The National Elective Surgery Waiting List Reduction Plan

ACT Report for period October to December 2010

The national waiting list reduction plan

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.

The ACT response

To improve access to elective surgery, the Commonwealth and the ACT Government have entered into a partnership to significantly increase the number of elective surgery operations provided in our public hospitals each year and reduce the number of people waiting more than clinically recommended times for that surgery.

As part of this program, the Commonwealth and ACT Government have made a commitment to add funds to the ACT Health budget to be spent specifically to increase access to surgery over the next four years.

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, also called “long waits”.

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

Under the National Elective Surgery Reduction Plan, the ACT will provide access to surgery for 10,712 Canberrans during 2011-12, a 13 percent increase on the total provided last year. This additional activity is working to reduce the number of people waiting longer than standard timeframes for care, with a 21 percent reduction noted over the 2010 calendar year.

While increasing access to elective surgery for people waiting beyond standard timeframes, our public hospitals have been also able to ensure that the majority of patients with the most urgent elective surgery needs (mainly cancer and major heart surgery) are admitted for surgery within the nationally recommended timeframe of 30 days.

Under the Commonwealth's Elective Surgery Reduction Plan, ACT Health has also constructed an additional three operating theatres at our public hospitals. While the building of the theatres has been funded by the Commonwealth, the ACT Government will fund the additional elective and emergency surgery activity that will be possible given the increase in operating room capacity.

ACT Elective Surgery Information

Under the National Elective Surgery Reduction Plan, ACT public hospitals have been able to provide record levels of access to elective surgery.

Table 1: Number of Patients Removed from Waiting List for Admission by Indicator Procedure (October to December 2010) – preliminary

Number of patients removed from waiting list for admission Quarter 2, 2010-2011			
Indicator procedure	**TCH**	**Calvary**	**Total ACT Public Hospital**
1 Cataract extraction	np	267	np
2 Cholecystectomy	36	37	73
3 Coronary artery bypass graft	25	np	np
4 Cystoscopy	102	141	243
5 Haemorrhoidectomy	np	np	np
6 Hysterectomy	24	12	36
7 Inguinal herniorrhaphy	48	30	78
8 Myringoplasty	np	np	np
9 Myringotomy	19	17	36
10 Prostatectomy	19	np	np
11 Septoplasty	np	18	27
12 Tonsillectomy	93	10	103
13 Total hip replacement	19	28	47
14 Total knee replacement	17	55	72
15 Varicose veins strip & ligate	21	np	np
16 Not applicable	1108	552	1660
Total	**1543**	**1180**	**2723**

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Table 1 above shows the number of patients removed from the ACT waiting list for admission for surgery for the period October to December 2010. The quarter 2 result for 2010-11 of 2,723 patients admitted for surgery, is up by 369 admissions from 2,354 in the same quarter in 2008-09.

Over the last three quarters (quarter four of 2009-10 and quarters one and two of 2010-11) our public hospitals have reported the highest levels of elective surgery on record. This achievement will ensure that our public hospitals meet the 2010-11 financial year target of 10,712 operations, up 10 percent from the total reported in the previous financial year.

Table 2: Median Waiting Time for Indicator Procedures and Urgency Category (October to December 2010) – preliminary

Median waiting time for the 15 indicator procedures and urgency category Quarter 2, 2010-11			
	Median waiting time (days)		
Indicator procedure	The Canberra Hospital	Calvary Public Hospital	Total ACT Public Hospitals
1 Cataract extraction	30	152	151
2 Cholecystectomy	65	87	73
3 Coronary artery bypass graft	12	0	12
4 Cystoscopy	57	93	67
5 Haemorrhoidectomy	22	168	146
6 Hysterectomy	44	54	45
7 Inguinal herniorrhaphy	74	139	103
8 Myringoplasty	462	0	462
9 Myringotomy	129	201	153
10 Prostatectomy	63	572	82
11 Septoplasty	415	522	484
12 Tonsillectomy	419	344	408
13 Total hip replacement	139	205	172
14 Total knee replacement	187	353	323
15 Varicose veins strip & ligate	342	196	311
16 Not applicable	30	64	38
Total	**41**	**113**	**68**
Median Waiting Times By Urgency Category			
Category 1: Admission within 30 days	14	20	16
Category 2: Admission within 90 days	83	111	97
Category 3: Admission at some time in futur	297	212	231
Total	**41**	**113**	**68**

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 June 2010. The median waiting time for the December Quarter 2010 of 68 days is well below the 91 days reported for the first quarter of 2010 (the March Quarter).

Waiting times at admission for elective surgery by Categories 1, 2 and 3 at the 50th percentile is also reported in Table 2.

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 (October to December 2010) – preliminary

Number of patients waiting by urgency category and by surgical speciality Quarter 2, 2010-11						
	Category 1		Category 2		Cateogry 3	
Surgical speciality	**Overdue**	**Waiting**	**Overdue**	**Waiting**	**Overdue**	**Waiting**
Cardiothoracic surgery	np	np	np	17	np	np
Ear, nose and throat surgery	np	np	298	148	212	344
General surgery	np	17	140	174	np	124
Gynaecology	np	np	35	119	10	130
Neurosurgery	np	np	13	28	np	np
Ophthalmology	np	np	13	50	14	541
Orthopaedic surgery	np	np	700	365	79	239
Plastic surgery	np	np	73	55	13	25
Urology	12	np	188	166	24	130
Vascular surgery	np	np	21	23	57	134
Other	np	13	89	119	np	109
Total	**18**	**55**	**1570**	**1264**	**418**	**1776**

n.p. not published

The number of people waiting longer than recommended waiting times for surgery in the ACT dropped by 21 percent over the 2010 calendar year. Further significant reductions are expected through 2011 as the ACT continues to boost access to elective surgery, particularly for those with longer than standard waiting times.

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 in this Report is preliminary.