

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Rob Fairs MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

QUESTION:

Constituents in my division of Bass have made inquiries about reports of The Examiner this week claiming health department figures show some patients are waiting up to six years to see a specialist health professional at the Launceston General Hospital.

The report claims urgent wound management patients are waiting 1121 days, with semi-urgent respiratory patients waiting 940 days for specialist services. Those respiratory patients deemed non-urgent can wait up to 2087 days, which is nearly six years.

1. Can the minister provide verification of these figures and an update on the availability of specialist services at the LGH?

ANSWER:

I can assure the Member that ensuring Tasmanians have access to the best possible health care services has been and will remain a strong focus of our Government.

Since our election in 2014 we've delivered an additional 298 hospital beds and employed an extra 2,500 health professionals, including 1,390 nurses.

But there's more work to do and our health system still needs to be better – and this time next year there will be even more frontline health workers in the Tasmanian health system as we continue to build an even better health system.

The State's biggest ever recruitment blitz is now underway searching for Tasmania's newest doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals.

Importantly, it is already delivering positive results, with 494 additional staff being welcomed into our health system, including 138 new nurses – almost two every single day.

Tasmania already has more healthcare workers than any state in Australia per head of population, but we are committed to delivering more to ensure Tasmanians can get the health care they need sooner.

We're also building the infrastructure our State needs for the future, and at the LGH, work is already underway on our \$580 million LGH Master Plan Redevelopment, delivering long term upgrades to the LGH over the next 10 years.

Our 2030 Strong Plan builds on this, with a commitment to double the size of the Emergency Department as part of a new \$53.5 million expansion.

This will ensure the ED has additional capacity to meet current and future demand, and includes:

- a new and improved Emergency Medical Unit for patients to be discharged in less than 24 hours;
- a new and improved Acute Medical Unit for patients who need a couple of days of admission;
- and an expanded fast track and waiting area.

In terms of elective surgeries, our Government is delivering more than ever before, with a record number of elective surgeries completed in a financial year for two consecutive years - meaning more Tasmanians are getting the right health care sooner, despite increasing demand.

We have invested significantly in recent years through our \$196.4 million Statewide Elective Surgery Plan and these results confirm our investment is working, with more Tasmanians able to have a better quality of life as a result.

Additionally, we understand that access to outpatient services including specialist procedural, surgical, medical, diagnostic, allied health and nursing interventions are important for supporting the health of the Tasmanian community.

We are committed to improving access to public outpatient services, to address growing demand and improve outcomes for patients – not just at the Launceston General Hospital, but across the entire state.

I do acknowledge the impact that waiting outside recommended times can have on patients, which is why we are investing into our health system so more people can get the care they need sooner.

Our \$20 million Outpatient Transformation Strategy is working to reduce the time Tasmanians are waiting for their appointments.

This will allow us to see more people within clinically recommended timeframes, deliver improved outcomes for individuals and broaden community access to specialist services for those that need them.

We're also investing in digital technology, with the new eReferral system implemented statewide in all public hospital clinics in 2023 and the planned statewide implementation of a new outpatient management system in the last quarter of 2024.

We will continue to do all we can to ensure Tasmanians have access to the healthcare they deserve, when and where they need it.

APPROVED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Barnett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 19 July 2024