services. All facilities undertaking certain cosmetic surgical procedures must now be licensed. Find out more here.

**Any of the following surgical procedures (however described) should be performed in a facility licensed for Cosmetic Surgery**

- abdominoplasty (tummy tuck)
- belt lipectomy
- brachioplasty (arm lift)
- breast augmentation or reduction
- buttock augmentation, reduction or lift
- calf implants
- facial implants that involve inserting an implant on the bone or surgical exposure to deep tissue
- fat transfer that involves the transfer of more than 2.5 litres of lipoaspirate (rules vary from state to state)
- liposuction that involves the removal of more than 2.5 litres of lipoaspirate (rules vary from state to state)
- mastopexy or mastopexy augmentation
- necklift
- pectoral implants
- penis augmentation
- rhinoplasty
- superficial musculoaponeurotic system facelift (SMAS facelift)
- vaginoplasty or labiaplasty



**"OUR FACILITY IS FINE; IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE ACCREDITED/ LICENSED FOR COSMETIC SURGERY."**

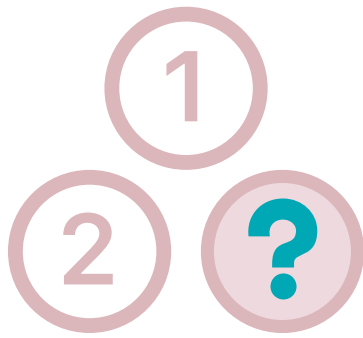
### **WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR PATIENT SAFETY?**

Your safety should be the top priority. Having your cosmetic surgery in an accredited and licensed facility is an important safety measure that is mandated by the government.

**Are you okay to have a cosmetic surgery procedure in a facility that is not accredited or licensed for cosmetic surgery?**



6



**ASK YOUR SURGEON ABOUT HIS/HER EXPERIENCE IN THIS PROCEDURE AND IN MANAGING COMPLICATIONS, SHOULD THEY OCCUR.**

Research suggest that surgeons do get better with experience, so it is reasonable to ask your surgeon these questions at your consultation. In addition to your surgeon's experience at performing the procedure, you may wish to find out more about risks and complications.

**You should also ask the question, 'What if there is a complication?'**

The Medical Board of Australia Guidelines 2016 require explicit responsibility for postoperative care and provision of emergency facilities when using sedation, anaesthesia or analgesia.

Cosmetic Surgery complications can be acute and life-threatening. Complications like excessive bleeding, severe infection or anaesthetic related complications like anaphylaxis all require immediate specialist care and hospital admission.

If your surgeon is a Registered Specialist in Surgery and has undergone AMC accredited surgical training, your surgeon will have the necessary training and adequate skills and expertise in early recognition and management of complications. Your surgeon can admit you to hospital, liaise with other specialists, and ensure you get the best of care.

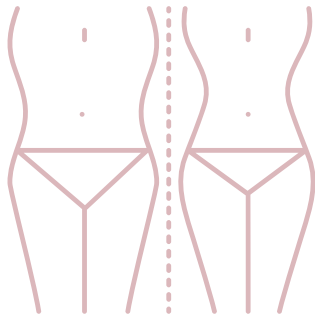


**"I DON'T HAVE ADMITTING RIGHTS IN HOSPITALS;  
I OPERATE IN SMALL DAY SURGERY CLINICS."**

#### **WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR PATIENT SAFETY?**

A registered, trained and experienced surgeon has the skills to help you achieve your aesthetic goals and manage any complications, should they occur.

**Have you thought about how your surgeon can manage complications if your surgeon is not a registered specialist surgeon and does not have admitting rights in accredited hospitals?**



**ASK YOUR SURGEON IF HE/SHE HAS BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOGRAPHS AND ONLINE REVIEWS.**

### **A picture speaks a thousand words.**

Good Before and After photos of cosmetic surgery are comforting to a prospective patient and help to instil confidence in a surgeon's ability.

While prospective patients can visualise what is possible when viewing realistic photographs, the same cannot be said for some photos on social media that may be face-tuned and/or filtered to look good.

When you consult with a Registered Specialist Surgeon you will have the opportunity to see realistic Before and After photos.

### **Read the reviews**

Online reviews about the surgical care can be helpful as they showcase patient journeys and patient experiences. Reviews that are detailed will reveal much more and will be useful when making a decision about the surgeon.

Most online reviews are posted on third party websites like [Realself.com](https://www.realself.com) or Google as it is against AHPRA rules to post testimonials on a surgeon's website or Facebook page.



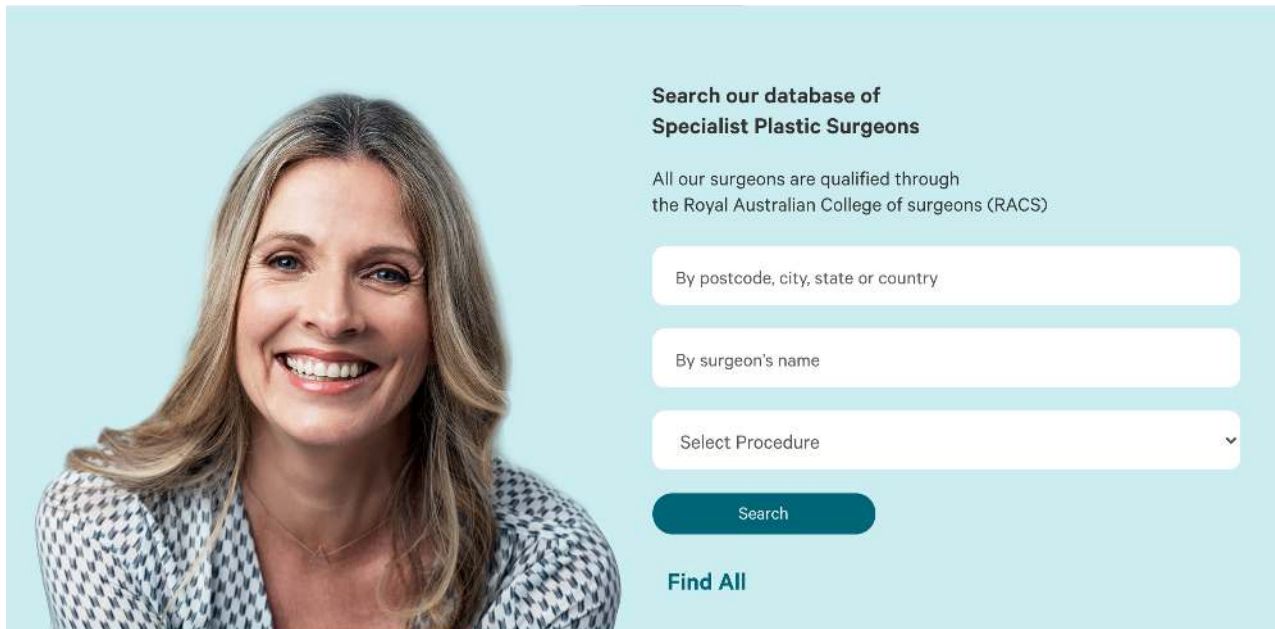
**"I'VE HAD THOUSANDS OF SATISFIED PATIENTS. WHY DO YOU NEED TO SEE PATIENT PHOTOGRAPHS OR REVIEWS?"**

#### **WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR PATIENT SAFETY?**

Before and After photos and online reviews can help in the decision making process and help patients choose the right surgeon.

# FIND THE RIGHT SURGEON

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You can use the **Search function** **'Find Your Surgeon'** on the ASAPS website to look up your surgeon's qualifications, their practice, and whether they're registered with AHPRA/MCNZ.

You must ensure that your surgeon is registered as a specialist surgeon by **AHPRA** in Australia and the **MCNZ** in New Zealand.

Using this search can help you find out whether your **surgeon is a Specialist Plastic Surgeon** so that you know you're in safe hands when it comes to your procedure.