

**Question on Notice
No. 1986
Asked on 6 October 2010**

MR MALONE asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (MR ROBERTS)—

QUESTION:

With reference to ambulance ramping at Queensland Hospitals—

- (1) How many recorded instances of ramping (that is, off stretcher in more than 15 minutes) were there in 2008-09 and 2009-10 (reported separately by year and by region)?
- (2) Of those instances identified in (1) how many patients were ramped for
 - (a) more than one hour and
 - (b) more than two hours?

ANSWER:

The Bligh Government has provided the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) with a record operating budget of \$533.7 million in 2010-11, an increase of \$39.1 million on last financial year. This will help to fund an additional 75 ambulance officers to significantly boost front-line services, and provide six new ambulance stations and 14 replacement, refurbished or redeveloped facilities.

Since 2007, the Government has funded 630 additional ambulance officers, taking the operational staffing ratio of the QAS to 82.9 per cent in 2009-10. Queensland has the highest rate of ambulance officers per head of population with 55.9 officers per 100,000 people, exceeding the national average of 43.2 as reported in 2010 Report on Government Services (ROGS).

The Government commenced an audit of the QAS in 2007 to identify savings which could be better invested in frontline services. The audit culminated in 2010. As a result, the Government committed to report ambulance off-stretcher times on a quarterly basis. Quarterly “off-stretcher” times are reported in the Quarterly Public Hospital Performance Report publicly available on the QH website at www.health.qld.gov.au.

The Bligh Government is delivering on its commitment to greater transparency and access to information. More information than ever before is now available on our ambulance and health services. Ambulance response time data is available online at the QAS website. Off-stretcher time data is also available online in the Quarterly Public Hospital Performance Report on the QH website, along with other vital information about Emergency Department performance and elective surgery and outpatient activity.

As the Member would be aware, the Leader of the Opposition was also recently provided with information regarding average off stretcher times for nine major hospitals across the state through his RTI request number 456.

The QH Quarterly Public Hospital Performance Report measures the percentage of patients ‘off-stretcher’ within 30 minutes of ambulance arrival. For the 2009-10 financial year approximately 88 per cent of patients were transferred within 30 minutes for the 27 major reporting hospitals.

Upon arrival in an emergency department, a triage nurse will assess a patient's condition and assign a triage category as defined by the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine. Categories range from patients who require resuscitation in triage category 1 to less urgent ailments in triage category 5. Patients with immediate life threatening conditions are always seen to first.

QAS and QH work together to ensure patients are seen to as quickly as possible. 19 ambulance officers work in our busiest Emergency Departments at the Royal Brisbane & Women's, Princess Alexandra, Gold Coast, Logan, Ipswich, Nambour, Redcliffe, Caboolture and Cairns to get patients promptly triaged and where possible off load lower acuity patients to Emergency Department waiting areas.

All QAS Communication Centres have access to the QH ECHO system which provides live Emergency Department data which provides for better coordination of patients and workload between QAS and QH. Hospitals will soon be able to view the current status of ambulance vehicles enroute to or at Emergency Departments via the Ambulance Arrivals Board. QAS Communication Centres will soon be able to view real-time information on the status of Emergency Department ramps via Closed-Circuit Television.

In response to the Member's question, the following data needs to be considered in the context that during 2008-09 Queensland paramedics were rostered on duty for around 3.6 million hours and 3.7 million hours in 2009-10. Additionally, paramedics provide continuous pre-hospital care to patients prior, and up to admission to a hospital bed.

Region	2008-09 Financial Year					2009-10 Financial Year				
	>15 mins	>15 min % of Total Incidents	>1 hour	>2 hours	>2 Hours % of Total Incidents	>15 mins	>15 min % of Total Incidents	>1 hour	>2 hours	>2 Hours % of Total Incidents
Northern	1,148	0.15%	32	13	0.00%	1,825	0.25%	34	5	0.00%
Central	1,050	0.14%	48	14	0.00%	1,589	0.21%	61	12	0.00%
South Western	982	0.13%	15	4	0.00%	1,372	0.18%	30	4	0.00%
North Coast	16,106	2.16%	1,404	217	0.03%	20,645	2.77%	2,139	391	0.05%
Brisbane	48,753	6.55%	3,251	468	0.06%	58,665	7.88%	4,783	781	0.10%
South Eastern	28,134	3.78%	2,986	588	0.08%	33,220	4.46%	3,284	597	0.08%
Far Northern	4,622	0.62%	759	133	0.02%	3,006	0.40%	372	71	0.01%

NB: Percentages are correct to two decimal places.

In spite of the growth in demand, Queensland has some of the best response times in the country. In the 2008-09 financial year, 50 percent of Code 1 life threatening incidents in Queensland were attended within 8.4 minutes, compared to 10.3 minutes in New South Wales. Ninety percent of Code 1 life threatening incidents were attended within 17.2 minutes.

In 2009-10, QAS responded to 744,623 incidents, an increase of 0.08 percent over the previous year and a corresponding increase of 6.96 percent in Code 1 incidents compared to 2008-09. Despite the growth in demand, 50 percent of Code 1 life threatening incidents were attended within 8.1 minutes, and 90 percent of Code 1 life threatening incidents were attended within 16.4 minutes.