Question on Notice

No. 803

Asked on 15 June 2023

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

QUESTION

With reference to answer to Question on Notice No. 1376 of 2022—
Will the Minister advise the number of elective adult surgical cases deferred or cancelled in Queensland Health facilities due to unavailability of bed (reported separately by Hospital and Health Service and by calendar year) for 2022 and 2023 to date?

ANSWER

Since the beginning of 2020, Queensland's health system has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including through managing positive patients and quarantine requirements of Queensland Health staff diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19.

These pressures have impacted on bed availability, which can fluctuate depending on a range of factors including availability of physical beds, and ability to comply with safe staffing ratios.

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.

As a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, throughout 2022 Queensland hospitals cancelled 1,361 elective surgeries.

However, I'm pleased to advise that the system is recovering well, and our fantastic health workers are making progress to make up for cancelled surgeries.

From 1 July 2022 to 30 April 2023, Queensland public hospitals treated over 114,750 elective surgery referrals from the waitlist. This is 10,554 (10.1 per cent) more referrals treated from waitlist compared to the corresponding period last year.

The Elective Surgery Services Implementation Standard (ESSIS) outlines the suite of business rules and processes for ensuring equitable access for all patients requiring elective surgery at Queensland public hospitals.

ESSIS provides 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.

Whilst Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) will endeavour to rebook patients as per the ESSIS guidelines above, data is not available for patients who have been deferred or rebooked following an Elective Surgery cancellation.

This information would require detailed analysis at HHS level to identify patients, and would unreasonably divert resources in the HHSs.

The table below details Elective Surgery, Cancellations for Adults* due to unavailability of beds for calendar year 2022 and calendar year to date 2023 (at 15 June 2023), noting that beds may be unavailable due to multiple reasons including high unplanned demand resulting in beds running at capacity and/or beds unable to be utilised for planned care due to staff illness, or other unplanned leave.

Hospital and Health Service	Calendar Year 2022	2023 Calendar Year To Date (incl. 15 June 2023)
Cairns & Hinterland	75	7
Central Queensland	82	17
Children's Health Queensland	6	2
Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service	46	13
Gold Coast	65	42
Mackay	65	28
Metro North	227	82
Metro South	438	46
North West	6	3
Sunshine Coast	19	2
Townsville	76	39
West Moreton	103	8
Wide Bay	153	18

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 >16yrs
The Mater (Public) is excluded from above. Minimum dataset is received from Mater Public for the Elective Surgery Data Collection (ESDC) which does not include data relating to cancellations.