



Media Release

Hunter New England Local Health District delivers more surgeries on time as emergency department attendances rise across NSW

13 March 2024

The latest Bureau of Health Information (BHI) Healthcare Quarterly report (October to December 2023) shows Hunter New England Local Health District (HNELHD) made significant improvements in completing planned surgeries, cutting the overdue waitlist by 67.1 per cent and performing more planned surgeries on time.

Chief Executive, Tracey McCosker said the District maintained a steady increase in surgical activity across all urgency categories in the October to December 2023 quarter, compared with the same quarter in 2022.

"It's extremely encouraging to see our strategy in delivering world-class healthcare for every patient every time is evident in the latest release of hospital performance data," Ms McCosker said.

"Our District saw an 8.9 per cent increase overall in planned surgeries performed during the quarter, totalling 7,210, with the biggest improvements seen in non-urgent and staged surgery categories of 13.8 per cent and 19.2 per cent, respectively.

"It's fantastic to see such an increase to 86 per cent, in the number of patients who received their planned surgery on time, a testament to the dedication of our staff and the strategies employed to reduce the number of patients exceeding the recommended timeframe for their planned procedure."

At the end of the final 2023 quarter, across the District, there were 303 fewer semi-urgent patients awaiting planned surgery, a reduction of 14.4 per cent, compared with the same quarter in 2022.

HNELHD emergency departments (EDs) also performed well, attendances remained steady at 114,767 attendances in the final quarter of 2023, with 67.6 per cent of patients starting treatment on time.

"Our dedicated emergency department staff do a fantastic job and I want to express my gratitude to our teams providing care to our most sick and vulnerable patients," Ms McCosker said.

"Despite seeing a five per cent increase in triage category 2 (Emergency) patients, we saw a reduction in their time to start treatment. In particular, the semi-urgent category had wait times 2 minutes quicker than the same time in 2022."

"The District has been very successful in its recent recruitment efforts, and we're excited to welcome those coming to our regional and rural facilities in the coming months," Ms McCosker said.

"I acknowledge the strains on our staff at the moment. I want to reassure the community we are working very hard to bring more people to our regions with generous incentive offers and relocation payments."

The community is reminded that any patients who feel their condition may have deteriorated while awaiting surgery are encouraged to contact their treating doctor who can review their condition and place them in a higher urgency category if appropriate.

If an illness or injury is not serious or life-threatening, there are several other care options available to the community, including calling Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222, for 24-hour telephone health advice, speaking to your local pharmacist for mild illnesses or visiting your GP.