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NSW hospitals performing more planned surgery

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said today that more people were receiving surgery in NSW hospitals than ever before and more were getting their surgery sooner.

Mr Della Bosca said the Quarterly Hospital Performance Report for September reveals 91 per cent of people were receiving their planned surgery within the benchmark times of 30, 90 and 365 days.

“This compares to 87 per cent for the same quarter last year so we have seen a significant improvement – about five per cent - in the speed in which people are being seen by surgeons and treated,” the Minister said.

“The overall average waiting time for patients is steady at two-and-a-half months – this result is even more impressive when you consider we have a growing and ageing population.

“NSW public hospitals lead the nation in both emergency department performance and elective surgery.

“Planned surgery is categorised into three groups to ensure the most serious cases, such as people with cancer or serious heart conditions, are seen first,” he said.

The percentage of people being seen within the benchmark times are:

- Category 1 (who need to be seen within 30 days) – 93 per cent, compared to 91 per cent for the same quarter last year.
- Category 2 (90 days) – 81 per cent, compared to 73 per cent last year.
- Category 3 (365 days) – 96 per cent, steady from last year.

“More people are undergoing surgery because we have an ageing and growing population and we now conduct more screening for all kinds of conditions, like breast and prostate cancer, so we can detect health problems earlier,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“The Shadow Health Minister does not understand how surgery is managed in NSW hospitals – it is not the size of the list, it is the length of time patients have to wait for their surgery that is important – and that time has been reducing.

“She is also misleading the public over claims that elective surgery information is being hidden – the performance data has been on the NSW Health website since the beginning of this month for all to see with additional information being openly reported for the most recent quarter– we have been totally transparent.

“The public are sick and tired of politicians using sick patients, our hospitals and the health system as a political football to score cheap points,” the Minister said.

“The NSW Opposition has made a career out of criticising our hospitals and undermining the morale of our hard-working doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and health support staff,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“It is high time they gave our clinicians the credit they deserve for treating more patients sooner,” he added.