

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

ABN 37 008 426 793

39 Brisbane Avenue, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604  
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499  
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



**UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2022 AT 12:01AM**

7 December 2022

**New data reveals hospital logjam worsening**

Public hospital performance is at a record low with patients waiting longer due to a system that is in logjam, according to new data released today.

The Australia Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2021–22 data on emergency department and essential elective surgery performance has continued to deteriorate to the point where access to timely healthcare is out of reach for many Australians.

Nationally, close to 40 per cent of patients had to spend more than four hours in an emergency department, the worst emergency department performance recorded in 20 years. ACT and Tasmania are the worst performers, with almost one in two patients having to spend more than four hours in an emergency department.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said that this latest data is just more evidence that the system is in crisis, and has been for many years, but is now at the breaking point.

“This week we have seen reports of [children waiting up to 12 hours for emergency care](#) and patients [dying while ramped at hospitals](#), and we know that these are not isolated instances,” Professor Robson said.

“These stories are just the tip of the iceberg. We know from our [Clear the Hospital Logjam](#) campaign that there are hundreds of stories of patients waiting for hours on end in hospital emergency departments, or in the back of an ambulance outside the hospital,” he said.

Professor Robson said that elective surgery performance has also deteriorated.

“While the AIHW data reveals that wait times for essential elective surgery decreased in 2021–22, this is most likely the result of fewer patients being added to the waiting list to receive surgery,” Professor Robson said.

In 2021–22, the number of elective surgeries performed decreased by 131,000 from the previous year, and by 135,000 from the pre-pandemic 2018–19 year. The data also shows there were 110,000 fewer patients added to elective surgery waiting lists in 2021–22 compared to the year before, a similar decrease from 2018–19.

“This reduction in volume is likely due to patients being stuck on the [elective surgery ‘hidden’ waiting list](#) or seeking care through the private health system because they just can’t wait any longer.

“Sadly, even the lucky patients who got their surgery often waited longer than the clinically recommended time. One in three patients waited over one year for a knee replacement, and almost one in five waited over a year for hip replacement. This is nothing short of disastrous,” he said.

Professor Robson said that you know a system is at capacity when we are propping up our public system by having 75,000 surgeries conducted in private hospitals funded by the public system in 2020–21.

“Clearly the way in which we fund our public hospital system is broken when we are forced to rely on the private system to treat our public patients. This is not a sustainable solution, and a new funding agreement is needed to support public hospitals to improve their performance, expand their capacity, and reduce their wait times,” Professor Robson said.

The AMA has a plan to address achieve this, outlined in the [solution for public hospital reform](#).

**Contact:** AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 | [media@ama.com.au](mailto:media@ama.com.au)

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: [twitter.com/ama\\_media](https://twitter.com/ama_media)

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: [twitter.com/amapresident](https://twitter.com/amapresident)

Like the AMA on Facebook [facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation](https://facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation)