

Question on Notice

No. 1376

Asked on 10 November 2022

MS R BATES ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES (HON Y D'ATH)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise the number of elective adult surgical cases deferred or cancelled in Queensland Health facilities due to the unavailability of beds (reported separately by calendar year from 2015 and by Hospital and Health Service)?

ANSWER

The best way to provide access to elective surgery is to provide more investment in health staff and health facilities – the Palaszczuk Government is doing both.

In addition to the more than 15,000 frontline health staff recruited since 2015, additional surgical capacity has been delivered through the construction of the Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS) facility within the Metro North HHS. This investment forms part of the 1,350 new beds that have been opened since 2015.

The Queensland Health and Hospitals Plan is delivering even more bed capacity for Queensland Hospitals. The Plan will see the most significant bed expansion in Queensland's history with 2,509 new beds being delivered within six years.

As part of the Plan, new developments at Townsville Hospital (143 additional beds) and QEII Hospital (112 additional beds) will be dedicated to enhancing elective surgery capacity.

This additional capacity will assist in meeting the increasing inpatient bed demand, which has grown significantly over time. Indeed, since 2014-15, Queensland patient admissions have grown by close to 40%, a greater rate than the growth in emergency department presentations.

The advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic also placed significant pressure of inpatient bed capacity. The number of patients admitted to Queensland hospitals with COVID-19 peaked in July 2022 at over 1,100. At the same time more than 2,500 Queensland Health staff were reported as furloughed due to either being infected with COVID-19 or as a close contact.

The inpatient treatment of COVID-19 positive patients, and workforce pressures resulting from isolation and quarantine requirements of Queensland Health staff diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19 has impacted the cancellation of elective surgery due to bed unavailability in 2021 and 2022.

The Elective Surgery Services Implementation Standard outlines the suite of business rules and processes for ensuring equitable access for all patients requiring elective surgery at Queensland public hospitals by providing best-practice, waitlist management processes aimed at facilitating treatment of patients within clinically recommended timeframes. The standard provides guidance to Hospital and Health Services in the management of hospital-initiated cancellations, including the requirement to:

- notify the patient as soon as possible that their surgery has been cancelled;
- make arrangements for the surgery to be undertaken on the next available list;
- keep an accurate record of the postponement and the reason; and
- maintain the patient's current ready for surgery status on the elective surgery waiting list.

I am advised by the department that Elective Surgery, Cancellations for Adults*, due to unavailability of beds for January 2015 to October 2022, is reported as follows:

HHS	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 OCT YTD
Cairns & Hinterland	46	13	31	8	19	104	233	62
Central Queensland	8	7	11	22	20	7	51	77
Children's Health Queensland	0	4	0	1	1	0	3	4
Darling Downs	15	24	7	48	49	38	40	44
Gold Coast	139	98	178	125	138	42	76	53
Mackay	10	17	16	4	2	10	85	60
Metro North	284	195	164	102	136	71	456	219
Metro South	160	162	185	160	323	134	580	414
North West	5	3	1	0	5	3	3	6
Sunshine Coast	5	13	9	3	17	11	102	18
Townsville	24	90	53	53	54	18	69	68
West Moreton	9	71	76	70	141	113	109	96
Wide Bay	22	23	58	55	60	103	138	145
Queensland	727	720	789	651	965	654	1,945	1,266

Source: Queensland Health, HBCIS Elective Admissions Module (Bookings/Cancellations). Data is sourced from an operational information system and is subject to change.

Notes: *Adults are ages >16