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Stable performance for Southern NSW Local Health District despite ongoing COVID-19 response

Emergency departments across Southern NSW Local Health District (SNSWLHD) performed well in the April to June 2021 quarter, highlighted in the latest Bureau of Health Information (BHI) *Healthcare Quarterly* report.

Overall, emergency department (ED) attendances across the District increased 38 per cent (8,196) to 29,782 attendances in the April to June 2021 quarter compared with the same quarter in 2020. The notable difference can be attributed to reduced activity across NSW Health facilities in the April to June 2020 quarter as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just under three-quarters of patients (71.1 per cent) started treatment on time in the latest quarter, and approximately four out of five patients (77.3 per cent) left the ED within four hours.

Chief Executive of SNSWLHD, Margaret Bennett, said that staff have worked hard to keep hospital services running smoothly while operating extra functions as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

“I am pleased with the stable activity reflected in the BHI results, especially given the impact of COVID-19 on our services. We are focused on maintaining strong hospital activity while keeping our community safe with COVID-19 testing clinics, screening and more recently, provision of vaccinations,” Ms Bennett said.

“We are ensuring that patients who had their elective surgery postponed due to COVID-19 receive their surgery as soon as possible, and we continue to work with our private hospital partners to make that happen.”

Hospitals across the District performed most (99.6 per cent) urgent elective surgeries on time in the April to June 2021 quarter.

In addition, nearly all semi-urgent elective surgeries (95.5 per cent) and more than three-quarters of non-urgent elective surgeries (87 per cent) were also performed on time.

In the 2020–21 budget, the NSW Government has invested an extra \$458.5 million to fast-track elective surgeries which were delayed as a result of the collective response by Australian governments to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring patients will be booked in to public or private hospitals as soon as possible.

In the 2021-22 Budget, the NSW Government announced \$1.1 billion to continue the state’s response to COVID-19, including:

- \$340.0 million to fund personal protective equipment (PPE) procurement and associated warehouse costs to keep our frontline workers safe;
- \$261.3 million for COVID-19 vaccine distribution;
- \$200.0 million for pop-up clinics, testing and contact tracing;
- \$145.4 million for returning travellers in quarantine requiring medical assistance;
- \$80 million to continue additional elective surgery; and
- \$30.0 million for the ongoing enhanced level of cleaning within health facilities.

This takes the total commitment to the health system to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to more than \$4 billion since March 2020.

Between mid-2012 and mid-2021, SNSWLHD increased its workforce by an additional 575 full-time equivalent staff - an increase of 32.5 per cent including 29 more doctors, 242 more nurses and midwives and 71 more allied health staff.

Individual Hospital Results (for local media markets):

Batemans Bay District Hospital saw 3,557 emergency department (ED) attendances during April to June 2021, up 38.8 per cent (or 995), compared with the same period in 2020.

Batemans Bay District Hospital performed 99 elective surgery procedures during the quarter. Pleasingly, 100 per cent of all elective surgery patients had their surgery on time during April to June 2021..

At **Moruya District Hospital**, the hospital's Emergency Department had 2,814 attendances from April to June 2021, up 28.1 per cent (or 617) from the same period in 2020. Nearly two-thirds of patients (62.7 per cent) started their treatment on time in the ED.

At **Goulburn Base Hospital** all (100 per cent) of the 72 urgent elective surgeries performed were done on time, and 95.7 per cent of the 139 semi-urgent elective surgery procedures were performed on time during April to June 2021. Goulburn Base ED saw 5,104 attendances during the quarter, with 64.4 per cent of patients leaving the ED within four hours.

At **Cooma Hospital** there were 69 elective surgery procedures performed during the April to June 2021 quarter, and all (100 per cent) urgent, semi-urgent and non-urgent procedures were performed on time.

The hospital recorded an increase in the number of emergency department attendances during April to June 2021 compared with the same quarter in 2020, with 2,843 attendances, up by 40.2 per cent or 815 attendances, although remaining steady compared to the same quarter in 2019 pre pandemic where there were 2,704 attendances. Cooma Hospital had 79.8 per cent of patients leaving the ED within four hours.

During April to June 2021 **Queanbeyan Hospital** recorded an increase in emergency department attendances of 42.5 per cent, or 1,917 more patients, up from 4,510 compared to the same quarter in 2020, and also an increase of 268 attendances from April to June 2019 pre-pandemic. A total of 87.7 per cent of patients left the ED within

four hours, consistent with the same quarter last year (88.4 per cent) and higher than the peer group result of 81 per cent.

The hospital performed 262 elective surgery procedures during the quarter, with 96.2 per cent of urgent, 94.6 per cent of semi-urgent and 90.3 per cent of non-urgent elective surgeries performed on time.

South East Regional Hospital (SERH) emergency department saw 5,357 attendances for the April to June 2021 quarter, an increase of 41.5 per cent, or 1,557, on the same quarter in 2020 and a significant increase from April to June 2019 pre pandemic where there were 4,942 ED attendances.

There were 423 elective surgery procedures performed, and 100 per cent of urgent elective surgery was performed on time.

Seclusion and Restraint

This quarter, the vast majority of episodes of care in the District had no seclusion or restraint events.

SNSWLHD is committed to reducing and where possible, eliminating seclusion and restraint and providing the best possible mental health care and treatment in the least restrictive environment.

Seclusion and restraint are only used as a last measure to maintain the safety of the patient, other patients, staff and visitors.

Goulburn Hospital had 264 acute mental health episodes of care during the quarter, with 1.1 per cent of these having at least one seclusion event. This was a decrease of 2.7 percentage points compared to the same period in 2020. The percentage of episodes with a physical restraint event also decreased by 4.1 percentage points to 4.9 episodes compared to the same period in 2020.

“These reductions are thanks to new practices at Southern mental health units including implementation of the Six Core Strategies for Seclusion and Restraint Reduction, and close collaboration with consumer advocates,” Ms Bennett said.