The National Elective Surgery Waiting List Reduction Plan

ACT Report for period April to June 2011

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 Government's 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. Funding for Stage One is targeted at patients who have been waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery, also called "long waits".

This increase in activity has been possible due to the partnership established between the ACT and Commonwealth Governments to boost access to elective surgery as part of the new national health reforms.

The support provided by the Commonwealth to increase access to elective surgery, together with the more than $90 million already added to the health system for extra elective surgery by the ACT Government, is providing more access to elective surgery and reducing overall waiting times for care.

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 provided access to surgery for 11,366 procedures to be performed 2010-11, a 16 percent increase on the total provided in 2009-10. This additional activity is working to reduce the number of people waiting longer than standard timeframes for care, with a 35 percent reduction noted compared to the same period last 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, the ACT Government 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 (April to June 2011) - preliminary

	Indicator Procedure	TCH	Calvary	Total ACT Public Hospital
1	Cataract extraction	0	323	323
2	Cholecystectomy	37	38	75
3	Coronary artery bypass graft	36	0	36
4	Cystoscopy	127	222	349
5	Haemorrhoidectomy	np	np	13
6	Hysterectomy	19	18	37
7	Inguinal herniorrhaphy	57	44	101
8	Myringoplasty	np	np	np
9	Myringotomy	27	14	41
10	Prostatectomy	16	np	22
11	Septoplasty	np	26	33
12	Tonsillectomy	156	28	184
13	Total hip replacement	33	27	60
14	Total knee replacement	28	55	83
15	Varicose veins strip & ligate	31	np	37
16	Not applicable	1178	678	1856
	Total	**1703**	**1492**	**3252**

(np – not published)

Table 1 above shows the number of patients removed from the ACT waiting list for admission for surgery for the period April to June 2011. The quarter 4 result for 2010-11 of 3,252 patients admitted for surgery is up by 722 admissions from 2,530 in the same quarter in 2009-10.

In 2010-11 our public hospitals have reported the highest levels of elective surgery on record. This achievement has ensured that our public hospitals not only met but exceeded the 2010-11 financial year target of 10,712 operations. In 2010-11, there were 11,336 elective surgery procedures performed. This was 16 percent above the 9,778 reported for 2009-10.

The new partnerships we have built with private hospitals will provide us with the capacity to further boost elective surgery into 2011-12 and further reduce the number of people waiting too long for surgery.

Table 2: Median Waiting Time for the 15 Indicator Procedures and urgency Category (April to June 2011) - preliminary			
	Median waiting time (days)		
Indicator Procedure	TCH	Calvary	Total ACT Public Hospital
1 Cataract extraction	.	157	157
2 Cholecystectomy	70	57	60
3 Coronary artery bypass graft	14	.	14
4 Cystoscopy	69	73	72
5 Haemorrhoidectomy	84	59	71
6 Hysterectomy	102	47	50
7 Inguinal herniorrhaphy	98	57	64
8 Myringoplasty	217	43	130
9 Myringotomy	183	86	178
10 Prostatectomy	46	204	67
11 Septoplasty	196	322	319
12 Tonsillectomy	270	239	269
13 Total hip replacement	246	230	231
14 Total knee replacement	208	329	289
15 Varicose veins strip & ligate	357	246	334
16 Not applicable	28	51	34
Total	**48**	**84**	**70**
Median Waiting Times by Urgency Category			
Admission within 30 days desirable	14	18	15
Admission within 90 days desirable	121	76	100
Admission at some time in the future	270	208	221
Total	**48**	**84**	**70**

Table 2 above shows that median waiting time statistics (50th percentile) from the waiting list for elective surgery, by indicator procedures for the period April to June 2011. The median waiting time for the June Quarter 2011of 70 days is lower than 97 days reported for the previous quarter of 2011 (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 Government Health Directorate's Public Services Performance report, a comprehensive quarterly report published on the Health Directorate's website at http://health.act.gov.au/publications/. A new quarterly ACT Surgery Report Card can also be found on the Health Directorate's website shown above.

Table 3: Number of Patients Waiting by Urgency Category and by Surgical Speciality (April to June 2011) - preliminary

	Category 1		Category 2		Category 3	
Surgical Speciality	**Waiting**	**Overdue**	**Waiting**	**Overdue**	**Waiting**	**Overdue**
1 Cardiothoracic surgery	10	0	12	0	0	0
2 Ear, nose and throat surgery	8	0	312	197	379	78
3 General surgery	44	np	269	76	76	np
4 Gynaecology	25	0	116	27	136	11
5 Neurosurgery	np	0	29	12	np	0
6 Ophthalmology	10	0	46	np	515	np
7 Orthopaedic surgery	21	0	860	566	259	52
8 Plastic surgery	8	0	109	63	37	18
9 Urology	27	0	301	96	87	10
10 Vascular surgery	11	0	51	26	174	63
11 Other	9	np	237	106	87	16
Total	**175**	**np**	**2342**	**1173**	**1751**	**256**

(np – not published)

The number of people waiting longer than recommended waiting times for surgery in the ACT dropped by 35 percent compared to the same period in 2010. Further significant reductions are expected through 2011-12 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 on the ACT Government Health Directorate's webpage at www.health.act.gov.au/waitinglists.

Note: The data in this Report is preliminary.