

At a glance

Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals

April to June 2011

The Bureau of Health Information's latest *Hospital Quarterly* report adds to the evolving picture of hospital performance in NSW. In three separate modules, it reports on admitted patients, those who attended emergency departments (EDs) and those who underwent elective surgery during April to June 2011. Detailed information for more than 80 hospitals is available in the Performance Profiles on the Bureau's website www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

In this latest *Hospital Quarterly*, the Bureau has made the decision to not report emergency department performance measures. Preliminary analysis by the Bureau suggests there may be differences between hospitals in the way some emergency department information is recorded. Such differences can be clinically appropriate, but make it difficult to compare hospitals.

The Bureau is conducting a more extensive analysis and consultation about emergency department data and information systems to understand these differences and improve the way we report performance information to support fairer hospital comparisons.

The next issue of *Hospital Quarterly* will include performance measures from April to June 2011 and July to September 2011 quarters to ensure the availability of time series information.

From April to June 2011 ...	Same period last year ...	The difference ...
There were 412,497 admitted patient episodes	400,860 episodes	11,637 (+3%)
Acute patients stayed a total of 1,360,866 bed days in hospital	1,322,234 bed days	38,632 bed days (+3%)
18,254 babies were born	17,924 babies	330 (+2%)
52,089 elective surgical procedures were performed	53,064 procedures	-975 (-2%)
The percentage of urgent procedures treated on time was 93%	91%	2 percentage point increase
The percentage of urgent procedures treated on time was 91%	86%	5 percentage point increase
The percentage of urgent procedures treated on time was 92%	85%	7 percentage point increase
There were 512,592 visits to NSW emergency departments	496,182 visits	16,410 (+3%)
127,486 people travelled to the emergency department by ambulance	122,200 people	5,286 (+4%)
There were 119,507 admissions to hospital from emergency departments	111,998 admissions	7,509 (+7%)

In NSW public hospitals during April to June 2011, on average for each day ...

5,633 people attended an emergency department
1,313 people were admitted to hospital as emergency admissions
572 people had elective surgery
201 babies were born

Elective surgery

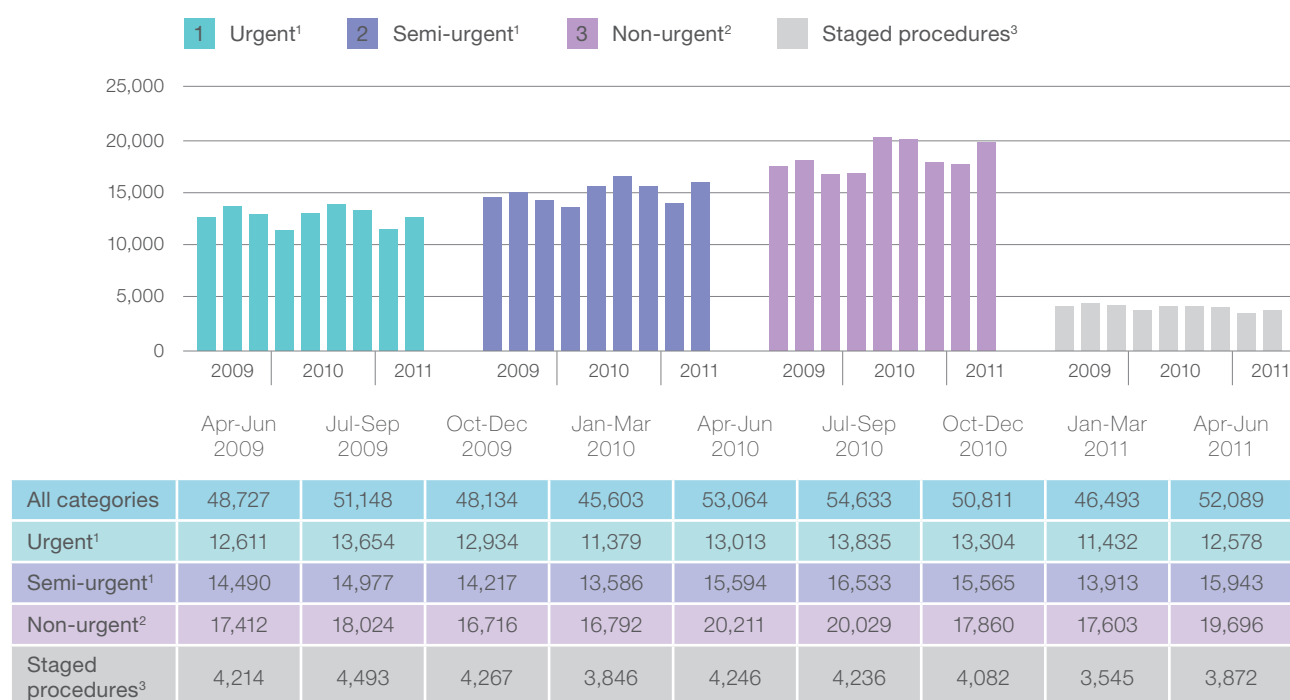
Number of completed procedures

The amount of elective surgery conducted each quarter changes depending on the time of year. There was an increase in the number of procedures during April to June 2011 when compared with the previous quarter, which is typical for this time of year. Elective surgery procedures generally fall sharply across all urgency categories in December and, to a greater extent, January. Compared with the same time last year, however, less elective surgery was performed (Figure 1).

During the quarter, there were 52,089 elective procedures. This represents more procedures overall than last quarter (up 12%), fewer procedures than the same period last year (down 2%) and more than two years ago (7%).

Compared with the same time one year ago, less surgery was performed in the urgent and non-urgent categories (both down 3%), although semi-urgent surgery increased by 2%. Staged surgery decreased by 9% from the same quarter last year although this group is small, making up 7% of all completed surgical procedures.

Figure 1: Total number of elective surgery procedures conducted, by urgency category, April 2009 to June 2011



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 Department of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports*.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for the April to June 2011 quarter on 18 July 2011. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

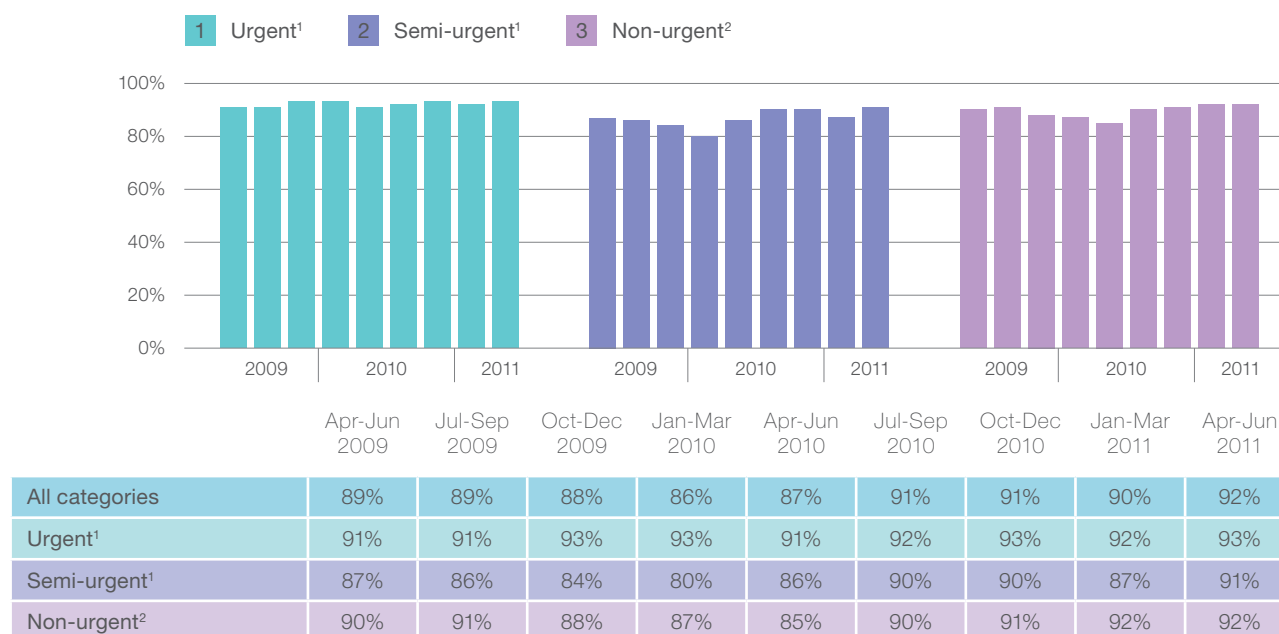
On-time admissions

Most patients continued to receive their elective surgery on time during the quarter, with 92% of patients admitted to hospital within the time frame recommended by their surgeon. This is up on the previous quarter (90%) and higher than the same time last year (87%).

On-time performance showed considerable improvement this quarter. In the urgent category, 93% of patients were admitted for surgery on-time, up two percentage points from the same quarter in 2010; 91% of semi-urgent patients were admitted on-time, up five percentage points; 92% of non-urgent patients were admitted on-time, up seven percentage points (Figure 2).

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

Figure 2: NSW elective surgery on-time performance, by urgency category, April 2009 to June 2011



1. Excluding staged procedures.

2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Note: Because staged patients are now reported separately, on-time performance by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Department of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports*.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for the April to June 2011 quarter on 18 July 2011. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Surgery waiting times

Median waiting times were 11 days for urgent surgery, 48 days for semi-urgent surgery and 221 days for non-urgent surgery (Figure 3).

During the April to June 2011 quarter, there was a decrease in the median number of days non-urgent surgery patients waited (221 days) compared with last year (231 days) but still considerably higher than in the same quarter in 2009 (167 days). Wait times for patients needing urgent and semi-urgent surgery were relatively unchanged compared to the previous quarter or last year (Figure 3).

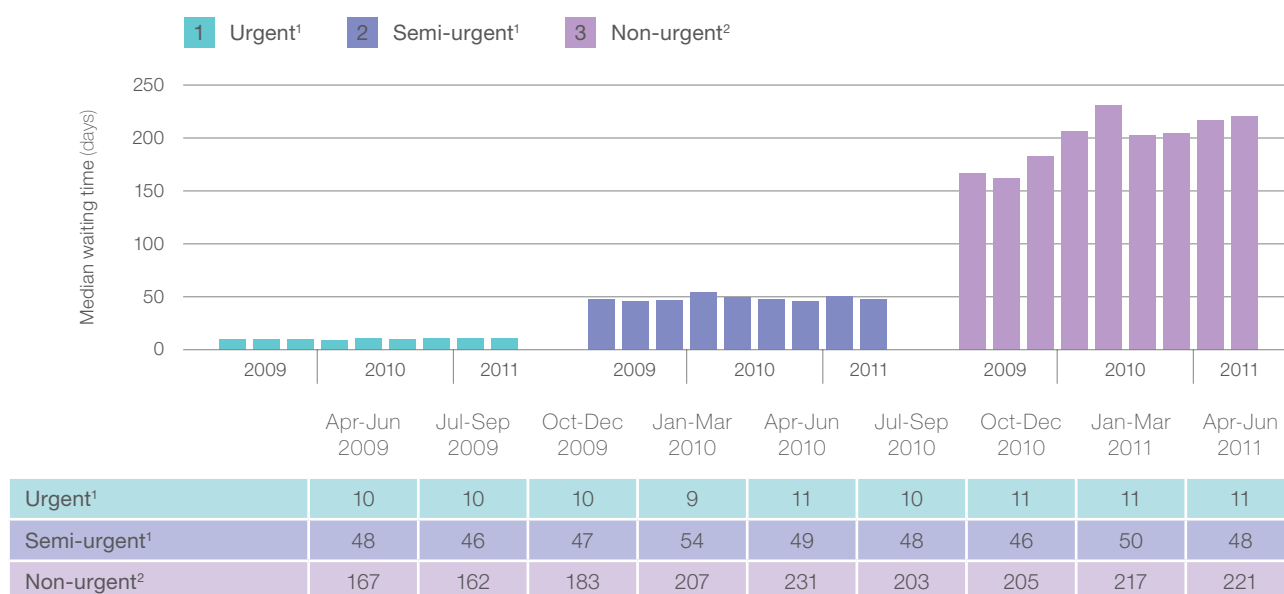
Surgical performance measures in this issue of *Hospital Quarterly* exclude patients who had a 'staged' surgery and non-urgent cystoscopy.

"What we see is more elective surgery procedures being completed than two years ago but also more patients being seen on time."

Dr Diane Watson

Chief Executive
Bureau of Health Information

Figure 3: NSW elective surgery median waiting time (days), by urgency category, April 2009 to June 2011



1. Excluding staged procedures.

2. Excluding staged procedures and non-urgent cystoscopy.

Note: Patients recorded as 'deferred' when they received their surgery are allocated to 'ready for care' urgency categories as appropriate.

Note: Because staged patients are now reported separately, median waiting time by urgency category will differ from those reported in previous NSW Department of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Reports*.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted for the April to June 2011 quarter on 18 July 2011. Data extracted for all previous quarters on 15 July 2011.

Cumulative waiting time

Greater detail on how long people waited to be admitted for their elective surgery during April to June 2011 is presented in [Figure 4](#).

The graph's slope indicates the rate at which patients were admitted for care. A steep slope demonstrates a high percentage of patients being admitted for their surgery over the period shown. A flat slope shows relatively fewer patients receiving surgery over the period.

Urgent patients have the most rapid rate of admission and almost all patients are admitted for surgery within 45 days. Non-urgent patients are admitted at a slower rate with almost all patients admitted within 420 days.

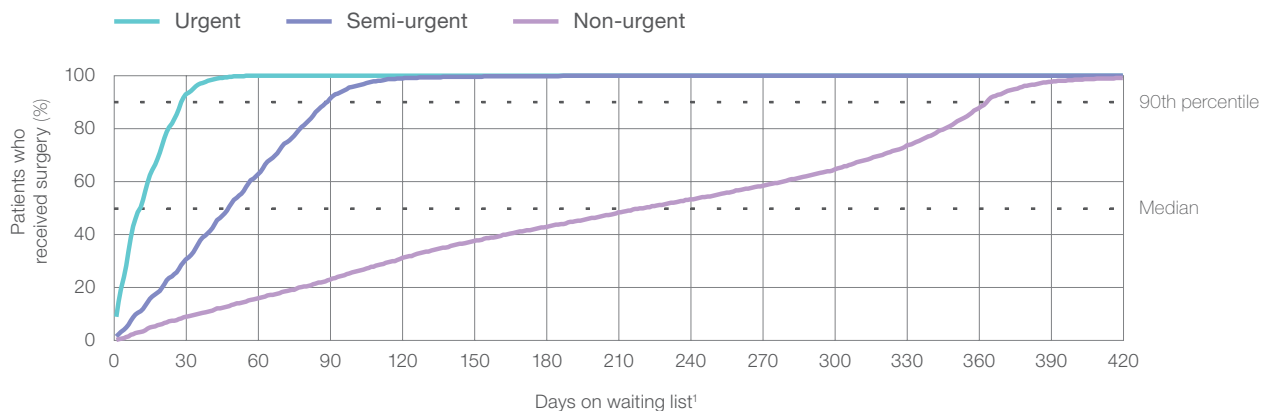
Find out how **your local** hospital

PERFORMS

Detailed information about emergency department volumes and elective surgery volumes and performance of more than **80 NSW hospitals** is available at

www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

Figure 4: Cumulative percentage of patients who received elective surgery, by waiting time (days), April to June 2011



Note: Excludes the total number of days the patient was coded as 'not ready for care'.

Source: Waiting List Collection On-line System, NSW Health. Data extracted on 18 July 2011.

Emergency departments

Emergency department attendances

More than half a million patients attended public hospital emergency departments (EDs) during April to June 2011, 3% more than during the same quarter last year but only 2% more than two years ago at the start of the swine flu epidemic (Figure 5).

Annually, ED attendance numbers are highest during October to December and lowest during April to June, resulting in an expected decrease of 3% from last quarter and 4% since the October to December peak.

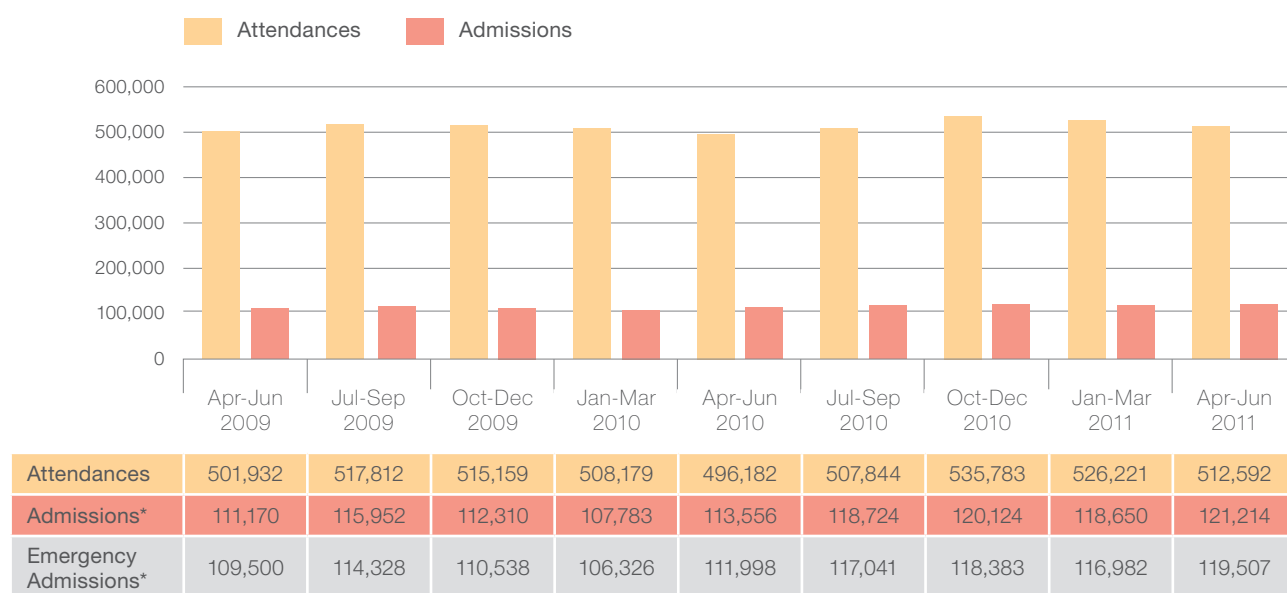
Ambulance arrivals

A quarter (25%) of all people who attended NSW EDs during April to June 2011 were transported there by ambulance, a total of 127,486 patients.

The overall number of patients delivered to emergency departments by ambulances has increased by 4% since the same quarter last year and by 5% since the same quarter two years ago.

In the April to June 2010 quarter, 25% of patients (122,200) arrived by ambulance and during the same period in 2009, 24% (121,372 patients) arrived this way.

Figure 5: Attendances at, and admissions from, NSW emergency departments, April 2009 to June 2011



(*) Admissions refers to all admissions through the emergency department. Emergency admissions refers only to those patients attending for an emergency or unplanned presentation, and who have a recorded triage category.

Note: Emergency department activity includes 87 facilities for which electronic data are reported. This covers approximately 85% of NSW emergency department activity.

Note: Numbers might differ slightly from those previously reported by the NSW Department of Health's *Quarterly Hospital Performance Report* due to differences in when data were extracted from the emergency department information system.

Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 20 July 2011.

Leaving the emergency department

Almost seven in 10 patients (67%) who attended an ED during April to June 2011 received treatment there but were not subsequently admitted to that hospital (Figure 6).

More than two in 10 (24%) were treated in ED and admitted to the same hospital, and were most likely to have a potentially life-threatening condition (triage 3). Emergency admissions

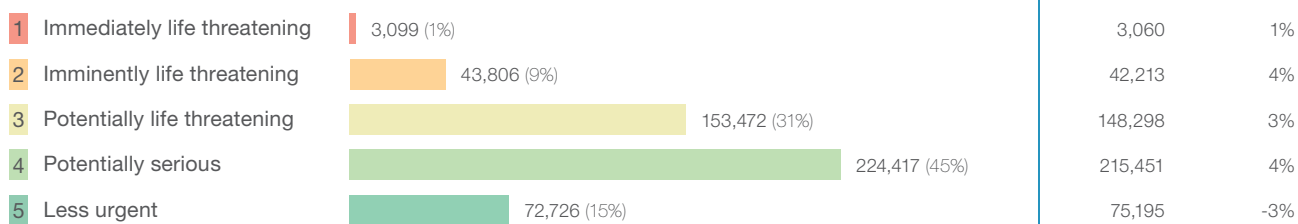
increased by 7,509 cases (+7%) since the same quarter last year and by 10,007 since two years ago (+9%).

Less than one in 10 (7%) left the ED without, or before completing, treatment and these people were most likely to come from the least urgent categories (triage 4 and 5). Patients have a number of reasons for leaving before completing treatment, including being dissatisfied with the care they received or their reason for visiting resolved without treatment from staff.

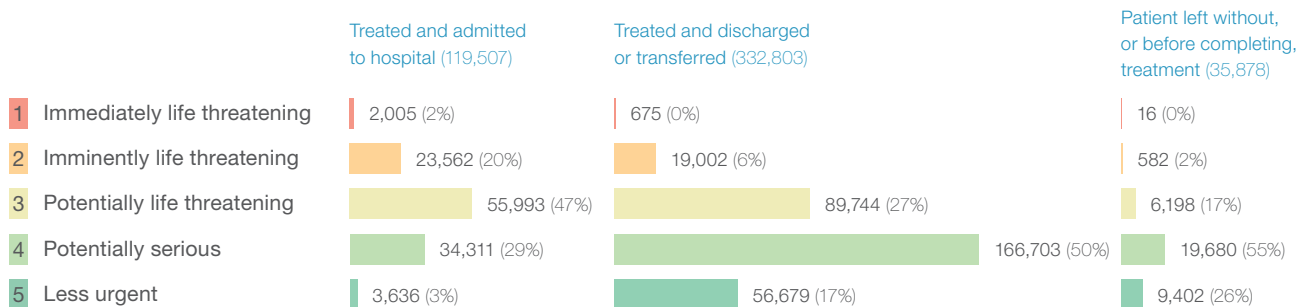
Figure 6: Attendances at NSW emergency departments, April to June 2011

All attendances:¹ 512,592 patients

Emergency attendances² by triage category: 497,520 patients



Emergency attendances by triage category and mode of separation:³ 488,188 patients



- All attendances at the emergency department including emergency and non-emergency.
- All emergency attendances (emergency presentation and unplanned return visits for a continuing condition) with a recorded triage category.
- All emergency attendances with a recorded triage category, excluding attendances with a mode of separation of 'transferred prior to treatment', 'dead on arrival' or 'died in ED'.

Note: All percentages rounded to whole numbers and therefore percentages may not add to 100%.

Note: Emergency department activity includes 87 facilities for which electronic data are reported. This covers approximately 85% of NSW emergency department activity.

Source: Health Information Exchange, NSW Health. Data extracted on 20 July 2011.

Download our reports

The report, *Hospital Quarterly: Performance of NSW public hospitals, April to June 2011* and related reports are available at www.bhi.nsw.gov.au

The suite of products includes:

- Three core modules on Admitted Patients, Elective Surgery and Emergency Departments
- *Performance Profiles: Elective surgery* (performance and activity reports for more than 80 hospitals and NSW as a whole)
- *Performance Profiles: Emergency department care* (activity reports for EDs in 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 Department of Health or any other NSW public health organisation is intended or should be inferred.

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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 for any amendments.