

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Elective surgery on the rise in NSW public hospitals

Elective surgery is increasing in NSW public hospitals, with the latest issue of *Hospital Quarterly* showing the number of procedures reaching 46,500 during January to March 2011. This is an increase of 2% and 9%, compared with one and two years ago.

The Bureau's report shows non-urgent surgery saw the largest rise, with 5% more procedures performed than the same time last year and 18% more than two years ago.

The median wait for non-urgent surgery was 10 days longer than the same time a year ago and approximately 10 weeks longer than in 2009. At the same time, the median waits for urgent and semi-urgent surgery were relatively unchanged from one and two years ago. Performance across all urgency categories remained high, with 90% of patients receiving their surgery on time compared with 86% a year ago and 91% two years ago.

In this latest *Hospital Quarterly* the Bureau takes a new approach to measuring elective surgery wait times to address differences in how hospitals record patients on waiting lists.

"Our new approach to reporting elective surgery waits creates a more level playing field to give a better picture of hospital comparisons," Bureau Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said. "We have done this by excluding 3,500 'staged' surgery procedures from the 46,500 procedures reported on for January to March. For medical reasons, staged surgery shouldn't be performed before a certain date, so patients are not actually waiting for care."

A Bureau analysis begun last year found that hospitals had different interpretations of how to record staged patients in the surgery booking system.

"By changing the way we measure wait times, we remove these recording variations and can see more clearly how one hospital compares with another," Dr Watson said.

"The change means some hospitals' non-urgent elective surgery wait times look longer using the new method than the historic approach. It's important to note the difference between new and historic approaches reflects a change in reported waits rather than telling us whether patients waited longer."

To see changes over time in how long patients waited, *Hospital Quarterly* applies the new method to data since 2009.

The report also shows NSW emergency departments faced continued high demand during January to March. Individual hospital Performance Profiles on emergency department and elective surgery performance are available at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

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