

**Date:** 6 June 2018

## **New scorecard for Hunter New England Health released**

The BHI Healthcare Quarterly Activity and Performance Report for January to March 2018 is in and results show that the hard work of staff across the District is helping to reduce waiting times and improve the patient experience, particularly in Emergency Departments.

Mr Michael DiRienzo, Chief Executive of Hunter New England Local Health District said, while overall the District experienced a small reduction in Emergency Department presentations, there was a 19.5 percent increase in resuscitations – the most urgent category of patients.

“Demand on our hospitals, especially our Emergency Departments, is always high, and our staff are working hard to ensure patients receive high quality and safe care,” Mr DiRienzo said.

“A number of our hospitals are performing well above the state average in terms of patients being seen, treated and either transferred or discharged from the Emergency Department within recommended timeframes.

“We are performing better than the state average, with 76.1 of patients leaving our Emergency Departments within the four hour target, the average time being two hours and 22 minutes,” Mr DiRienzo said.

Across the District, more than 78 percent of patients started their treatment within recommended timeframes, which is an improvement on the same period last year.

John Hunter Hospital performed particularly well during the January to March period. There was a 5.7 percent improvement in patients starting treatment on time. At 76.7 percent, this is also above the state average.

Mr DiRienzo explained that a number of strategies were implemented to support staff to deliver this level of service.

“Our highly trained nursing staff monitor ED waiting rooms to ensure patients are commencing required treatment as promptly as possible,” Mr DiRienzo explained.

“In addition we have a Clinical Initiatives Nurse monitoring and assessing patients in the Waiting Room and commencing simple treatments on a growing volume of patients.

We have also reviewed rosters to ensure there is an overlap of the number of Specialist Doctors during peak daytime periods, and since December we have further increased the number of ED Physicians working in the John Hunter Hospital ED.”

Tamworth Hospital’s Emergency Department performance over the January to March quarter also remained stable, with 72 per cent of patients starting their treatment on time in the Tamworth ED, and almost 74 percent of patients leaving the ED within four hours of their presentation.

There is a 'Whole of Hospital' focus on improving patient flow through the Emergency Department and the hospital, and we are working to attract senior doctors to Tamworth to achieve the best staff mix and to ensure patients are being seen quickly.

Unfortunately increases in emergency presentations to some hospitals saw treatment rates drop, however staff have been working hard to offset the impact that these fluctuations can have on performance times.

"Where we have seen an increase in demand, beyond what is typical for that hospital at that time of year, we are looking at options to better manage services to the local community," Mr DiRienzo said.

"For example, at Belmont Hospital, during orientation for medical staff, there is an increased focus on responding to and reviewing emergency patients in a timely manner. There is also a strong emphasis on delivering efficiency and high quality patient care.

Belmont Hospital is also addressing its Emergency Department processes, including use of additional nursing staff during periods of increased activity and clearer escalation to radiography to access ultrasound and x-ray appointments.

Communities are also being encouraged to seek appointments with their GP for non-urgent health issues, so that the hospital can focus its emergency care on those that need it the most.

"While less urgent presentations to our emergency departments have declined compared to last year, there are still patients coming to hospital emergency departments for non-emergency reasons who could receive treatment more appropriately by accessing services such as their General Practitioner or local pharmacy," Mr DiRienzo added.

The District performed more than 7,300 surgeries from January to March 2018, a 5.4 per cent increase on the same period last year. There were significantly more non-urgent surgeries, which were up by 16.1 percent.

Mr DiRienzo said 98 percent of all elective surgeries were performed on time across the District. Of these, 99.9 percent of urgent surgeries, 98 percent of semi-urgent surgeries and 97.2 percent of non-urgent surgeries were performed on time.

"Standout performances include Belmont Hospital where 100 percent of elective surgeries were performed on time, despite a 5.9 percent increase in activity compared to last year. Manning Hospital also did well, with 99.1 percent of elective surgery performed on time even with a 3.9 per cent increase in activity," said Mr DiRienzo.

"Tamworth Hospital has also maintained an excellent surgery performance with 99.7 per cent of procedures performed within the specified timeframe. The hospital continues to monitor all wait lists every day and is working hard to ensure people receive their surgery sooner."

This performance across all categories is better than the state average. The waiting times for all elective surgeries are well within the recommended timeframes.

"Our staff have been going above and beyond to ensure we continue to meet the demands of the community, and I am grateful for their ongoing commitment to delivering high quality health care across the region," Mr DiRienzo said.

The NSW Government is investing a record \$15.3 billion in acute health services in NSW this year, including \$36 million for growth in emergency care services and \$227 million for more inpatient hospital services. An additional \$3 million will deliver more cataract removal, hip and knee replacement surgeries.