



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question taken on notice

Asked by: Ms Jo Clay MLA

Addressed to: Dr Grant Howard, Chief Operating Officer, Canberra Health Services

In relation to: Emergency Department presentation categories

Hearing: 20 February 2025

Uncorrected Proof Transcript pp 16-17

Transcript provided: 27 February 2025

Answer Due: 6 March 2025 5:00PM

Dr Howard took on notice the following question(s):

why people are reporting to ER. We know we heard that the categories are about the same, it is just the overall number has increased. Are you able to provide, each year for the last three years, the data on the numbers of presentations by category?

Dr Howard: Absolutely.

MS CLAY: Yes, great. That would be great on those. And if we can also have an indication of how many of those might have been dealt with by preventive? I think we are already reporting against dental, but there might be other preventative things. Is that part of the categorisation?

Dr Howard: I think it is very difficult to report on who did not turn up and why. I think there are so—

MS CLAY: No, no, no. Not who did not turn up; the people who did turn up, who are turning up with things that could have been dealt with preventatively. Like dental is a good one and there will be other examples in there.

Dr Howard: I think for specific and individual clinical issues like the dental one you have mentioned, we can certainly provide and interrogate the data. But in terms of a more sweeping catchall of things that could have been seen or done somewhere else or prevented earlier, I think that is quite a hard thing to—

MS CLAY: All right. We will start with what we get. Thank you.

Mr Pepper: I might just add, if I could Ms Clay, there is an indicator that gets released by the Productivity Commission each year as part of their publication, their report on government services, where it tracks potentially preventable hospitalisations. So it essentially measures those who are presenting to hospital who otherwise may have been able to be treated in the community or through some other means. And I think the territory is, if not the top, then one of the top performers nationally on that indicator.

Minister Stephen-Smith: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

The number of presentations to ACT emergency departments by triage category over the last three years is detailed in Table 1 below.

There is no analysis currently available that identifies emergency department presentations that may have been avoided by specific preventative measures. A proxy measure for preventable emergency department presentations is potentially avoidable GP type presentations to emergency departments. Table 2 details the number of potentially avoidable GP-type emergency department presentations for the last three years for the ACT, along with the proportion of emergency department presentations that are considered potentially avoidable.

When calculating the number of potentially avoidable GP-type emergency department presentations against total emergency department presentations, the ACT achieved the third lowest proportion when compared to other jurisdictions in 2023-24.

Table 1: Emergency department presentations, by triage category, Australian Capital Territory, 2021–22 to 2023–24

Triage Category	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Resuscitation	770	1,058	975
Emergency	17,162	19,787	21,439
Urgent	56,176	61,017	67,230
Semi-urgent	55,382	52,190	55,564
Non-urgent	14,203	11,664	10,813
Total	143,693	145,718	156,029

Source: AIHW Emergency Department Care publication 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24

Table 2: Potentially avoidable GP-type presentations to emergency departments, Australian Capital Territory, 2021–22 to 2023–24

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Total potentially Avoidable GP type presentations	49,887	46,025	46,522
Proportion of all ED presentations (%)	34.7	31.6	29.8

Source: Report on Government Services 2025

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Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:



By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith

Date:

4
3/3/25