The National Elective Surgery Waiting List Reduction Plan

ACT Report for period July to September 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 last year. This additional activity is working to reduce the number of people waiting longer than standard timeframes for care, with a 45 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 (July to September 2011) - preliminary

	Indicator Procedure	TCH	Calvary	Total ACT Public Hospital
1	Cataract extraction	0	185	185
2	Cholecystectomy	28	33	61
3	Coronary artery bypass graft	34	0	34
4	Cystoscopy	134	148	282
5	Haemorrhoidectomy	np	np	10
6	Hysterectomy	24	12	36
7	Inguinal herniorrhaphy	33	35	68
8	Myringoplasty	np	0	np
9	Myringotomy	34	19	53
10	Prostatectomy	np	np	17
11	Septoplasty	14	16	30
12	Tonsillectomy	54	11	65
13	Total hip replacement	21	32	53
14	Total knee replacement	28	60	88
15	Varicose veins strip & ligate	52	12	64
16	Not applicable	1293	648	1941
	Total	**1771**	**1221**	**2992**

(np – not published)

Table 1 above shows the number of patients removed from the ACT waiting list for admission for surgery for the period July to September 2011. The quarter 1 result for 2011-12 of 2,992 patients admitted for surgery is up by 238 admissions from 2,754 in the same quarter in 2010-11.

In 2010-11 our public hospitals have reported the highest levels of elective surgery on record with 11,336 people who have had their elective surgery. 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 (July to September 2011) - preliminary			
	Median waiting time (days)		
Indicator Procedure	TCH	Calvary	Total ACT Public Hospital
1 Cataract extraction	.	107	107
2 Cholecystectomy	65	42	54
3 Coronary artery bypass graft	21	.	21
4 Cystoscopy	68	43	54
5 Haemorrhoidectomy	118	349	204
6 Hysterectomy	84	93	93
7 Inguinal herniorrhaphy	75	57	67
8 Myringoplasty	393	.	393
9 Myringotomy	146	241	174
10 Prostatectomy	74	105	75
11 Septoplasty	284	349	321
12 Tonsillectomy	218	170	210
13 Total hip replacement	235	317	304
14 Total knee replacement	206	291	264
15 Varicose veins strip & ligate	304	190	284
16 Not applicable	29	42	34
Total	**45**	**70**	**56**
Median Waiting Times by Urgency Category			
Admission within 30 days desirable	12	16	14
Admission within 90 days desirable	109	83	96
Admission at some time in the future	273	172	228
Total	**45**	**70**	**56**

Table 2 above shows that median waiting time statistics (50th percentile) from the waiting list for elective surgery, by indicator procedures for the period July to September 2011. The median waiting time for the September Quarter 2011of 56 days is lower than 70 days reported for the previous quarter of 2011 (the June 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 (July to September 2011) - preliminary						
	Category 1		Category 2		Category 3	
Surgical Speciality	Waiting	Overdue	Waiting	Overdue	Waiting	Overdue
1 Cardiothoracic surgery	15	np	18	np		
2 Ear, nose and throat surgery	10		288	154	436	73
3 General surgery	38	np	292	72	57	np
4 Gynaecology	14		111	np	96	np
5 Neurosurgery	np		30	np	np	
6 Ophthalmology	np		68	np	610	np
7 Orthopaedic surgery	11		701	434	241	34
8 Plastic surgery	13		81	40	28	10
9 Urology	38	np	376	124	84	10
10 Vascular surgery	17	np	38	18	131	30
11 Other	26		244	108	79	9
Total	**192**	**17**	**2247**	**973**	**1763**	**176**

(np – not published)

The number of people waiting longer than recommended waiting times for surgery in the ACT dropped by 45 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.