

Winter season was the busiest quarter on record for emergency departments in NSW public hospitals

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released its *Healthcare Quarterly* report showing how public hospitals and ambulance services in NSW performed in July to September 2017.

The report shows that more than 720,000 patients presented to a NSW public hospital emergency department – the highest number ever recorded by BHI and 9.4% higher than the same quarter last year.

BHI Acting Chief Executive, Dr Kim Sutherland, said the increase in emergency department activity was evident in hospitals throughout NSW, during one of the worst flu seasons the state has experienced in recent years.

“Winter is typically the busiest quarter for NSW public hospitals, but this winter season was particularly busy for emergency departments throughout the state,” Dr Sutherland said.

During the quarter, treatment started within clinically recommended times for 70.0% of emergency department patients, 3.6 percentage points lower than the same quarter last year.

The total time spent in emergency department was less than four hours for 68.4% of patients, down 3.3 percentage points.

“While the report shows decreases of between three and four percentage points in emergency department timeliness measures, there were increases of between nine and 10 per cent in the number of patients presenting to – and arriving by ambulance at – emergency departments,” Dr Sutherland said.

It was also a very busy winter season for ambulance services in NSW. There were more than 311,000 ambulance responses, 9.2% higher than the same quarter last year.

The report shows, compared with the same quarter last year:

- There were 2,521 highest priority (P1A, life-threatening) cases during the quarter (up 11.9%). The median response time for these cases was 7.7 minutes (up 0.2 minutes). Altogether, 70.6% had a response time within 10 minutes (down 1.4 percentage points).
- Paramedics reached 60.1% of priority 1 (emergency) cases within 15 minutes (down 2.4 percentage points) and 69.9% of priority 2 (urgent) cases within 30 minutes (down 3.9 percentage points).
- 85.6% of patients who arrived by ambulance had their care transferred to emergency department staff within 30 minutes – 3.5 percentage points lower.
- Almost all (97.9%) elective surgical procedures in NSW public hospitals were performed within clinically recommended timeframes (unchanged).

The report and data, including local hospital information, are available at bhi.nsw.gov.au