




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Health Update

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.53 am): On this, the 12th day of no new community transmission of COVID-19 in Queensland, I am proud to update the House on the amazing work of our hospital staff who have not just kept Queensland safe from COVID-19 but who have also been carrying out an elective surgery blitz.

As we ramped up our COVID response, some of the day-to-day business in our hospitals had to be suspended such as non-urgent surgeries and data reporting. These measures were agreed to nationally. In the absence of usual performance reporting, I asked the health department to prepare a three-month report so we can all see how our hospitals performed during this period. I am pleased to say that it shows wait times for elective and emergency care in Queensland hospitals have improved despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is clear that from April to June our hospital staff have worked so hard. Not only have they kept COVID out; they have also made sure Queenslanders have the other care they need. In June, the Palaszczuk government announced a quarter of a billion dollar blitz on elective surgery and other procedures to get through the list of people forced to wait longer than clinically recommended. While elective surgery long waits were expected to peak at 7,000, our elective surgery blitz saw them drop to just 2,774 by the end of June.

Despite seeing nearly half a million people, the median wait to be seen at Queensland's emergency departments was just 10 minutes in the quarter to June 2020, down from 15 minutes in the same period last year. Nearly 90 per cent of patients were seen at emergency departments within clinically recommended times, up from 76 per cent to June 2019.

As anticipated, the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery increased after the national suspension. This time last year, 94.5 per cent of patients were seen in time, which dropped to 80.6 per cent after the elective surgery shut down. The most urgent surgeries—category 1—continued unaffected, and our hospitals delivered 11,723 life-saving surgeries during this time.

The impact here was much smaller than other parts of the world and we are recovering faster. It is incredible to think that, while many hospitals around the world are struggling to cope, our fantastic health staff have managed to improve performance across most measures. During a global pandemic, Queenslanders were able to go to the emergency department at their hospital and be seen in around 10 minutes. I want to sincerely thank the Queenslanders who had surgeries deferred for their patience and understanding. Most of all, I want to thank our health staff. They are simply the best in the world. I table the Queensland hospitals performance report March to June 2020.

Tabled paper: Queensland Government—Queensland Hospitals Performance Report [1359](#).

While I am on my feet I would like to say a few words about the NRL players alleged to have breached their COVID-safe plans. The Queensland Police Service are currently investigating, but any breach to a COVID-safe plan is disappointing. These rules were developed by the NRL for the NRL and are in place to protect Queenslanders, the players, their families and staff. Blatant disregard of the rules is an insult to the hard work of Queenslanders who have followed the public health messaging. Stiff penalties apply to rule breakers, no matter what position in the NRL they hold.

I am one of the Brisbane Broncos biggest fans. I very much hope the recent claims are untrue. Players who breach the COVID-safe plan are not just putting the season at risk, not just letting down their club and their code, but also betraying their fans who tune in and turn up every weekend. They need to know that their actions will have consequences.