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## New report on performance of NSW healthcare system released

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released its annual performance report benchmarking healthcare performance in NSW against comparable countries and Australian states and territories.

*Healthcare in Focus 2017: How does NSW compare?* examines healthcare in the context of three important dimensions of performance – accessibility, appropriateness and effectiveness – for more than 60 measures and one third of these relate to the experiences and outcomes of Aboriginal people.

“For the most part, NSW public hospitals met or exceeded expected standards for patient care in relation to access, appropriateness and effectiveness. However, there are some notable differences in performance across hospitals, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, which point to opportunities to improve,” said BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson.

NSW outperforms other Australian states and territories when it comes to wait times to care in the emergency department and most patients received elective surgery within the recommended timeframes, with large improvements over the last five years. NSW also had among the lowest rates of bloodstream infections in the country.

New measures this year reflect the experiences of women participating in screening with BreastScreen NSW, which were generally positive, with a majority saying they intended to continue with routine mammograms. “The patient voice is at the heart of this report and patients, across a variety of settings, have provided very valuable feedback,” Dr Watson said.

Among patients admitted to NSW public hospitals, a lower proportion of Aboriginal people (58%) rated their care as “very good”, compared to non-Aboriginal people (65%). Aboriginal patients were less positive about interpersonal aspects of care, such as being treated with dignity and respect, having their cultural beliefs respected, and having confidence in the doctors and nurses treating them.

The measures that examine equity of care also found that a greater proportion of Aboriginal people did not wait, or left the emergency department at their own risk; had lower rates of follow up after being discharged from acute psychiatric services; and had higher rates of unplanned returns to both emergency departments and psychiatric services. Some measures have shown improvement and the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women receiving antenatal care in the first trimester has closed in recent years.

“It is now 10 years since the Council of Australian Governments first set targets aimed at closing the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal people and non-Indigenous Australians. Therefore, it was a timely opportunity for BHI to look at the equity of healthcare for Aboriginal people, to enhance understanding about where progress is occurring and identify opportunities to improve health outcomes,” Dr Watson said.

“While it is clear that improvements are being made in important areas, due to the work of so many dedicated health professionals and community leaders, it is also clear that there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve a health system that is equally responsive to all.”

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