



## Media Release

### Hunter New England Health performs despite continued demand

Public hospitals across the Hunter and New England regions continue to perform well, despite sustained demand for high-level emergency care.

The latest Bureau of Health Information (BHI) *Healthcare Quarterly* report (January – March 2023) captures another busy quarter for Hunter New England Local Health District (HNELHD), with a record number of complex presentations to the District's EDs.

Susan Heyman, Acting Chief Executive, Hunter New England Local Health District thanked staff for their commitment to delivering safe and compassionate care to the community.

"In the first quarter of 2023, the District saw 110,800 attendances to our emergency departments, including an unprecedented number of patients (14,781) presenting with an imminently life-threatening condition (triage category 2), which is a record high for the District," said Ms Heyman.

"These patients often require significant time and effort from staff as they provide high-level emergency care – and pleasingly, the average time to start treatment for this triage category is 10 per cent faster than the state at 9 minutes.

"I would like to express my gratitude to our dedicated staff who continue to go above and beyond to provide life-saving care to our patients, despite high activity and ongoing challenges to secure health staff, especially across our rural and regional areas."

During the reporting period, the majority of patients (66.4 per cent) started their treatment on time. Further, almost 8 in 10 patients (79.4 per cent) were transferred from ambulance to hospital staff within the 30-minute benchmark, which is better than the state average (77.7 per cent).

Of the more than 107,000 ED presentations, 59,346 (55.4 per cent) were in the semi-urgent (triage 4) and non-urgent (triage 5) categories.

"While it's encouraging to see fewer people visit our emergency departments with less urgent conditions, more than half of all presentations still did not require urgent, life-saving or critical care," said Ms Heyman.

"We aim to see every patient as quickly as possible, but the most unwell patients will always be prioritised and treated first, meaning those with less urgent conditions may face a wait, especially during times of high activity.

"We thank the community for their patience and understanding, especially those who have faced a longer wait than usual. While we continue to address some of these challenges, we remind everyone to support us by saving our emergency departments for saving lives, especially as we come into the winter season."

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.

A total of 6,977 planned surgeries were performed across the District, an increase of 346 surgeries on the preceding October – December 2022 quarter (6,631).

Almost all urgent planned surgeries (99.9 per cent) were performed on time.

We remind the community that any patients who feel their condition may have deteriorated while awaiting surgery should contact their treating doctor who can review their condition and place them in a higher urgency category if required.