



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Mr Alistair Coe MLA (Chair), Ms Tara Cheyne MLA (Deputy Chair), Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA,
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA

Select Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic Response QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by MRS DUNNE asked on 5 June 2020

In relation to: Outpatient Clinics

Generally, what are we doing in relation to elective surgery, how much cooperation is there with the private hospital system, what is the strategy to clear the backlog, when do you expect to clear the backlog, and the same, essentially, for outpatient clinics?

Outpatient clinics, what is the backlog there?

Another thing to take on notice would be, with the elective surgery, not just what the quantum looked like but what it looked like in specialities like ENT and orthopaedics and the like. If we could have that broken down?

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:-

Outpatients

On 1 July 2020, the ACT Government announced the injection of \$30 million into the health system in 2020-21 that will deliver, among other things, 14,000 additional outpatient appointments.

The strategy to address backlogs across specialties over the next 12 months will utilise a combination of existing workforce, interstate workforce, and in some cases, technology solutions (including telehealth).

A patient's referral is considered a 'long wait' where they have not been provided an outpatient specialist review within the clinically recommended timeframe. That is; within 30 days for a category one, within 90 days for a category two and within 365 days for a category three.

Elective Surgery

On 21 April 2020, the Federal Government eased restrictions on elective surgery. Increases in the ACT have been cautious and progressive, with ongoing monitoring of COVID-19 case load and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) burn rates. On 15 May 2020 National Cabinet issued instructions to jurisdictions that they could reopen elective surgery with reference to local conditions and PPE supplies.

The Territory has now reopened to 100 per cent elective surgery capacity.

On 1 July 2020, the ACT Government announced that at least 16,000 elective surgeries would be completed in 2020-21, an increase of approximately 2000 on the record 14,015 elective surgeries completed in 2018-19.

The Territory has long standing relationships with the private hospitals, and current contracts related to elective surgery are in place with the six major private hospitals. Collaborative efforts between the Territory and private hospital providers are progressing well. Discussions are also underway with Calvary Public Hospital.

There are 1,461 overdue patients on the waitlist as at 21 June 2020. It is estimated 1,771 people have not received their surgery as a result of the COVID-19 shutdown. It should be noted that any data is time stamp specific as it is a census and will change day to day.

It is estimated it will take between 12 to 18 months to clear this backlog, dependent on workforce, especially anaesthetists, and surgeon availability. It is estimated that it will require the equivalent of two extra theatres working 250 workdays per year for between 12 to 18 months.

This is a 15 per cent increase on last year's target and will require significant additions to the current workforce. Travel restriction and multiple jurisdictions addressing the same problem will be complicating factors in acquiring this workforce.

Below is the list of overdue patients at two time points (Table 1) and most recent broken down by specialty (Table 2).

Table 1

Date	Overdue No
28 April 2020	1,209
21 June 2020	1,461

Table 2

Specialty	Overdue No
Cardiac	0
Thoracic	0
Dental	0
Orthopaedics	366
ENT	297
General	154
Paediatric Surgery	141
Gynaecology	114
Plastics	104
Urology	97

Oral and Maxillofacial	92
Vascular	68
Ophthalmology	22
Neurosurgery	5
Oral	1
Total	1,461

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic response

Signature:



Date: 13/7/20

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith