



ANZCA

FPM

President

Australian and New Zealand
College of Anaesthetists

11 August 2026

Hon Ryan John Park MP
Chair, Health Ministers' Meeting

Via email: NationalHealthSecretariat@health.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister Park,

Perioperative medicine provides an effective solution for Joint Hospital Discharge Taskforce

We write to you in relation to your 1 May 2026 Health Ministers' Meeting, where Health Ministers agreed to establish a Secretary-led Hospital Discharge Joint Taskforce to oversee a coordinated approach addressing delayed discharge of older persons.

A multidisciplinary perioperative medicine model is one of the most effective system-level intervention solutions for reducing hospital length of stay for older patients, improving discharge planning and free up in-patient beds.

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) has led the development of the Australian and New Zealand Perioperative Patient Pathway (pathway), a multidisciplinary, patient centred approach to higher-risk surgical patient care including the elderly.

How can perioperative medicine assist

Through this pathway, patients are referred to a perioperative care team as soon as surgery is planned. This team works with the patient and their broader healthcare team, including their GP, to plan strategies to reduce complications, identify risks up front, and implement cost effective and evidence-based interventions to optimise patients and improve fitness prior to surgery.

Perioperative medicine extends beyond the operating theatre to include frailty assessment, optimisation of chronic disease, delirium prevention, discharge planning and coordination with aged care and community services from the point of admission.

As you know, complications are the strongest determinant of extended length of stay, delayed discharge and downstream pressure, with the elderly being the group that is most likely to be impacted. Frailty is associated with 13 of 15 postoperative complication categories.

Anaesthetist-led perioperative medicine addresses this driver *before* surgery and improves patient and hospital flow. Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) protocols, embedded in the Perioperative Medicine course curriculum, reduce complications by 30 to 50 percent and cut primary hospital stay by 2.35 days, protecting surgical throughput¹.

ANZCA's ANZCA Perioperative Care Framework describes this further.

¹ Zhang X, Yang J, Chen X, et al. Enhanced recovery after surgery on multiple clinical outcomes: umbrella review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Medicine* (Baltimore). 2020;99(29): e20983

Tried and tested examples

Some proven Australian perioperative medicine models include:

- A South Australian hospital's Advanced Recovery Room Care (ARRC) model has seen half the rate of complications, at least six fewer days in hospital or supported care for each patient, and one-third fewer deaths, when compared to equivalent patients who recovered in regular wards.
- A Gold Coast hospital's rapid discharge list has seen cost savings equal to the cost of running nine theatre sessions each week.
- A Launceston hospital program has seen more than a quarter of patients undergoing a nonsurgical management strategy, with no day-of-surgery cancellations, resulting in considerable savings and better patient outcomes.

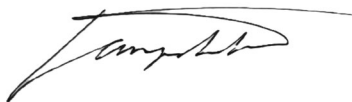
These case studies and further information on perioperative medicine is located on the [ANZCA website](#), specifically a short video and case study booklet.

The evidence is clear. Perioperative medicine is a high value, economic value proposition, and minimal risk reform that directly supports discharge performance, while improving the quality of life for many older patients after surgery.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss perioperative medicine with you in more detail and how our college can assist in this important area of health reform. This may include working with jurisdictions to scale up perioperative medicine models that work.

Please contact Dr Lance Emerson, Chief Executive Officer on ceo@anzca.edu.au with any further queries.

Yours sincerely



Dr Tanya Selak
ANZCA President



Dr Chris Cokis
Chair, Board of the Chapter
of Perioperative Medicine