

Question on Notice

No. 1112

Asked on 14 September 2023

MS R BATES ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (HON S FENTIMAN)—

QUESTION

With reference to Table 2, Part B of the Health Service Investigation Report ‘into the reporting of radiology services at the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service’ (page 40)—

Will the Minister provide (reported separately by Hospital and Health Service and financial year) since 2015-16 (a) the number studies per financial year and (b) the reporting rate of the studies taken?

ANSWER

Where appropriate, medical imaging examinations are reviewed and reported by a radiologist and the report is returned to the referring clinician to assist in the clinical management of the patient. Turnaround times for reports vary from one hospital to another (due to differences in radiologist availability), however across all sites the highest priority is given to urgent imaging and complex scans that require interpretation by a radiologist or nuclear medicine physician.

When assessing radiology services many factors are considered, of which one is the reporting rate of the studies taken.

It is important to note that a 100 per cent reporting rate is not necessarily appropriate, as there are some situations where a report is not required. Examples of this include:

- where a live image is reviewed whilst in theatre, e.g., examination of a live x-ray to ensure correct placement of pins
- in some instances where an outpatient attends a fracture clinic for follow-up – typically this involves an x-ray and then the patient is seen by an orthopaedic surgeon who reviews the imaging and then decides ongoing treatment immediately
- when a dental x-ray is reviewed by a dentist in real-time.

Other factors considered when assessing radiology studies performance, which also affects the reporting timeframe, are:

- the patient’s clinical status
- the type of image performed
- the location of the patient e.g., Emergency Department vs Out-Patient

Queensland Health monitors reporting rates and reports are provided to Hospital and Health Services (HHS) for active management. In the instance a HHS is assessed as <80% for a quarter, a performance discussion is initiated between the HHS and Department of Health.

I am advised that the number of studies per financial year and the aggregated monthly reporting rate of the studies per financial year, reported separately by HHS since 2015-16, are available in Appendix 1 below.

Limitations of this data include:

- The Radiology Information Systems are different across HHSs and there are different methods for counting examinations. For example, a patient could present to the emergency department and require five radiology studies in that presentation, which would be counted as one study, whereas another HHS might count this as five separate studies).
- Data is not separated by modality or patient type. Individual modalities (e.g. CT, ultrasound) and patient types (e.g. emergency, in-patient) may have specific requirements.
- The aggregated monthly reporting rate data is an aggregate of the monthly rates collected monthly on the 6th day of the following month to allow time for administration processes to be completed.

For financial year 2022/23 there are two HHSs that are below 80%.

Health systems across the world are facing staffing shortages and recruitment challenges, and this includes shortages in the medical imaging workforce in the Gold Coast HHS.

The Gold Coast HHS is doing everything it can to recruit additional staff. However, in an average year, the Gold Coast HHS takes more than 150,000 plain film x-rays.

Patient safety is always the HHS' top priority, and a number of measures have been taken to manage demand, including partnering with private imaging and diagnostic providers, and ensuring the most significant diagnostic results are being addressed first.

I am advised that strong progress is being made to clear existing unreported studies, and that this work is expected to be finalised in coming months.

Furthermore, I am advised that in recent months, the Cairns and Hinterland HHS reporting rate has been as follows:

- June – 97%
- July – 88%
- August – 93%

Appendix 1

	FISCAL YEAR															
	2022/2023		2021/2022		2020/2021		2019/2020		2018/2019		2017/2018		2016/2017		2015/2016	
HHS	Studied	Rate	Studied	Rate	Studied	Rate	Studied	Rate	Studied	Rate	Studied	Rate	Studied	Rate	Studied	Rate
Cairns and Hinterland	149326	71.2%	136935	86.0%	136316	75.4%	124135	98.1%	126788	100.0%	123189	100.0%	120335	99.4%	109760	99.9%
Central Queensland	133744	98.4%	133355	97.6%	132744	99.6%	116547	100.0%	117097	98.8%	109558	99.3%	105632	99.2%	104595	98.4%
Central West	8061	100.0%	7544	99.8%	8033	99.9%	7100	100.0%	7053	99.9%	6159	99.8%	5831	99.8%	5969	99.7%
Darling Downs	130279	97.7%	120109	98.0%	118125	97.8%	104343	97.6%	102891	97.6%	98560	99.0%	91569	99.6%	93417	99.1%
Gold Coast	285235	67.6%	273502	87.8%	284327	96.6%	262810	95.3%	263338	93.6%	252112	97.3%	239493	97.4%	231947	97.4%
Mackay	88826	89.1%	86845	89.1%	86383	92.7%	76327	97.1%	75586	96.0%	77479	97.5%	73784	98.2%	67355	98.6%
Metro North	499665	90.2%	499114	92.9%	490303	92.6%	443538	96.5%	459088	97.2%	470495	98.1%	484065	97.7%	476245	97.0%
Metro South	479691	91.8%	457614	92.1%	456342	94.4%	421187	96.3%	423287	94.6%	417051	95.0%	409188	96.6%	406365	97.1%
North West	29787	100.0%	36730	100.0%	32104	100.0%	25167	100.0%	26129	100.0%	25155	99.9%	24901	99.9%	21551	99.9%
QCH	81431	99.8%	73551	99.3%	76844	99.9%	71225	99.9%	74283	99.7%	74394	99.7%	73899	99.6%	71953	99.7%
South West	12721	96.5%	12185	96.7%	12342	98.2%	11785	97.9%	11182	98.5%	10971	98.6%	11655	99.5%	10780	99.1%
Sunshine Coast	228596	88.8%	211499	95.8%	209483	96.5%	191867	99.3%	185971	98.1%	169542	97.8%	150611	98.8%	141578	99.1%
Torres and Cape	15563	99.3%	14020	99.6%	13033	99.4%	13195	99.4%	13063	98.6%	13011	99.3%	12808	99.6%	11489	99.6%
Townsville	149987	94.6%	141258	97.5%	137597	97.3%	130955	97.5%	133054	97.7%	130971	96.0%	130305	91.3%	126343	93.3%
West Moreton	109079	98.5%	111003	99.7%	110273	96.6%	104835	93.8%	99651	100.0%	90886	100.0%	88385	100.0%	79375	96.5%
Wide Bay	101037	100.0%	100965	100.0%	115106	100.0%	104710	100.0%	105999	99.9%	107431	100.0%	104055	100.0%	99896	99.9%