

2013

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR
THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT NUMBER 25 OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**REVIEW OF AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT NO.1 OF 2011
WAITING LISTS FOR ELECTIVE SURGERY AND MEDICAL TREATMENT**

**Presented by
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Minister for Health**

Preamble

The Government notes the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts of the 7th ACT Legislative Assembly in relation to the Auditor General's Report No.1 of 2011, *Waiting lists for elective surgery and medical treatment*.

Over the past decade, the Government has invested record levels of funding into improving access to elective surgery and reducing waiting times to care.

That investment has worked.

At the end of December 2012, there were 3,723 people on the ACT public hospitals' elective surgery waiting lists. This is the lowest figure in over a decade.

More importantly, the number of people who were waiting beyond recommended waiting times at 31 December 2012 (761) was also the lowest in over a decade, and almost two-thirds lower than the figure reported at December two years earlier (2,006).

Over the past two years, the Government has provided over 11,000 elective surgery operations per year, well up on the 7,661 provided in our first full year of Government in 2001-02.

This level of activity will continue over the current financial year following the addition of over \$11m in additional funding for elective surgery activity.

While the Government is proud of its record in achieving additional access to elective surgery, we are also aware of the growing demands for elective surgery in our community.

The ageing of the population will mean that demand for elective surgery will grow above the general level of growth in demand for services in our community. This is why we have committed to allocating \$80 million in additional funding over the next four years for extra elective surgery.

The Auditor-General's report focused on improving processes for access to elective surgery. As noted by the Committee, the Health Directorate has established a process to monitor progress against the Auditor General's recommendations. The ACT's Surgical Services Taskforce, which is comprised of senior surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses and administrators, provides regular oversight of progress and ensures compliance with the ACT's elective surgery access policy.

New standard operating procedures have been put in place to ensure the reliability of elective surgery information and compliance against these procedures is audited on a regular basis.

New processes have been implemented to reduce the postponement of elective surgery. While there will always be cases where surgery needs to be postponed (such as in the case of more urgent patients requiring surgery), the Health Directorate has worked closely with hospital to minimise these instances. The 7.1 per cent of cases postponed in 2011-12 was well below the 8.7 per cent reported for the previous year.

Considerable work is also underway in improving processes for outpatient appointments and increasing the integrity of outpatient data. A Steering Committee has been established which closely monitors a range of projects to deliver on the Auditor-General's recommendations.

The only Auditor-General recommendation which has not yet been actioned refers to the establishment of a single elective surgery waiting list for the Territory. This was not able to be progressed prior to the commissioning of the ACT Patient Administration System (ACTPAS) at Calvary Public Hospital. ACTPAS went 'live' at Calvary in October 2012, and the Health Directorate and Calvary will work to establish a single waiting list data set for the ACT by the beginning of 2013.

Further work will commence on business rules around the establishment of a coordinated surgical bookings service which would increase the efficiency of allocation of procedures across public hospitals based on patient needs.

This work will take longer to complete, but both the ACT and Calvary Health Care ACT have agreed to a centrally managed elective surgery waiting list service. I envisage the work around the development of principles and process to achieve this outcome will be completed by the end of 2013.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Auditor-General should program a follow-up audit to examine the management of access to elective surgery across the ACT's public hospitals at the midpoint of the 8th ACT Legislative Assembly term.

Noted.

The Auditor-General determines her work plan independently of Government advice.