

29 May 2024

## NSW emergency departments continue to experience major and sustained pressure during first quarter of 2024

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released its latest *Healthcare Quarterly* report, showing activity and performance for public health services in NSW during January to March 2024.

BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said the latest quarterly results show that NSW public hospital emergency departments (EDs) experienced major and sustained pressure during the first quarter of 2024.

“In January to March, EDs once again saw record numbers of patients, and treated record numbers of patients with the most urgent clinical conditions,” said Dr Watson.

There were 810,201 **emergency department (ED)** attendances – up 5.2% from the same quarter a year earlier and the highest of any quarter since BHI began reporting in 2010. Of those, 192,874 patients arrived by **ambulance** – up 7.0% and also the highest ever.

66.1% of all ED patients had their treatment start on time – down slightly from the same quarter last year. Just 55.9% of patients left the ED within four hours – a record low.

There were 51,149 **elective surgeries** performed – down 6.6% from the same quarter last year. Of those elective surgeries, 86.2% were performed on time – up from 75.0% a year earlier.

Compared with the end of March 2023, the number of patients on the waiting list decreased to 93,839 (from 96,825) and those who had waited longer than clinically recommended decreased to 3,419 from 14,059. However, both were up compared with the end of December 2023.

“While the number of patients on the waiting list ready for surgery at the end of March rose for the first time this quarter in almost two years, the list remains close to pre-pandemic levels,” said Dr Watson.

There were 481,335 patients **admitted to NSW public hospitals** – up 2.7% compared with the same quarter a year earlier.

In this issue of *Healthcare Quarterly*, the Special Reporting section contains additional insights into the adoption and use of Hospital in the Home across NSW public hospitals.

Hospital in the Home – a clinical model that provides acute or sub-acute care in a patient’s home or in the community, as a substitute for in-hospital care – is used to manage a range of common conditions, most commonly including cellulitis, urinary tract infections and pneumonia.

In the January to March quarter, take-up of Hospital in the Home services varied considerably across NSW local health districts, with the highest usage still only accounting for 4.4% of total episodes of care.

“Evidence shows that Hospital in the Home offers a range of benefits for patients, including the ability to recover in familiar surroundings, and reducing the risk of adverse events related to hospital admissions,” said Dr Watson.

“The clear potential for the expansion of this model of care therefore presents an opportunity for patients, as well as NSW health services to benefit from increased hospital bed capacity.”

Detailed results for *Healthcare Quarterly* are available at [bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://bhi.nsw.gov.au)

**SPOKESPERSON:** Hilary Rowell, Acting Chief Executive

**MEDIA CONTACT:** 0408 472 625