



**28 August 2009**

## **Flu numbers on the decrease – focus back on planned surgery**

Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, today praised the efforts of doctors and nurses following the release of new figures which reveal the public hospital system continued to perform well despite the impact of Human Swine and seasonal flu on health resources.

“With Swine Flu on the decrease and seasonal flu returning to normal levels, the public hospital system has performed well during a very difficult period – and this is mainly due to the dedication of our highly skilled health professionals,” the Minister said.

“The flu pandemic has disrupted planned surgery at many hospitals over the past few months and hospitals are now getting back on track to reduce waiting times.

“This was due to the large surge in patients requiring Emergency Department and Intensive Care Unit treatment and many hospital staff contracting the flu themselves which reduced the available number of doctors and nurses.

“Despite this, in the last month NSW public hospitals still managed to perform 32,913 operations compared to 38,173 for the same period last year.

“The impact of the Human Swine Flu is also reflected in the latest quarterly hospital performance report for June - 88 per cent of planned surgery patients were treated within benchmark times compared to 90 per cent for the March quarter,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“The report also reveals the extra pressure placed on hospital Emergency Departments since the beginning of the Swine Flu crisis in May – there were 509,390 presentations in the June quarter compared to 493,830 for the previous three-month period.

“Surgeons, anaesthetists and operating room nurses have done tremendous work over the past few years to make NSW the leading State in planned surgery.

“In June this year, the Commonwealth released a report which reveals NSW public hospitals are the best performing in the nation in a number of key areas including planned surgery and emergency department care.

“The *State of Our Public Hospitals, June 2009* report shows that NSW had the lowest percentage of patients - 1.8 per cent - waiting more than 365 days – well below the national average of three per cent,” the Minister said.

“In addition, in all categories for elective surgery, NSW had the best performance with 88 per cent of admissions seen within the recommended timeframe –well above the national average of 84 per cent.

“Our hospitals will be working harder than ever to get surgery back on track,” he added.