Elective Surgery Waiting List Reduction Plan

Australian Capital Territory Report

On 20 December 2007, COAG announced that the Commonwealth will provide $150 million to the States and Territories in 2008 for an immediate national blitz on waiting lists. The aim of this Plan is that by the end of four years the backlog of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery will be dramatically reduced across Australia.

The Australian Government will provide up to $600 million over four years for the Elective Surgery Waiting List Reduction Plan. The four year Plan includes three stages:

1. $150 million to conduct an immediate national blitz, to help dramatically reduce the backlog of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery
2. $150 million to make systemic improvements to the hospital system and improve elective surgery throughput in the long term
3. Up to $300 million in dividend payments to States and Territories that dramatically increase the number of elective surgeries completed within the clinically recommended time by the end of the four year plan.

More information on the Elective Surgery Waiting List Reduction Plan can be viewed at www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/elective.

Under Stage One of the Plan, the ACT Government received $2.5 million from the Australian Government to provide an additional 250 elective surgery procedures. These additional procedures will be delivered on top of the nearly $49 million this government has funded since 2003-04. Funding for Stage One is targeted at patients who have been waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery, ie long waits.

This project will focus on the ACT's elective surgery waiting list currently maintained within ACT public hospital system (i.e. The Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital). The list includes both ACT and NSW residents.

The ACT will provide treatment to a significant number of people who have been waiting for admission for longer than 365 days. In the case of Category 2 patients, this will also include patients waiting longer than six months. The funding being sought will enable the treatment and removal from the waiting list of 250 persons for various procedures.

A surgical tender has been prepared for private providers. Agreement has also been negotiated with public providers to perform some of the work. Appropriate long wait patients have been identified for referral to public and private providers.

ACT Elective Surgery Information

Table 1: Number of Patients Removed from Waiting List for Admission by Indicator Procedure (January to March 2008)

Number of patients removed from waiting list for admission Quarter 3, 2007-2008			
Indicator procedure	**The Canberra Hospital**	**Calvary Public Hospital**	**Total ACT Public Hospital**
1 Cataract extraction	0	330	330
2 Cholecystectomy	21	33	54
3 Coronary artery bypass graft	37	0	37
4 Cystoscopy	71	54	125
5 Haemorrhoidectomy	n.p	n.p.	9
6 Hysterectomy	16	12	28
7 Inguinal herniorrhaphy	30	29	59
8 Myringoplasty	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.
9 Myringotomy	22	19	41
10 Prostatectomy	n.p.	12	n.p.
11 Septoplasty	28	15	43
12 Tonsillectomy	71	n.p.	n.p.
13 Total hip replacement	19	34	53
14 Total knee replacement	14	40	54
15 Varicose veins strip & ligate	21	n.p.	n.p.
16 Not applicable	831	450	1281
Total	**1199**	**1043**	**2242**

n.p. not published

Table 1 above shows the number of patients removed from the ACT waiting list for admission for surgery for the period January to March 2008. The quarter 3 result for 2007-08 is 2,242 patients admitted for surgery, up from 2,066 in the same quarter in 2006-07. ACT Public Hospitals are on track to meet the target of 9600 elective surgery operations in 2007-08, another record level of access to elective surgery in the ACT.

Table 2: Median Waiting Time for Indicator Procedures and Urgency Category (January to March 2008)

Median waiting time for the 15 indicator procedures and urgency category Quarter 3, 2007-2008			
	Median waiting time (days)		
Indicator procedure	The Canberra Hospital	Calvary Public Hospital	Total ACT Public Hospitals
1 Cataract extraction	0	193	193
2 Cholecystectomy	67	144	120
3 Coronary artery bypass graft	18	0	18
4 Cystoscopy	61	109	74
5 Haemorrhoidectomy	147	92	95
6 Hysterectomy	149	71	94
7 Inguinal herniorrhaphy	117	116	116
8 Myringoplasty	530	0	530
9 Myringotomy	123	179	160
10 Prostatectomy	61	32	57
11 Septoplasty	113	366	154
12 Tonsillectomy	389	457	419
13 Total hip replacement	461	192	206
14 Total knee replacement	301	244	267
15 Varicose veins strip & ligate	434	184	433
16 Not applicable	37	73	50
Total	**69**	**119**	**97**
Urgency category			
Category 1: Admission within 30 days	15	16	15
Category 2: Admission within 90 days	114	118	118
Category 3: Admission at some time in the future	475	195	202
Total	**69**	**119**	**97**

Table 2 above shows that median waiting time statistics (50th percentile) from the waiting list for elective surgery, by indicator procedures for the period January to March 2008. Waiting times at admission for elective surgery by Categories 1, 2 and 3 at the 50th percentile is also reported in Table 2.

The additional $2.5 million provided by the Commonwealth Government will target those specialities with the longest wait. As a result the median waiting times will increase, as the number of long-wait patients who have had their surgery are included in calculating the median waiting time.

Additional information on elective surgery can be found in the ACT Health Public Services Performance report, a comprehensive quarterly report published on the ACT Health website at www.health.act.gov.au/reports

Table 3: Number of Patients Waiting by Urgency Category and by Surgical Speciality (January to March 2008)

Number of patients waiting by urgency category and by surgical speciality Quarter 3, 2007-2008						
Surgical speciality	Current clinical urgency					
	Category 1		Category 2		Category 3	
	waiting	overdue	waiting	overdue	waiting	overdue
1 Cardiothoracic surgery	0	0	13	n.p.	0	0
2 Ear, nose and throat surgery	5	0	471	332	503	147
3 General surgery	49	n.p	316	151	54	n.p.
4 Gynaecology	17	n.p	197	82	170	16
5 Neurosurgery	7	n.p	94	55	18	13
6 Ophthalmology	4	0	32	n.p.	641	47
7 Orthopaedic surgery	7	0	854	570	243	119
8 Plastic surgery	6	0	161	92	93	55
9 Urology	21	n.p	395	270	163	44
10 Vascular surgery	13	n.p	46	28	138	35
11 Other	26	n.p	129	33	73	8
Total	**155**	**7**	**2708**	**1618**	**2096**	**485**

n.p. not published

The ACT Government also reports surgeon waiting times and operating sessions for ACT's public hospitals. This web page provides information on average waiting times for elective surgery for either a particular doctor or a clinical speciality. The web page shows the number of operating sessions a doctor has at either of the two Public Hospitals in the ACT. This information can be found in ACT Health's webpage at www.health.act.gov.au/waitinglists

Note: The data is this Report is preliminary.