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## New reports show NSW emergency departments are busier than ever but most patients remain positive about their care

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released two reports showing NSW emergency departments (EDs) continue to see record numbers of patients needing the most urgent care and revealing what patients told us about the care they received.

The latest results of the **Emergency Department Patient Survey** reflect the experiences of more than 21,000 people who attended one of 77 large EDs in NSW from **July 2022 to June 2023**.

BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said the majority of patients were positive about their ED care in 2022–23. Almost nine in 10 patients (87%) said, overall, their care was 'very good' (60%) or 'good' (27%).

“Despite EDs being busy, patients’ ratings for most survey questions were similar to the previous year,” said Dr Watson. “However, there was significant variation in results for individual hospitals.”

Of the 77 large EDs included in the survey, 41 are in rural areas and the report includes special insights into the experiences of patients who visited those hospitals between January and March 2023. Around one-third (34%) thought, at the time of their visit to a large rural ED, their condition could ‘definitely’ (15%) or ‘to some extent’ (19%) have been treated by a GP or other health professional.

Of those 34% 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.

Also released today, the latest **Healthcare Quarterly** report shows that during the **October to December 2023 quarter** demand for ED services in NSW remained high.

“Hospitals are treating more patients with the most urgent clinical conditions, with a record number of triage 1 and 2 presentations to NSW EDs in October to December 2023,” said Dr Watson.

Despite this, there has been continued improvement in the time patients waited to start treatment following record long waits in mid-2022. However, patients continued to spend a long time in the ED with just 58.1% leaving within four hours.

### **Healthcare Quarterly also shows that in October to December 2023:**

- **Ambulance** demand reached a new record of 379,705 responses, up 9.5% on the same time a year earlier. Despite the increase, response times were better than in October to December 2022.
- The **elective surgery** waiting list was down to 88,618 patients at the end of 2023 and is now similar to pre-pandemic levels. Of those, 2,133 patients were waiting longer than clinically recommended, a significant decrease (87.5%) compared with the same time a year earlier.
- There were 497,870 **admitted patient** episodes, up 1.5% from pre-pandemic levels. That includes 230,643 acute same-day episodes, up a notable 5.9% from pre-pandemic levels.

Given the sustained high numbers of admissions and longer average length of stay for NSW, this issue of *Healthcare Quarterly* includes a Special Reporting section presenting potential opportunities to reduce average length of stay by examining four common clinical conditions across public hospitals in NSW.

Detailed results for *Healthcare Quarterly* and the Emergency Department Patient Survey 2022–23 are available at [bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://bhi.nsw.gov.au)

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