

ACT Health response to question raised by Auditor-General in relation to errors in the December 2015-16 Quarterly Report

What data was changed?

No data was changed in source systems, extracts from source systems or in prior reports. The issues relate to

- i. inconsistent and inaccurate reporting of figures in the 2nd Quarter Health Performance Report for 2015-16, due to;
 - a. inaccurate calculations from the available data extracts;
 - b. inaccurate transcribing of data into tables within the report; and
- ii. A typographical error in the 2nd Quarter Report for the same quarter in 2014-15.

What period did the changes relate to?

The ACT Health Quarterly Performance Reports provide comparative performance and activity figures for the same period across financial years. The errors relating to inconsistent reporting of figures for comparative periods in the December 2015-16 Quarterly Performance Report ie: The median waiting time to treatment in the emergency department section of the report for 2013-14 and 2014-15 was inaccurately reported in the December 2015-16 Quarterly Performance Report.

Why was the data changed?

No data was changed in source systems or in prior reports. The issues relate to inconsistent and inaccurate reporting of figures across corresponding periods in 2 ACT Health Quarterly Performance Reports for the same indicators.

Under what process was the data changed?

No data was changed in source systems, data extracts or in prior reports. The issues relate to inconsistent and inaccurate reporting of figures across corresponding periods in 2 ACT Health Quarterly Performance Reports for the same indicators.

Who changed the data?

No data was changed in source systems or in prior reports. The wrong calculations were undertaken and incorporated into the 2nd Quarter report.

What quality assurance process was in place with respect to the production of the data in the first instance?

There was an existing quality assurance process in place to the compilation of the ACT Health Quarterly Performance Report.

The process included having 2 staff members responsible for generating the figures for different aspects of the Report. The 2 staff would then swap function and generate the same figures to ensure consistency and accuracy.

The Report would then go through a final validation and check by the Manager of this area, before going up the line for Senior Executive and Minister endorsement.

If the data was subject to a quality assurance process, why did it need to be amended subsequently?

The process for the compilation and checking of the Report is sound, however in the case of the December 2015-16 Quarterly Performance Report, a review indicates this process was not followed.

Firstly, the team leader of the Reporting Team was away on leave. This person has previously taken the lead on coordinating the Report. Instead, the Manager of the Team undertook to coordinate the completion of the Report.

The Manager tasked a range of people to undertake aspects of the Report. Many of these people had not previously had involvement in the compilation of the Report, and were unaware of correct sources of data used to complete these tasks.

Additionally, a review of the Report was not done thoroughly, which led to a number of errors in the Report. Most of the errors were due to transcription issues, not updating figures from previous reporting periods, and incorrectly calculating figures.

What purpose did the data serve?

The information contained within the ACT Health Quarterly Performance Report is used to inform the public of the current activity and performance across the health system, and provide insights into improvements and challenges faced by health.

To whom was the data provided?

The ACT Health Quarterly Performance Reports are updated on a Quarterly basis. Once approved by ACT Health Senior Executive and the ACT Minister for Health, the report is uploaded on the ACT Health website for public information.

Have steps been taken to “correct the record” in relation to the data errors?

A full review of the December 2015-16 Quarterly Performance Report was undertaken. The review found that there was a number of errors contained within the published report. The Report has been corrected and is awaiting endorsement by the Minister for Health to replace the online version of the report.

Have any changes been made to process in light of these circumstances?

Yes, a number of new processes have been established, including a change in the line management with dedicated staff responsible for the completion of the Reports with greater transparency and auditing which ensures processes are adhered to.

Additionally, a process document has been completed which covers all aspects of the report compilation.

Are there any new or revised initiatives planned for the preparation and production of data in light of these circumstances?

ACT Health has identified the need for, and are currently implementing, a robust quality and compliance system in our reporting area to ensure consistency and accuracy in the data we produce and publish.

Are there any new or revised assurance processes planned by the Health Directorate or some other group?

ACT Health has undertaken a review and amendment of processes related to the development of the quarterly report and the manual for its development has also been reviewed and updated.

In addition, ACT Health has identified the need for, and are currently implementing, a robust quality and compliance system in our reporting area to ensure consistency and accuracy in the data we produce and publish. This includes a new sign-off process that ensures all established processes have been followed in the development of the report.

ACT Health is reviewing all processes related to reports as part of its continual quality improvement cycle. This includes consolidation of data extracts and improved documentation of processes, particularly related to information used for external and national purposes.

The issues in relation to the errors in the Quarterly Report are different to those identified in relation to the two previous data audits for emergency department services and data integrity. The emergency department audit identified deliberate manipulation of data within the source system and the recommendations of that Audit Report have been implemented and ACT Health continually reviews systems and processes to ensure a similar situation does not occur again. The data integrity audit related to data quality processes for national reporting purposes. Many of the recommendations of that report have been implemented and new data validation and communication processes are being implemented to maximise the integrity of data used for national reporting and funding purposes.