

ASA Statement on Desflurane

March 2025

The ASA has been actively engaged in the discussion surrounding desflurane use in Australia via participation on the Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG) Expert Advisory Group (EAG) established to develop an evidence based National consensus statement on desflurane.

The ASA successfully advocated for changes to the CATAG document, along the lines of the statements set out below, and now supports the release of the CATAG Position Statement.

It is widely known the vast majority of national & international jurisdictions are pushing in the direction of reduction or complete elimination of desflurane in a rapid manner.

The ASA is aware however that whilst there has been a substantial reduction in its use already, some anaesthetists still use desflurane as an integral part of daily practice.

There continues to be concern expressed over the processes of removing what is a very useful anaesthetic agent, and the overriding of clinician autonomy in patient management decisions.

The available evidence base whilst voluminous & supportive of alternative volatile use in most clinical situations, isn't exhaustive and has been criticised by some as being unable to capture every scenario where anaesthetists continue to choose desflurane for observed benefits in the patient they are anaesthetising.

The ASA has maintained a consistent position of advocating for a reduction rather than removal.

We have advocated for an ability to retain access to desflurane when treating clinicians believe it is the most appropriate drug.

We have advocated for the vital need to include appropriate planning and broader consideration of flow on effects, including but not limited to equipment requirements, and appropriate lead times.

We have advocated for transparency in highlighting the financial considerations as a motivating factor rather than hiding behind this.

We have strongly advocated that consultation with clinicians including at a local level is integral.

We were also able to highlight with evidence via our NSW member survey the detrimental effect when planning and communication is perceived to be inadequate by anaesthetists.

We remain committed to supporting sustainability efforts and finding pathways to future proof our health care system.

Desflurane remains only one of a number of sustainability initiatives being pursued.

The ASA is supportive of efforts to ensure sustainability goals align with good clinical decision making and patient safety remaining at the core.

We are comfortable we strongly represented our members' interests, the community's interests and broader interests and will aim to continue to do so.