



UROLOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF AUSTRALIA  
AND NEW ZEALAND

**Media Release**  
**29 November 2024**

**USANZ Warning: Reforms fast tracking overseas medical specialists risk lives and fail to solve shortage of surgeons in the bush**

[The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand \(USANZ\)](#) is warning moves to fast track overseas trained medical specialists coming to work in Australia will do little to improve surgical shortages in regional areas and potentially put lives at risk.

The planned changes from December will allow specialists like anaesthetists, obstetricians, gynecologists, and psychiatrists from Ireland, New Zealand and the UK to treat patients unsupervised six months after arriving in Australia.

Urologists and other specialists from overseas are expected to be included in the reforms next year.

“Currently international medical graduates are assessed in their comparability to an Australian trained surgeon of equal experience and closely supervised before being allowed to treat patients unsupervised, but that’s about to change,” said Prof Helen O’Connell AO, President of the USANZ.

“The proposed accreditation changes will see no evaluation of comparability and only six months of loosely defined supervision with no requirement for overseas trained specialists to work in areas of need,” said Prof O’Connell.

“This could lead to an influx of surgeons with little experience and training, practicing in capital cities while shortages in the bush continue - already 60 percent of Australians don’t have access to specialist doctors in rural areas.

“We acknowledge the Federal Government is trying to address the shortage of medical specialists in regional areas but the proposed plan with the Medical Board of Australia is risky and will do little to address the problem.

“We are already seeing overseas trained specialists added to the fast-track program just weeks after general practitioners were given accreditation to work unsupervised,” Prof O’Connell added.

Recent data from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) showed one in five foreign doctors required additional education and professional support, even when their qualifications closely matched those of Australian General Practitioners.

“By introducing more doctors and specialists without the proper support and supervision the high standard of Australia’s medical system could crumble.”

“It was not that long ago Australia witnessed a court case evaluating deaths attributable to an internationally trained surgeon, and the risks of repetition are real.”

“It’s vital a collaborative approach be taken between government, medical regulators and colleges together to find a solution without putting the Australian population at risk.”

### **About the Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand**

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand is the peak professional body for urological surgeons in Australia and New Zealand. Urologists are surgeons who treat men, women and children with problems involving the kidney, bladder, prostate and male reproductive organs. These conditions include cancer, stones, infection, incontinence, urination difficulties, sexual dysfunction and pelvic floor problems. <https://www.usanz.org.au/>

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