

6 December 2023

New report shows NSW elective surgery activity returning to pre-pandemic levels, more patients receiving surgery on time

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released two reports – showing activity and performance for public health services in NSW during July to September 2023, and patients' experiences of emergency care in small rural hospitals in early 2023.

BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said the July to September 2023 *Healthcare Quarterly* results show continued improvement for patients receiving **elective – or planned – surgery**.

“Since the same quarter one year ago, there has been a considerable decrease in the number of patients on the elective surgery waiting list and more patients receiving their surgery on time,” said Dr Watson.

For example, in July to September 2023, compared with the same quarter a year earlier:

- The number of elective surgeries performed was up 10.4%, to close to pre-pandemic levels.
- 82.6% of all elective surgeries were performed on time – a 7.1 percentage point increase.
- The number of patients on the waiting list who had waited longer than clinically recommended decreased by 61.2%, to 6,937.

Emergency departments (EDs) continued to see an upward trend in patients presenting with the most urgent clinical conditions, with increased numbers of triage category 1 and 2 presentations.

“Despite EDs seeing larger numbers of very sick patients, 67% of all patients started their treatment on time – a slight improvement on the same quarter last year,” said Dr Watson.

“However, patients spent a record amount of time in the ED, with 56.6% leaving within four hours – the lowest result for any quarter since BHI began reporting in 2010.”

BHI has also released the latest results of the **Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey 2023**, which reflect the experiences of more than 5,100 people who received emergency care in one of 81 small rural public hospitals in NSW between January and March 2023.

“Patients were very positive about the emergency care they received, although ratings for some important questions declined compared with the previous survey in 2019,” said Dr Watson.

Notable results include:

- Most patients (94%) said, overall, the care they received was ‘very good’ or ‘good’.
- 67% of patients rated how health professionals worked together as ‘very good’.
- 71% of patients said they were ‘definitely’ involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about their care and treatment.

Additionally, almost half of patients (45%) thought, at the time of their visit, their condition could ‘definitely’ (23%) or ‘to some extent’ (22%) have been treated by a GP or other health professional.

Of those 45% of respondents, the most common reasons given for not seeing a GP or other health professional were: those services were closed; or they couldn't get an appointment within a reasonable time.

Detailed results for *Healthcare Quarterly* and results of the Rural Hospital Emergency Care Patient Survey 2023 are available at bhi.nsw.gov.au

SPOKESPERSON: Dr Diane Watson, Chief Executive

MEDIA CONTACT: 0475 946 065