



Version 1.1a

Key Drivers of Demand in the Emergency Department

A hypothesis driven approach to analyse demand and supply



Sydney

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Foreword and acknowledgements

As a result of concerns over escalating growth in patient demand on Hospital Emergency Department services, NSW Health commissioned a demand review in September 2006. The report by Health consultants Paxton Partners Pty Ltd was to build on internal work to examine and analyse the noted recent growth in Emergency Department activity in New South Wales. To add value to the work, comparative data from four other states was sought and included - Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. This was in an attempt to substantiate trends, identify possible reasons for the growth and to report on strategies undertaken by the other states' health departments to manage or divert patients from ED.

The main finding of this review was that growth in Emergency Department services in New South Wales was generally consistent with that experienced in other states and that all states concluded that the reasons for increases were multi-factorial. The report contended that reasons for growth included issues such as the ageing population, GP access & practice issues, increased patient awareness of conditions that require immediate medical attention, of faster access to ED and ability to obtain all clinical and diagnostic services at a single location.

The initiative taken by NSW Health to collaborate with other state health departments and to use and compare data in the review has proved very fruitful. All participating states further agreed to continue their collaboration by commissioning a joint study from Booz Allen Hamilton (Australia) Ltd, led by New South Wales that further analysed and explored the issues identified in the first review and by individual states. The approach taken by the consultants was a 'hypothesis driven' approach, couched in broad categories of health system demand and supply. The states' health departments believe that there is a potential for the results of the study to be used towards a joint position to the Commonwealth in the future.

NSW Health would like to acknowledge the contributions of the participating states both in a consultative and a financial capacity in the joint study "Key Drivers of Demand in the Emergency Department" by Booz Allen Hamilton. NSW Health would like to especially thank Stephen Duckett from QLD Health, Kym Piper from SA Health, Merran Smith from WA Department of Health and Frances Diver from Department of Human Services, Victoria for their support and enthusiasm for the study.

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We hope this sort of mutually beneficial collaboration can be continued.

Tony Dunn
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