

MEDIA RELEASE

SUN 11 MAY 2025

Change of plan required for planned surgery

AMA Queensland Pre-Budget Submission 2025-26

AMA Queensland has called for a renewed focus on improving planned surgery outcomes, particularly in the regions, as patients continue to suffer from inequitable access and lengthy wait times.

To reverse this trajectory, AMA Queensland urges the government to implement the recommendations detailed in its *Surgical Wait List Roundtable Action Plan* in collaboration with our dedicated regional health workforce as part of its upcoming state budget.

"Doctors remain distressed by increasingly poor health outcomes and a lack of concerted government action to reverse the decline in regional surgical services," AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim said.

"Alarming, the number of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended times for surgery has increased by over 8 per cent when compared to this time last year.

"This is most concerning for patients needing urology procedures, with latest available data indicating more than 10 per cent of category one patients, and more than 20 per cent of all patients, were not treated within clinically recommended timeframes.

"Improving rates of planned surgery is key to supporting a healthy and productive Queensland.

"The term 'elective surgery' often doesn't stress how crucial these operations are to patients' quality of life.

"A chronic hip or knee condition – or eye problems like cataracts – can prevent Queenslanders from working, driving or doing other activities required to take care of themselves and their loved ones.

"Excessive wait times for planned surgery can also have a detrimental effect on patients' mental health, an area also straining under unprecedented demand.

"While recent attempts have been made to rectify the issue, including the \$100 million funding boost into Surgery Connect, we are yet to see proposed tangible, long-term solutions that increase access to high-demand specialties in our underserved regions.

"Increased funding is crucial, but so too is a reallocation of resources, to ensure the right medical practitioners, specialists and allied health workers are going to the regions where they're needed most.

"This means prioritising doctors from rural and regional areas in specialist trainee selection processes and increases in specialist and subspecialty training in the regions.

"We also need fundamental reform to clear the backlog, as it continues to exacerbate our access issues.

"This includes expanding operating hours and surgical scheduling to deliver all-day lists and seven-day elective surgeries where workforce permits and enable private patients with private billings to be treated in public hospitals."

Background

- AMA Queensland's Surgical Waitlist Roundtable consisted of senior medical practitioners in the fields of anaesthetics, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics and general practice from HHSs across Queensland, including our regional facilities.
- It was tasked with identifying recommended solutions for implementation by Queensland Health, the Australian Government and other relevant stakeholders.

Further statistics

In the last quarter of 2024:

- **Cairns and Hinterland:** Nearly 20 per cent of category one patients ready for surgery were waiting longer than clinically recommended times.
- **Central Queensland:** 1,463 patients ready for surgery were waiting longer than clinically recommended time frames (a nearly 80 per cent increase compared to the same period the year prior).
- **Mackay:** 320 patients ready for surgery were waiting longer than clinically recommended time frames (a 45 per cent increase compared to the same period the year prior).
- **Metro South:** More than 23 per cent of category one patients ready for surgery were waiting longer than clinically recommended times.