

Question on Notice

No. 125

Asked on 14 March 2023

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

QUESTION

With reference to answer to Question on Notice No. 427 of 2022—

Will the Minister provide the amount of ambulance 'lost time' from November 2022 to January 2023 (reported separately by hospital and health service and calendar month)?

ANSWER

Queensland has the busiest ambulance service in the country and is the only mainland State to provide ambulance services free at the point of use.

Despite being Australia's busiest ambulance service, Report on Government Services (ROGS) data shows the QAS outperforms most jurisdictions, including Victoria and New South Wales, in relation to ambulance response times.

ROGS data for financial year 2021/22 demonstrated that Queensland had the second-best performing emergency department in the country with 68 per cent of patients seen within the recommended time, second only to New South Wales who saw 77 per cent of patients within the recommended time.

The most recent quarterly performance data shows that Queensland has now surpassed New South Wales, with Queensland seeing 72% of patients in the recommended timeframes and New South Wales seeing 66.4% within the timeframes set out in ACEM's ATS tool.

This nation-leading performance comes despite a significant increase in the most acute categories 1–3 ED presentations, including a 12 per cent increase in the most urgent category 1 patients, with 100 per cent of those patients being seen within the recommended two-minute timeframe.

I am advised that since 2013/14 there has been an increase of over 100 per cent in the presentations of category 1 and 2 patients.

As I recently advised Parliament, the rise in the urgency of cases, and the reduction in the availability and affordability of primary care, means that people who would have otherwise sought care in the community are now coming to our emergency departments.

Some of these patients will be less urgent and may need to wait for some time before receiving care from an emergency doctor.

In order to assist with patient flow, the Palaszczuk Government is investing in a variety of practical improvements to our health system, both immediate and long-term, that will assist our world class clinicians in providing the best possible care to Queensland patients.

This includes:

- Our record investment in 2,509 new beds through our Queensland Health and Hospitals Plan, including 289 beds being fast-tracked through the Accelerated Infrastructure Delivery Program;
- Embedding the Care4Qld investments on an ongoing basis, including the expanded QAS mental health co-responder model and Hospital in the Home models of care;
- Investing in the Long-Stay Rapid Response Program to ensure that long stay patients are able to attain support in the community, rather than staying in hospital;
- Delivering Rapid Access Clinics across the State to prevent re-presentations and re-admissions to hospital;
- Providing care closer to home through our Satellite Hospital Program;
- Ensuring Statewide access to the Metro North Virtual ED;
- Making a record \$1.645 billion investment in mental health services;
- Delivering on our election commitment to recruit 9,475 new health staff during this term of Government, with more than 17,000 having been recruited since 2015; and
- Delivering 735 new ambulance officers during this term of Government.

I am advised that the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) 'lost time' is not a published standard performance measure. 'Lost time' is an unofficial reporting metric that was developed for internal use to support inhouse performance analysis and operational decision making.

Lost time accounts for the time elapsed between the agreed Patient Off Stretcher Time (POST) target of 30 minutes and the time that a patient is transferred off the stretcher and into the care of the Hospital and Health Service clinical staff. This does not account for the clinical priority of the patient that is awaiting treatment.

The following is the "lost time" (in hours), by Hospital and Health Service for each month during the period November 2022 to January 2023*:

- Cairns and Hinterland HHS – 330, 270 and 246 respectively;
- Central Queensland HHS – 408, 322 and 531 respectively;
- Children's Health Queensland – 49, 35 and 41 respectively;
- Darling Downs HHS – 326, 359 and 167 respectively;
- Gold Coast HHS – 838, 965 and 1,032 respectively;
- Mackay HHS – 170, 235 and 179 respectively;
- Mater Health Services – 516, 898 and 829 respectively;
- Metro North HHS – 2,327, 2,175 and 2,185 respectively;

- Metro South HHS – 3,228, 4,041 and 4,422 respectively;
- North West HHS – 27, 15 and 15 respectively;
- Sunshine Coast HHS – 659, 810 and 708 respectively;
- Townsville HHS – 155, 172 and 113 respectively;
- West Moreton HHS – 1,221, 1,309 and 1,618 respectively;
- Wide Bay HHS – 544, 801 and 658 respectively.

*These figures reflect the amount of Lost Time (in hours) at Queensland Reportable Hospitals by HHS for patients where the POST is greater than 30 minutes. Of the 17 HHSs, three do not have Reportable Hospitals.

Note: Lost Time is the total amount of time elapsed between the agreed POST target (within 30 minutes) and the time that a patient is transferred off stretcher to the care of the Hospital and Health Service clinical staff.

The increase in 'lost time' (hours), during this period, is reflective of an increase in patient presentations to Queensland Health reportable hospital emergency departments and is consistent with an increase during the same period in the previous financial year.