

# At a glance

## Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals

### October to December 2012

The Bureau of Health Information's latest *Hospital Quarterly* report adds to the evolving picture of hospital performance and patient use of hospitals in NSW. In three separate modules, it reports on admitted patients, those who attended emergency departments and those who underwent elective surgery during October to December 2012.

*Hospital Quarterly* looks at the number of elective surgery procedures performed, how long patients waited for their surgery and whether they were treated on time. This issue reports on the wait times by the speciality of the surgeon, by common procedures and by urgency category. The number of patients who have been waiting for more than 12 months is also reported.

*Hospital Quarterly* also reports on emergency department times to treatment, times to leaving the emergency department and performance against the National Emergency Access Target.

Detailed information on elective surgery performance for more than 80 hospitals and emergency department care in more than 70 hospitals is available in the Performance Profiles on the Bureau's website [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

During the quarter	Oct-Dec 2012	Oct-Dec 2011	The difference
Admitted patient episodes	440,144 episodes	421,237 episodes	+18,907 (+4%)
Total bed days for acute admitted patient episodes	1,343,269 days	1,341,833 days	unchanged
Elective surgical procedures performed	52,133 procedures	50,173 procedures	+1,960 (+4%)
Elective surgery patients treated on time	93% on time	92% on time	+1 percentage point
Median waiting time for orthopaedic surgery	110 days	96 days	+14 days (+15%)
Median waiting time for total knee replacement	291 days	302 days	-11 days (-4%)
Visits to NSW emergency departments	579,776 visits	562,616 visits	+17,160 (+3%)
People travelling to NSW EDs by ambulance	140,362 people	136,041 people	+4,321 (+3%)
Emergency attendances that were categorised as triage 2	59,291 attendances	50,980 attendances	+8,311 (+16%)
Median time to start treatment for triage 2 patients	8 minutes	8 minutes	unchanged
People leaving the ED within four hours of presentation (NEAT)	64% in 4 hours	59% in 4 hours	+5 percentage points

#### In NSW public hospitals during October to December 2012, on average for each day ...

4,784 people were admitted to hospital

567 people had elective surgery

6,302 people attended an ED

1,688 people were admitted to hospital from an ED

# Elective surgery

## Number of procedures performed

During this quarter there were 52,133 elective procedures performed in NSW. This is 4% lower than the previous quarter (in line with the usual season pattern), but 4% higher than the same quarter in 2011.

Compared with the same quarter one year ago, more surgery was performed in the urgent category (up 2%), semi-urgent category (up 4%) and non-urgent category (up 6%). Staged surgery decreased by 1%.

Urgent procedures made up 25% of all completed elective surgery for this quarter; semi-urgent made up 32%; non-urgent made up 37%; and staged procedures made up 6% of all completed elective surgery (Figure 1).

Cataract extraction was the most common procedure performed, with 5,544 patients receiving the procedure during the quarter.

Due to a major upgrade to the information system at The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW), results from this hospital have been excluded from overall NSW measures for current and previous quarters to enable comparisons over time. This hospital accounts for approximately 3% of elective surgery activity in NSW, but its removal does not have a large effect on waiting times for NSW.

## On-time surgery

Most patients continued to receive their elective surgery on time during the quarter, with 93% of patients admitted to hospital within the time frame recommended by their surgeon. This is similar to the previous quarter (93%) and the same quarter in 2011 (92%).

Elective surgery guidelines	
<b>Category 1</b> Urgent	Admission <b>within 30 days</b> desirable for a condition that has the potential to deteriorate quickly to the point that it may become an emergency
<b>Category 2</b> Semi-urgent	Admission <b>within 90 days</b> desirable for a condition which is not likely to deteriorate quickly or become an emergency
<b>Category 3</b> Non-urgent	Admission <b>within 365 days</b> acceptable for a condition which is unlikely to deteriorate quickly and which has little potential to become an emergency

Performance across urgency categories remained high, with 96% of patients in the urgent category; 92% of those considered semi-urgent and 92% of patients in the non-urgent category being admitted on time (Figure 2).

## Surgery waiting times

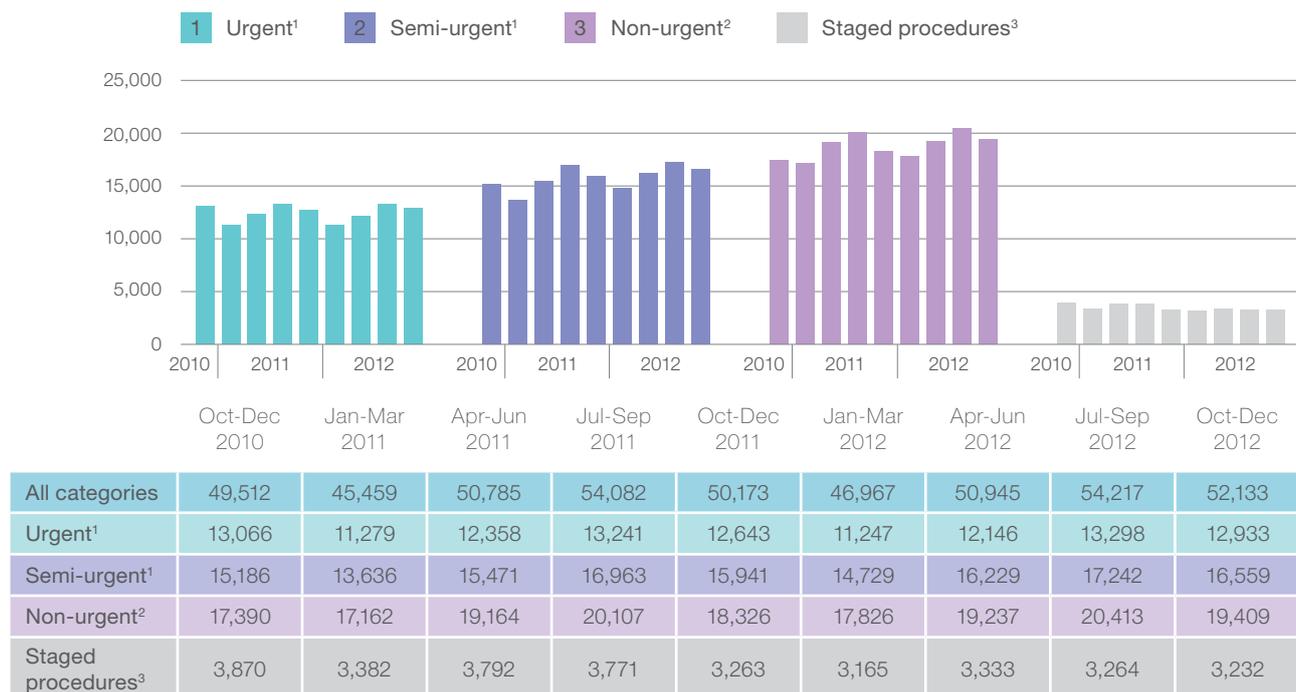
During the October to December 2012 quarter, median waiting times were 11 days for urgent surgery, 45 days for semi-urgent surgery and 224 days for non-urgent surgery.

The median waiting time varied by procedure. For example, the median waiting times were 291 days for total knee replacement and 29 days for coronary artery bypass graft (Figure 3).

## Waiting list

As at 31 December 2012, there were 67,438 patients waiting for elective surgery, up 3% compared with the same quarter last year. The majority (83%) of these patients were assigned as non-urgent, 15% as semi-urgent and 1% as urgent (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Total number of elective surgery procedures conducted, by urgency category, October 2010 to December 2012



1. Excluding staged procedures.
2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.
3. Including non-urgent cystoscopy.

**Note:** Because of changes in methods and reporting, numbers of surgical procedures by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Ministry of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports* and Bureau *Hospital Quarterly* reports published prior to May 2011.

**Source:** Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2012 and October to December 2012 on 31 January 2013. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Figure 2: Percentage of elective surgery patients treated within recommended waiting time, by urgency category, October 2010 to December 2012

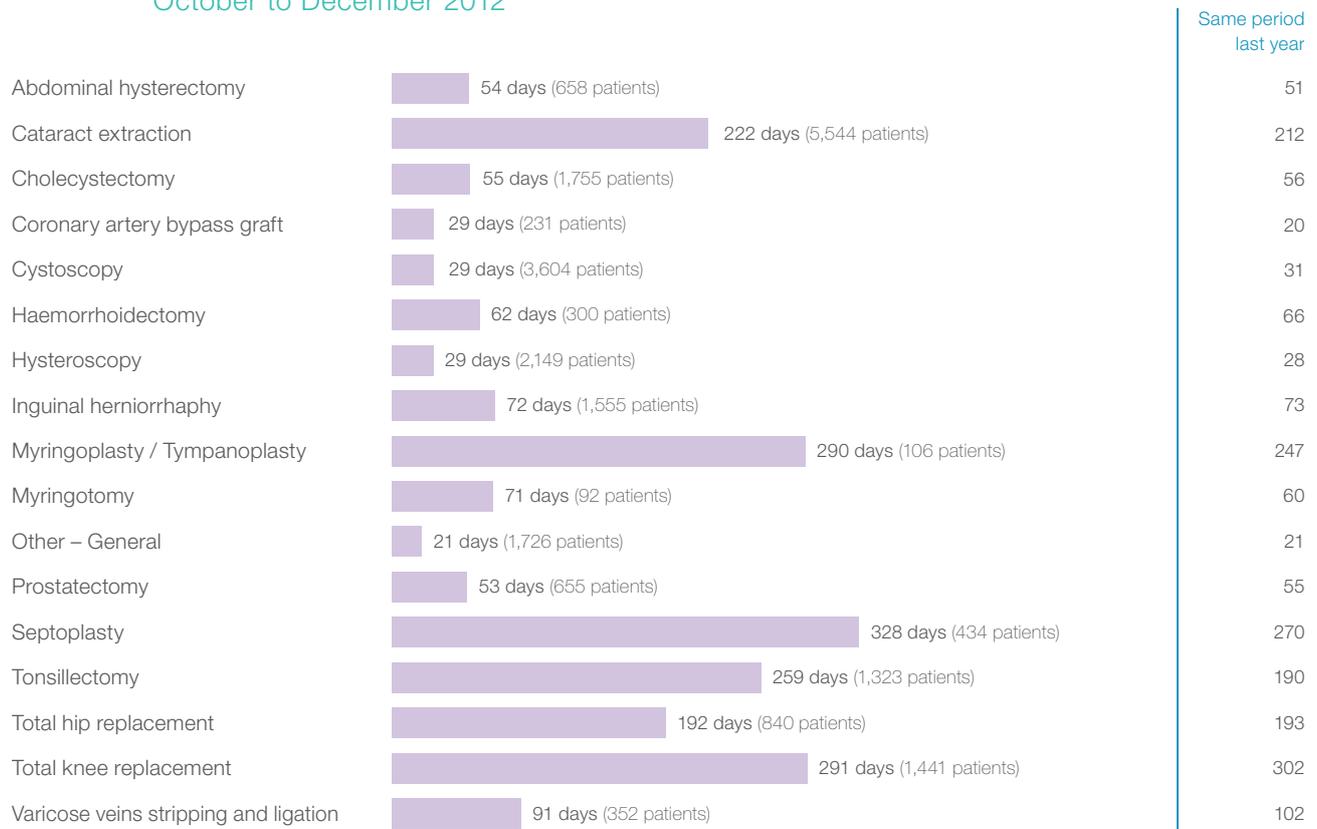
	Oct-Dec 2010	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012	Oct-Dec 2012
<b>All categories</b>	91%	90%	92%	92%	92%	91%	92%	93%	93%
<b>Urgent<sup>1</sup></b>	93%	92%	93%	93%	94%	93%	94%	96%	96%
<b>Semi-urgent<sup>1</sup></b>	91%	87%	92%	91%	91%	88%	91%	92%	92%
<b>Non-urgent<sup>2</sup></b>	91%	91%	92%	92%	92%	91%	91%	92%	92%

1. Excluding staged procedures.
2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

**Note:** Because of changes in methods and reporting, numbers of surgical procedures by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Ministry of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports* and Bureau *Hospital Quarterly* reports published prior to May 2011.

**Source:** Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2012 and October to December 2012 on 31 January 2013. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

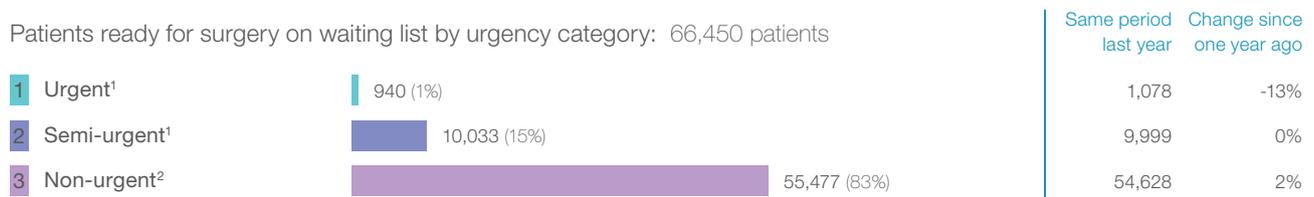
Figure 3: Median<sup>1</sup> waiting time (days) for patients who received elective surgery, by procedure,<sup>2</sup> October to December 2012



1. This is the number of days it took for half the patients who received elective surgery during the period to be admitted and receive their surgery. The other half took equal to or longer than the median to be admitted for surgery.
2. For a description of these procedures see *Elective Surgery Glossary of Common Procedures, December 2012*.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2012 and October to December 2012 on 31 January 2013. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Figure 4: Elective surgery waiting list, as at 31 December 2012



1. Excluding staged procedures.
2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for July to September 2012 and October to December 2012 on 31 January 2013. Data extracted for July to September 2011, October to December 2011, January to March 2012 and April to June 2012 on 19 October 2012. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

# Emergency departments

## Arriving at the ED

More than half a million patients attended NSW public hospital EDs during October to December 2012, 3% more than the same quarter in 2011. The greatest increase was seen in the emergency category (triage 2), with presentations 16% higher than the same quarter last year. These patients accounted for 11% of all emergency presentations.

The number of ambulance arrivals increased by 3% compared with the same quarter in 2011. During the quarter, 64% of ambulance patients were transferred into the care of the ED within 30 minutes of arrival. This compares with 57% in the previous quarter and 66% in the same quarter last year (Figure 5). The target is 90%.

## Time to treatment

The median times to start treatment were unchanged or shorter compared to the same quarter in 2011 (Figure 6). This quarter, the median time to start treatment was:

- eight minutes, the same as one year ago (triage 2)
- 21 minutes, two minutes less than one year ago (triage 3)
- 29 minutes, four minutes less than one year ago (triage 4)
- 27 minutes, four minutes less than one year ago (triage 5).

The 95th percentile times to start treatment were lower in each triage category. This quarter, 95% of patients began treatment within:

- 33 minutes, five minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 2)

- 111 minutes, 13 minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 3)
- 156 minutes, 20 minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 4)
- 149 minutes, 25 minutes shorter than one year ago (triage 5).

## Leaving the ED

In the October to December 2012 quarter, the median time to leaving the ED was 10 minutes less at three hours and six minutes, compared to the same quarter in 2011. The 95th percentile time to leaving the ED was one hour and 15 minutes less at 11 hours and 13 minutes (Figure 7).

During the October to December 2012 quarter:

- Most patients were discharged home. On average, these patients spent less time in the ED than other patients (Figure 8).
- About a quarter of ED patients were admitted to hospital (Figure 6). On average, these patients spent the most time in the ED (Figure 8).
- A small group of patients were transferred to another hospital. On average, these patients spent longer in the ED than patients who were discharged (Figure 8).
- Some patients left the ED without, or before completing, treatment. On average, these patients spent the shortest time in the ED (Figure 8).

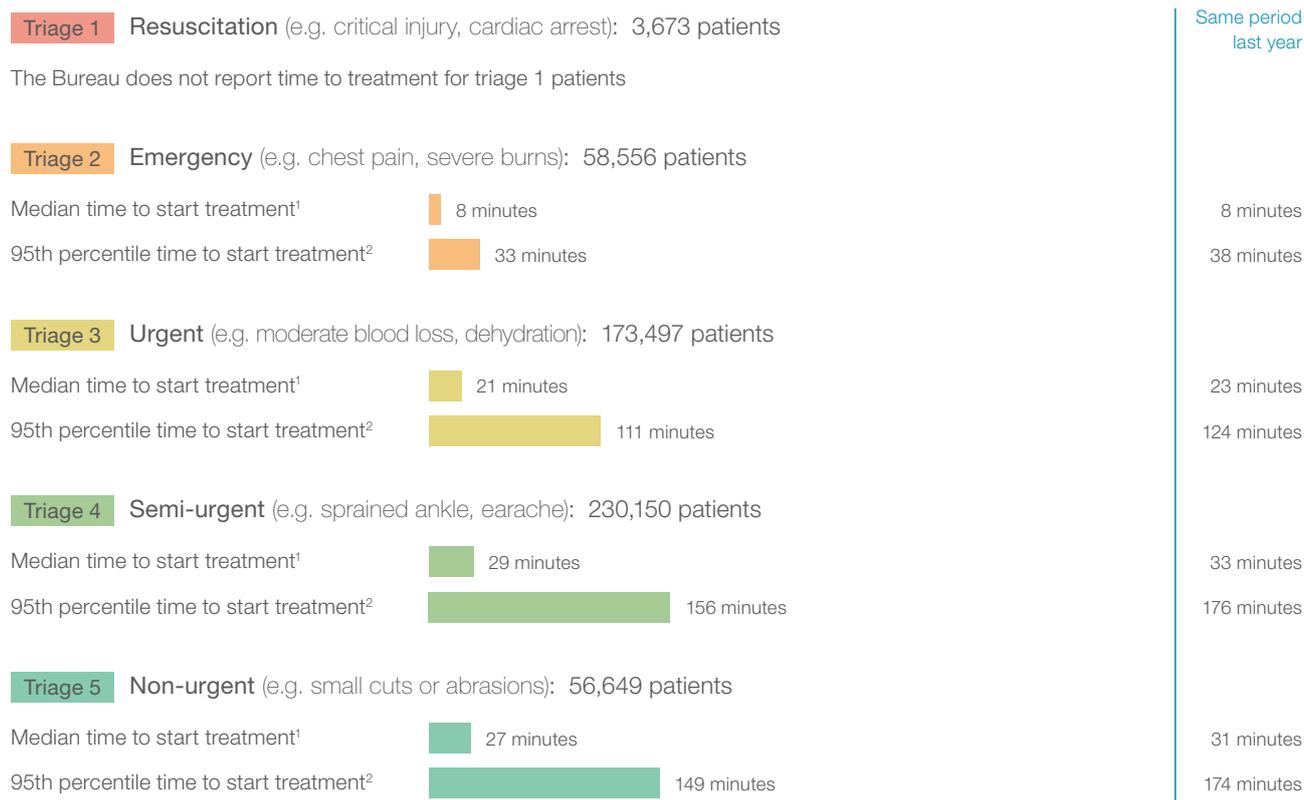
The National Emergency Access Target for NSW in 2012 is for 69% of all patients to leave EDs within four hours. In this quarter, 64% of patients left the ED within four hours of presentation (Figure 8).

Figure 5: Ambulance arrivals and percentage of patients accepted into the care of NSW emergency departments from an ambulance within 30 minutes of arrival, October 2010 to December 2012

	Oct-Dec 2010	Jan-Mar 2011	Apr-Jun 2011	Jul-Sep 2011	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012	Oct-Dec 2012
Off-stretcher time (OST)	67%	67%	66%	61%	66%	69%	64%	57%	64%
Ambulance arrivals	131,378	127,983	130,808	135,743	136,041	134,821	139,956	143,908	140,362

Source: Data provided by NSW Ambulance Service on 24 January 2013.

Figure 6: Waiting times for treatment in NSW emergency departments, October to December 2012



1. The median is the time by which half of patients started treatment. The other half of patients took equal to or longer than this time.
2. The 95th percentile is the time by which 95% of patients started treatment. The final 5% of patients took equal to or longer than this time.

**Note:** Treatment time is the earliest time recorded when a healthcare professional gives medical care for the patient's presenting problems.

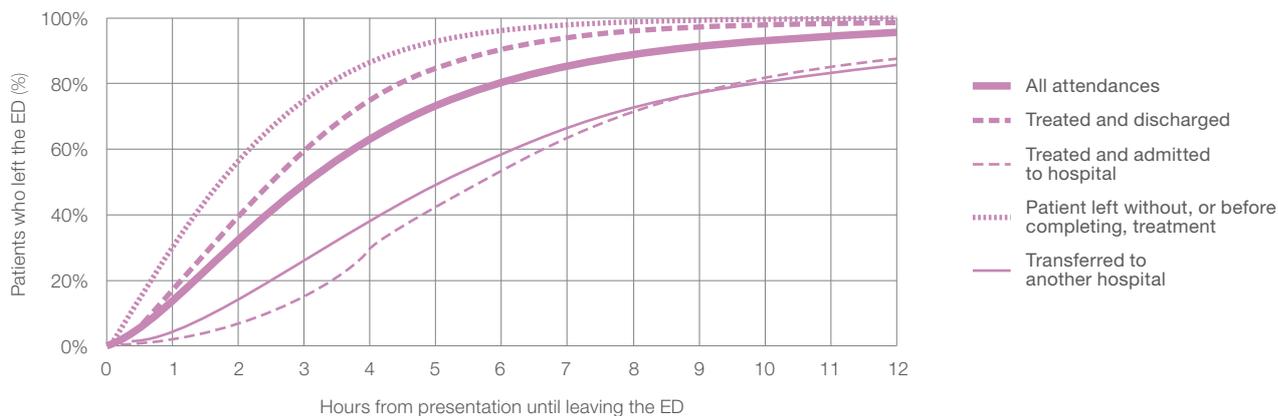
**Source:** Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 25 January 2013.

Figure 7: Time from presentation until leaving the emergency department, October to December 2012

		Same period last year
All attendances at the emergency department: <sup>1</sup>	579,776 patients	562,616
Attendances used to calculate time to leaving the ED: <sup>2</sup>	579,743 patients	533,925
Median time to leaving the ED <sup>3</sup>	3 hours and 6 minutes	3 hours and 16 minutes
95th percentile time to leaving the ED <sup>4</sup>	11 hours and 13 minutes	12 hours and 28 minutes

1. All emergency and non-emergency attendances at the emergency department (ED).
  2. All attendances that have a departure time.
  3. The median is the time by which half of patients left the ED. The other half of patients took equal to or longer than this time.
  4. The 95th percentile is the time by which 95% of patients left the ED. The final 5% of patients took equal to or longer than this time.
- Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 25 January 2013.

Figure 8: Percentage of patients who left the emergency department, by time and mode of separation, October to December 2012



1 hour    2 hours    3 hours    4 hours    6 hours    8 hours    10 hours    12 hours

	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours	6 hours	8 hours	10 hours	12 hours
Treated and discharged	17%	40%	60%	76%	91%	96%	98%	99%
Treated and admitted to hospital	2%	7%	16%	30%	53%	71%	82%	87%
Patient left without, or before completing treatment	30%	56%	75%	87%	96%	99%	99%	100%
Transferred to another hospital	4%	14%	26%	38%	59%	73%	81%	86%
All attendances	14%	32%	49%	64%	80%	89%	94%	96%

Note: Time from presentation to the emergency department (ED) until recorded as leaving the ED.  
 Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 25 January 2013.

## Download our reports

The report, *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, October to December 2012* and related reports are available at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

The suite of products includes:

- *At a Glance* summarising the three core modules
- Three core modules titled *Admitted Patients, Elective Surgery and Emergency Departments*
- Activity and performance reports about emergency department care and elective surgery for more than 60 hospitals and NSW as a whole
- *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 inform efforts to increase its beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of the people of NSW.

The Bureau is an independent, board-governed statutory health corporation. The conclusions in this report are those of the Bureau and no official endorsement by the NSW Minister for Health, the NSW Ministry of Health or any other NSW public health organisation is intended or should be inferred.

### To contact the Bureau

**Telephone:** +61 2 8644 2100

**Fax:** +61 2 8644 2119

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

**Postal address:**

PO Box 1770

Chatswood

New South Wales 2057

Australia

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

Copyright Bureau of Health Information 2013

State Health Publication Number: (BHI) 130006

ISSN 1838-3238

Suggested citation: Bureau of Health Information. *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, October to December 2012. At a glance. 3(4).* Sydney (NSW); 2013.

Published March 2013

Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au) for any amendments.