



## Elective surgery should focus only on patients in greatest need, anaesthetists say

18 March 2020

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists recognises the severity of the evolving public health crisis related to COVID-19.

We are collaborating with other key medical stakeholders, particularly our colleagues in intensive care medicine, and recognise the importance of continuing to work with health care providers across the public and private health care sectors to collectively prepare for the forthcoming enormous challenges to our health care system.

This includes decisions around the timing and volume of elective surgery over the next few weeks.

“It is recognised that many elective operations are in fact critically important. Elective should not be confused with “optional”, ANZCA President Dr Rod Mitchell said.

Patients who are considered to be in need of their surgery within the next few weeks should be prioritised access while it is safe to do so and resources are available.

It is vital that we preserve the integrity of the clinical workforce, as they will be at the forefront of the response to this crisis. This includes allowing time to prepare anaesthetists for the specific issues relating to COVID-19, to allow their deployment to other areas of the hospital, including intensive care.

Any current efforts to increase elective surgery must be focused only on the patients in greatest need, must not reduce the capacity of the anaesthetic workforce to respond to the forthcoming emergency, and must not deplete reserves of medicines and other resources including protective equipment.