

# Backgrounder

## Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW Public Hospitals

April to June 2010

The Bureau of Health Information's *Hospital Quarterly* provides information about admitted patients, elective surgery and emergency departments. This first issue contains a special supplement that reports the performance of NSW emergency departments and presents a new analysis of the NSW Health Patient Survey 2009 about how 21,000 patients rated the care they received in the emergency department.

To provide comparability of information, the Bureau has included the measures reported previously in the NSW Department of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Report*. The Bureau builds on this with an in-depth focus on NSW public hospital emergency departments - increasing the scope of information and the number of emergency departments being individually reported on from 40 to 66.

Public hospitals meeting recommended waiting times and hospitals with higher or lower patient ratings of care are found across the state and across different hospital types.

The main report, the special feature on emergency departments and individual performance reports for 66 public hospital emergency departments are at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

## Fast facts

From April to June 2010...	For the same period last year...	The difference...
There were 400,592 admitted patient episodes	388,391 episodes	12,201 episodes (+3.1%)
acute admitted patients stayed an average length of 3.4 days	3.5 days	0.1 days (-2.9%)
18,118 babies were born	17,460 babies	658 babies (+3.8%)
The proportion of elective surgery patients treated 'on time' was 87 per cent	88%	1% drop
There were 495,863 visits to NSW emergency departments	501,489 visits	5,626 visits (-1.1%)
122,200 people travelled to the emergency department by ambulance	121,306 people	894 people (+0.7%)
68 per cent of people arriving by ambulance were transferred into the care of emergency department staff within the 30 minute target	71%	3% drop
There were 113,526 admissions from emergency departments	111,119 admissions	2,407 admissions (+2.2%)
72 per cent of people admitted from the emergency department arrived on the ward within the target of 8 hours of starting treatment	73%	1% drop

### In NSW public hospitals during April, May and June 2010, on average for each day...

5,449 people attended an emergency department
1,247 people were admitted from an emergency department
4,402 people were discharged from hospital
199 babies were born

# Elective surgery

From April to June 2010, the percentage of patients admitted for elective surgery within the time frame recommended by the referring surgeon differed across urgency categories (Table 1), as did the median waiting time (in days) for patients to be admitted for surgery (Table 2).

There are principal referral hospitals and major acute hospitals where almost all elective surgery patients across all urgency categories are seen within the recommended time.

Category 1	Admission within 30 days desirable
Category 2	Admission within 90 days desirable
Category 3	Admission within 365 days desirable

**Table 1:** Per cent of elective surgery patients seen in recommended waiting time, by urgency category, April 2008 to June 2010

	Apr-Jun 2008	Jul-Sept 2008	Oct-Dec 2008	Jan-Mar 2009	Apr-Jun 2009	Jul-Sept 2009	Oct-Dec 2009	Jan-Mar 2010	Apr-Jun 2010
All categories	87%	91%	90%	90%	88%	90%	89%	87%	87%
Category 1	92%	93%	92%	91%	90%	91%	93%	93%	91%
Category 2	75%	81%	81%	83%	83%	86%	85%	80%	85%
Category 3	95%	96%	95%	94%	91%	92%	89%	88%	86%

**Note:** Patients treated on time refers to the per cent of patients that are admitted for elective surgery in the time frame recommended by the referring surgeon.

**Source:** Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted on the 14 July 2010.

**Table 2:** NSW elective surgery median waiting time (days), by urgency category, April 2008 to June 2010

	Apr-Jun 2008	Jul-Sept 2008	Oct-Dec 2008	Jan-Mar 2009	Apr-Jun 2009	Jul-Sept 2009	Oct-Dec 2009	Jan-Mar 2010	Apr-Jun 2010
Category 1	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	9	11
Category 2	52	49	49	52	51	46	47	54	49
Category 3	136	121	108	120	134	135	146	175	205

**Note:** Median waiting time is the number of days by which a patient who was in the middle of the waiting list of patients waited to be admitted.

**Source:** Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted on the 14 July 2010.

# Emergency departments

## Ambulance arrivals

An ambulance crew needs to wait with a patient until emergency department staff can accept the patient into their care. From April to June 2010, 68% of ambulance patients, rather than the target 90%, were transferred into the care of an emergency department within 30 minutes of arrival (Table 3).

## Waiting time to treatment

From April to June 2010, NSW emergency departments treated more patients in all triage categories in the recommended time than a year ago. NSW emergency departments are meeting waiting time targets for patients in triage categories 1, 2, 4 and 5 as these patients were seen within recommended timeframes (Figure 1).

Table 3: Percentage of patients accepted into the care of the emergency department from an ambulance (off stretcher performance) in NSW, April 2008 to June 2010

	Apr-Jun 2008	Jul-Sept 2008	Oct-Dec 2008	Jan-Mar 2009	Apr-Jun 2009	Jul-Sept 2009	Oct-Dec 2009	Jan-Mar 2010	Apr-Jun 2010
OST	78%	71%	77%	75%	71%	68%	72%	71%	68%

OST target: 90% accepted within 30 minutes  Not meeting target

Source: Ambulance off stretcher time data from Ambulance Service, NSW. Data provided 23 July 2010.

Figure 1: Waiting times in NSW emergency departments, April to June 2010

### Attendances arriving by ambulance: 122,200 patients

Transfer time (off stretcher)<sup>1</sup>  Target: 90% transferred in 30 min. 68%

Same period last year

71%

### Percentage of patients who received treatment<sup>2</sup> by target<sup>3</sup> time, by triage category

1 Immediately life threatening	Target: 100% seen in 2 min.	100%
2 Imminently life threatening	Target: 80% seen in 10 min.	84%
3 Potentially life threatening	Target: 75% seen in 30 min.	74%
4 Potentially serious	Target: 70% seen in 60 min.	75%
5 Less urgent	Target: 70% seen in 120 min.	89%

100%

80%

68%

72%

88%

1. Transfer time refers to the time between arrival and transfer to the care of the emergency department.

2. All unplanned and pre-arranged medical attendances excluding those without a recorded triage category, triage time, or treatment time.

3. Targets for triage levels are recommended by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine.

Note: Numbers and percentages might differ slightly from those previously reported by the NSW Department of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Report*.

Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 16 July 2010. Ambulance Service, NSW on 23 July 2010.

Seventy four per cent of triage 3 patients began treatment within the recommended timeframe; the target is 75 per cent.

There are emergency departments in principal referral hospitals and major acute hospitals meeting the triage targets for all categories and some area health services perform closer to the targets than others.

### Time from treatment to discharge or admission

This issue of *Hospital Quarterly* includes new information on the time taken to leave the emergency department (starting from when treatment begins) for those emergency patients who completed treatment but who were not admitted. From April to June 2010, 94 percent of patients had left within eight hours (Table 4). There is no target for this measure.

From April to June 2010, NSW emergency departments admitted 72 per cent of patients to a hospital ward, intensive care unit or operating theatre within the recommended eight hours. The target Emergency Admission Performance (EAP) is 80 per cent within eight hours (Table 5).

### Patient experiences in NSW emergency departments, 2009

The NSW Health Patient Survey is the largest patient survey in Australia; almost 21,000 emergency department patients participated in 2009. Patients in emergency departments who completed the survey rated their care as excellent (26%), very good (32%), good (25%), fair (12%) or poor (5%)\* see Figure 2.

Importantly, emergency departments with higher or lower patient ratings of overall care are located across NSW (Figure 3) and across the different types of hospitals.

Table 4: Time from the start of treatment until discharge or transfer from the emergency department, by triage level

	2 hours	4 hours	6 hours	8 hours	10 hours	12 hours
<b>Triage 1:</b> Immediately life threatening	15%	45%	70%	82%	88%	92%
<b>Triage 2:</b> Imminently life threatening	17%	49%	70%	82%	90%	93%
<b>Triage 3:</b> Potentially life threatening	33%	65%	82%	90%	94%	96%
<b>Triage 4:</b> Potentially serious	58%	82%	92%	96%	98%	99%
<b>Triage 5:</b> Less urgent	76%	92%	98%	99%	99%	100%
<b>All triage categories</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>98%</b>

1. Time from start of treatment until discharge or transfer from the emergency department.  
Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 16 July 2010.

\* In 2010 some of the patients who receive care in an emergency department will be surveyed about their experiences of care. The results of those surveys will be available in late 2010.

Table 5: Time from the start of treatment until arrival on the ward for those admitted from the emergency department, by triage level

	2 hours	4 hours	6 hours	8 hours (EAP)	10 hours	12 hours
Triage 1: Immediately life threatening	14%	40%	64%	80%	87%	91%
Triage 2: Imminently life threatening	6%	28%	53%	73%	82%	87%
Triage 3: Potentially life threatening	7%	26%	50%	70%	80%	86%
Triage 4: Potentially serious	10%	30%	53%	72%	82%	87%
Triage 5: Less urgent	27%	51%	71%	85%	90%	93%
All triage categories	9%	29%	53%	72%	81%	87%

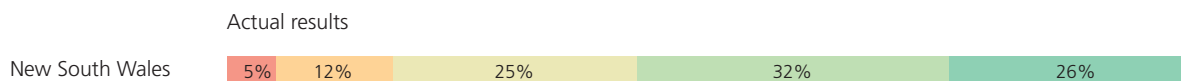
1. Time from start of treatment until arrival on the ward for those admitted from the emergency department.  
Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 16 July 2010.

Figure 2: Patient experiences in NSW emergency departments, 2009

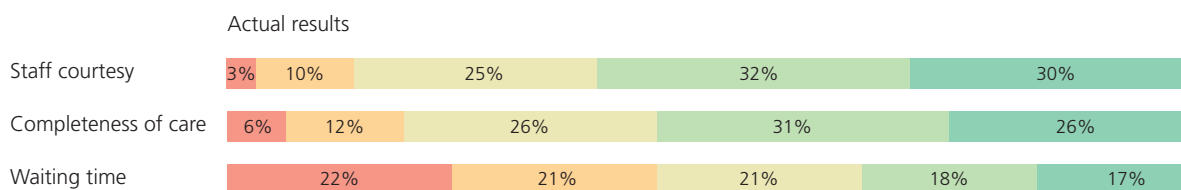
Key to patient ratings:



Overall patient ratings of emergency department care



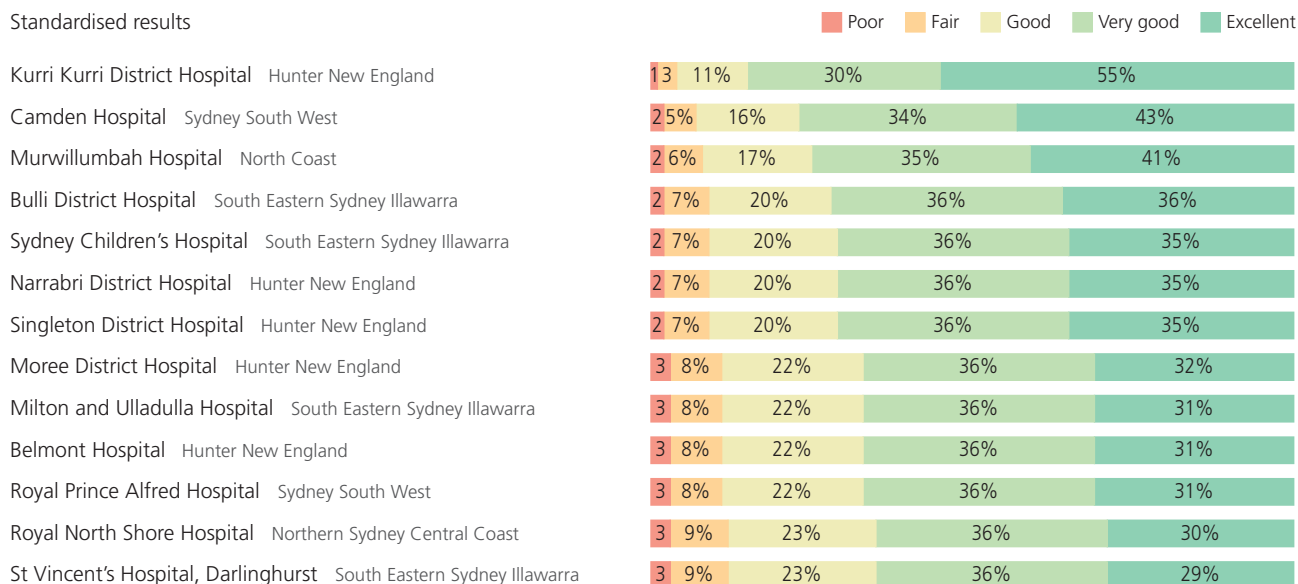
Patient ratings of care experiences that matter most<sup>1</sup>



1. Care experiences that matter most are based on analysis of all emergency department respondents to the NSW Health Patient Survey 2009.  
Source: Emergency department module of the NSW Health Patient Survey 2009.

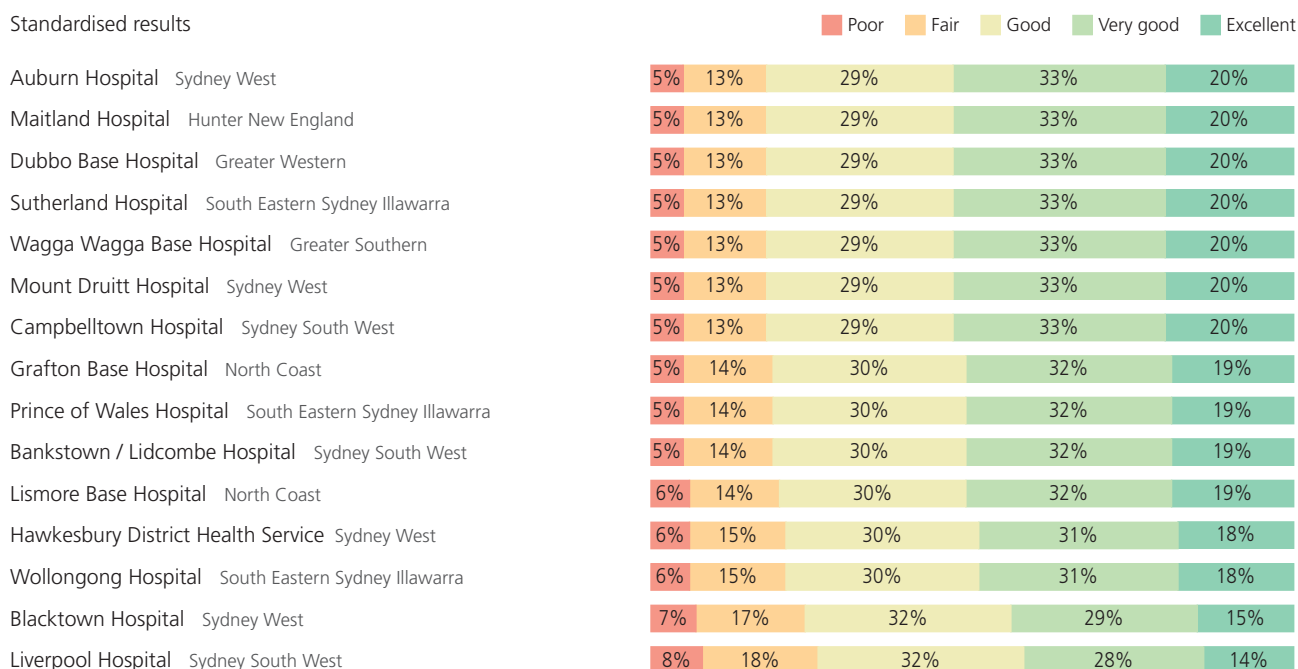
Figure 3: Comparisons of standardised ratings of patients' care experiences in emergency departments, February 2009

### Public hospitals with higher patient ratings



All other large public hospitals\* in NSW (not shown) were rated lower than the hospitals in the graph above and higher than the hospitals in the graph below.

### Public hospitals with lower patient ratings



**Note:** Standardised results: to account for differences between hospitals in the types of patients served, values are standardised for age, gender, health status, education, language, socio-economic status, days in bed for illness or injury in February 2009, times in hospital overnight in past six months and severity of pain (if any).

**Note:** Seven hospitals were similarly rated by patients and therefore all have been included in the list of hospitals with lower patient ratings

(\*) Large public hospitals include all NSW hospitals comprising the peer groups of principal referral, paediatric specialist, ungrouped acute/tertiary referral, major metropolitan, major non-metropolitan and district groups 1 and 2.

**Source:** Emergency department module of the 2009 NSW Health Patient Survey.

## Download the report

The report, *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW Public Hospitals, April to June 2010* and related reports are available at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

The suite of products includes:

- *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW Public Hospitals, April to June 2010*
- *Special feature on emergency department care* (Performance and activity reports for NSW and emergency departments in 66 hospitals)
- *At a Glance*
- *Data Quality Assessments*
- *Technical Supplements*



## About the Bureau

The Bureau of Health Information provides the community, healthcare professionals and the NSW Parliament with timely, accurate and comparable information on the performance of the NSW public health system in ways that enhance the system's accountability and informs efforts to increase its beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of the people of NSW.

The Bureau is an independent, board-governed organisation established by the NSW Government to be the leading source of information on the performance of the public health system in NSW.

### To contact the Bureau of Health Information

Telephone: 61 2 8644 2100

Fax: 61 2 8644 2119

Email: [enquiries@bhi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@bhi.nsw.gov.au)

Web: [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

#### Postal address:

PO Box 1770  
Chatswood  
New South Wales 2057  
Australia

#### Business address:

Zenith Centre Tower A  
821 Pacific Highway  
Chatswood  
New South Wales 2067  
Australia