

Call for ban on cosmetic procedures for teenagers

- **Julia Medew**
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Teenagers should be banned from cosmetic surgery, the [Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons](#) says.

As Australia's health ministers consider tougher regulation of the cosmetic surgery industry, the society's president, Howard Webster, said all Australian governments should follow Queensland's lead in banning teenagers from such things as breast augmentation and liposuction.

"We're getting a rash of 16-year-old girls wanting breast implants," he said.

"These women are still growing and they are still developing.

"They should not have a body shape-changing procedure until their growth is complete."

Congenital deformities such as cleft lips should be exempt, he said.

Mr Webster, a Melbourne plastic surgeon, said he also wanted Australia to follow France's lead in banning non-surgeons from cosmetic surgical procedures.

"Right now a GP can do a weekend course in liposuction and tell patients they are qualified to do it."

In most states and territories, any person with a medical degree can practise as a so-called "cosmetic surgeon" and perform invasive procedures, because it is not recognised as a specialty by the national accreditation body, the Australian Medical Council.

While plastic surgeons want non-surgeons banned from such work, Dr Daniel Fleming, president of the [Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery](#), has requested the council recognise cosmetic surgery as a specialty.

The Queensland Government recently banned cosmetic surgery for under-18s, and NSW has introduced a three-month "cooling-off period" for teenagers requesting cosmetic work.

The society's call for action comes as a Melbourne woman told *The Age* she would have to pay more than \$30,000 to fix her "broken face", after two unqualified doctors allegedly left her with a leaking eye and large scars.

The woman, 54, who is suing the doctors, claims liposuction to her chin and surgical work to lift her eyes and tighten her face left her in pain and looking worse than before.

"It's been devastating," said the woman who does not want to be identified because she feels embarrassed and ashamed of her appearance.

"I've lost all my hair from the stress... Everytime I look in the mirror I see these things."

A statement of claim lodged in the Victorian County Court alleged Mill Park practitioner Usha Venkataraman and Springvale GP Dennis Duy Nguyen performed procedures on her without the appropriate qualifications, skills and experience.

The woman's lawyer, Anthony Carbone, of law firm Nowicki Carbone, said he was shocked to discover little protection for consumers commonly targeted by "cosmetic specialists" in advertisements.

"The average person would think a doctor would have the necessary qualifications and skills," he said. "If nothing is done about this, I expect to see a lot more cases like this in future."

A spokesman for [Health Minister Nicola Roxon](#) said health ministers would report back on possible measures to regulate the industry in coming months.

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