

TRANSCRIPT

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Transcript: AMA Queensland Immediate Past President, Dr Maria Boulton, 10 News First, Lunchtime with Narelda Jacobs, Thursday 7 March 2025

Subject: Accessing health care during Cyclone Alfred

NARELDA JACOBS: Schools, public transport services, some airports, and a number of supermarkets are closed. But what happens to essential services like GP practices and hospitals in a cyclone? Well, former AMA Queensland President Dr Maria Boulton joins us now. Dr Boulton, will hospitals remain open and running as normal?

DR MARIA BOULTON: Good afternoon. Queensland Health has informed us that hospitals will continue to open their emergency departments as usual. They have also increased the operating hours of their virtual emergency care service, so they will be open 24/7 until at least Monday, and they can be accessed online or on the phone. For GP practices, it depends on the staff levels. Some have been offering telehealth appointments and will continue to do so over the weekend. However, some may be forced to close due to power outages. But the main thing to remember is that if it's an emergency, ring Triple Zero. If it's urgent, you can always call 13 HEALTH.

NARELDA JACOBS: What happens to patients who are meant to have elective surgery over the next couple of days?

DR MARIA BOULTON: We've been informed that some hospitals in the affected areas have cancelled elective surgeries and outpatient appointments. Some outpatient appointments, however, have been moved to telehealth. But the information we've had from Queensland Health is that they will contact those patients affected and reschedule their surgeries. This is extremely stressful and extremely anxiety provoking for patients because we know those surgeries are for serious things, but that's the effect of the cyclone.

NARELDA JACOBS: Have GPs closed their doors?

DR MARIA BOULTON: Some have, some are still open. Some have reverted to telehealth phone appointments. For example, our clinics continue to offer telephone and telehealth appointments provided that power lasts, because everything needs power nowadays.

NARELDA JACOBS: Speaking of power, there are a lot of people out there with life saving medical equipment at home, like oxygen tanks. What's your advice in the event of power outages?

DR MARIA BOULTON: My advice is that we've got a few hours now to continue preparations, and if you haven't already done so, and if you don't have the access to a generator – I mean, many people don't because they are expensive – It's really important that you contact your local hospital to see what emergency provisions you can have. We know that when it's life saving equipment, it's really important that electricity supply to the equipment doesn't stop.

NARELDA JACOBS: All right. Thanks for your time, Dr Maria Boulton.

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