

**15 September 2021**

## Surgery waiting lists down but record activity across hospital and ambulance services in April to June 2021

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released its latest *Healthcare Quarterly* report, showing activity and performance for public hospital and ambulance services in NSW during April to June 2021.

BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said the results showed demand for healthcare services in April to June 2021 rose above pre-pandemic levels across many key measures.

“As activity increased before the current lockdown, emergency department and ambulance patients tended to wait longer for their care than they did before the arrival of COVID-19,” said Dr Watson.

“Hospitals continued their focus on boosting elective surgery levels following the suspension of some services for a time in 2020, and this resulted in better on-time performance and reduced waiting lists in April to June 2021.”

### Emergency department

There were 806,728 emergency department (ED) attendances in NSW in April to June 2021, the highest since BHI began reporting in 2010.

On the time it took patients to start and complete their treatment:

- Of patients who arrived at the ED by ambulance, 78.7% had their care transferred from paramedics to ED staff within 30 minutes, down 8.9 percentage points from April to June 2019.
- Fewer than seven in 10 patients had their treatment start on time (67.4%) and spent four hours or less in the ED (64.7%), both well below pre-pandemic levels in April to June 2019.

### Elective surgery

The 64,599 elective surgeries performed was the highest of any April to June quarter since 2010, and record numbers were seen across all urgency categories.

“The percentage of patients who received their surgery on time continued to improve while waiting lists were markedly shorter at the end of June 2021 when compared with the record levels seen a year earlier.”

When it came to waiting times and lists:

- Almost nine in 10 elective surgeries (89.3%) were performed on time, a substantial improvement from 79.8% in July to September 2020.
- On-time performance for non-urgent surgery also improved, to 84.3%, while almost all urgent surgeries (99.7%) continued to be performed on time.
- There were 85,296 people on the waiting list at the end of the quarter, significantly down from 101,024 in April to June 2020. Of those people, 2,108 had waited longer than the clinically recommended timeframe, down from 10,563 a year earlier.

### Ambulance

“Ambulance activity was at record levels in April to June 2021, with 329,709 ambulance responses including 8,367 to the highest priority patients with life-threatening conditions,” said Dr Watson.

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Patients tended to wait longer for ambulances to arrive:

- The highest priority (P1A) cases had the longest median response time (8.3 minutes) and lowest percentage of responses within the 10-minute target (64.8%) of any quarter since 2010.
- Median response times for emergency (P1) and urgent (P2) cases were the longest of any quarter since 2010, at 13.4 and 24.9 minutes, respectively.

Detailed results from *Healthcare Quarterly* are available at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

Find and compare results, including for the 77 larger hospitals and 91 local ambulance areas, in the [Bureau of Health Information Data Portal](#). Snapshots of hospital results can also be found in the [Activity and performance profiles](#).