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5 June 2009

Mr Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By Email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Humphery

I write to address the Private Health Insurance (National Joint Replacement Register Levy) Bill 2009. It would be appreciated if this letter could be brought to the attention of the Senate Community Affairs Committee in the context of its current inquiry into this legislation, and be considered as a submission from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Accordingly, the College would have no objection to this letter being posted on the Committee's website.

College Fellows practising within the Orthopaedic specialty consider the National Joint Replacement Registry to be a valuable medical resource, collecting and making available data on joint replacement operations across Australia. This data informs the development of joint replacement techniques and contributes to the development of new technologies.

As the Registry also monitors mortality rates and the incidence of surgical complication, it serves to enhance patient safety. By identifying those devices with high failure rates, it also enhances consumer confidence. These are important considerations at a time when the Australian population is ageing and becoming more reliant on joint replacement technology.

It is therefore to be hoped that any new funding arrangement for the Registry does not compromise its proven effectiveness. In particular, the College supports existing arrangements whereby the Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA), one of the College's thirteen affiliated specialty societies and associations, is contracted by the Commonwealth Government to administer the Registry. The AOA is clearly the best placed entity to undertake such a role.

As it appears that the proposed legislation will not have any undue effect on these arrangements, nor on the independence and effectiveness of the Registry, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons raises no particular concerns as to the passage of this Bill through the Australian Parliament.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to make this brief submission.

Yours sincerely

Professor Ian Gough
President