

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-162

OUTCOME 13: Acute Care

Topic: EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS WAITING TIMES

Hansard Page: CA 134

Senator Furner asked:

In terms of the situation of the current emergency department waiting times, can you identify those that are over four hours in waiting time?

Answer:

The latest available data shows 95,364 patients waited longer than four hours for medical assessment and treatment in emergency departments in 2008-09. This accounted for 1.7% (see Table below) of total emergency department (ED) presentations, which were largely reported by principal referral and large hospitals. Such hospitals represented around 80% of total accident and emergency occasions of service provided by all public hospitals across Australia in 2008-09.

Table: Patients waited longer than 4 hours for medical assessment and treatment in ED, 2008-09

| Number of ED visits | Waiting time longer than 4 hours | % |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|------|
| 5,733,878 | 95,364 | 1.7% |

Note:

- (1) Sourced from the National Non-admitted Patient Emergency Department Care Database
- (2) The number of ED presentations excludes those visits with invalid waiting times.

The ED waiting time is defined as the time elapsed for each patient from presentation in the ED to the commencement of assessment and treatment within the ED. ED waiting times differ from length of stay ED targets, which measure the length of time a patient stays in the ED prior to admittance to hospital, referral or discharge.