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# 10 Public hospitals

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### **Attachment tables**

Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 10A.3). A full list of attachment tables is provided at the end of this chapter, and the attachment tables are available on the CD-ROM enclosed with the Report or from the Review website at <[www.pc.gov.au/gsp](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp)>.

Public hospitals are important providers of government funded health services in Australia. This chapter reports on the performance of State and Territory public hospitals, focusing on acute care services. It also reports separately on a significant component of the services provided by public hospitals — maternity services.

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Reporting on public hospitals has been enhanced this year as a result of improvements to the definition of one of the sentinel event categories, which in turn has led to better data comparability across jurisdictions for this measure.

## 10.1 Profile of public hospitals

### Definition

A key objective of government is to provide public hospital services to ensure the population has access to cost-effective health services, based on clinical need and within clinically appropriate times, regardless of geographic location. Public hospitals provide a range of services, including:

- acute care services to admitted patients
- sub-acute and non-acute services to admitted patients (for example, rehabilitation, palliative care, and long stay maintenance care)
- emergency, outpatient and other services to non-admitted patients
- mental health services, including services provided to admitted patients by designated psychiatric/psychogeriatric units
- public health services
- teaching and research activities.

This chapter focuses on services provided to admitted patients and emergency services provided to non-admitted patients in public hospitals. These services comprise the bulk of public hospital activity and, in the case of services to admitted patients, have the most reliable data available. Data in the chapter include sub-acute and non-acute care services.

In some instances, stand-alone psychiatric hospitals are included in this chapter, although their role is diminishing in accordance with the National Mental Health Strategy. Under the strategy, the provision of psychiatric treatment is shifting away from specialised psychiatric hospitals to mainstream public hospitals and the community sector. The performance of psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric units of public hospitals is examined more closely in the mental health section of the 'Health management' chapter (reported in chapter 12).

In WA in 2006-07, two private hospitals which provided a substantial amount of public hospital services through contract arrangements were split, resulting in the creation of two new public hospital reporting units to cover the public separations

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from these two hospitals. This represents a change in reporting arrangements that can affect comparisons over time.

Some common health terms relating to hospitals are defined in box 10.1. Other terms and definitions are included in section 10.8.

### Box 10.1 **Some common terms relating to hospitals**

#### ***Patients***

**admitted patient:** a patient who has undergone a formal admission process in a public hospital to begin an episode of care. Admitted patients can receive acute, sub-acute or non-acute care services.

**non-admitted patient:** a patient who has not undergone a formal admission process, but who may receive care through an emergency department, outpatient or other non-admitted service.

#### ***Types of care***

Classification of care depends on the principal clinical intent of the care received.

**acute care:** clinical services provided to admitted or non-admitted patients, including managing childbirth, curing illness or treating injury, performing surgery, relieving symptoms and/or reducing the severity of illness or injury, and performing diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. Most episodes involve a relatively short hospital stay.

**sub-acute and non-acute care:** clinical services provided to patients suffering from chronic illnesses or recovering from such illnesses. Services include rehabilitation, planned geriatric care, palliative care, geriatric care evaluation and management, and services for nursing home type patients. Clinical services delivered by designated psychogeriatric units, designated rehabilitation units and mothercraft services are considered non-acute.

#### ***Hospital outputs***

**separation:** an episode of care for an admitted patient, which can be a total hospital stay (from admission to discharge, transfer or death), or a portion of a hospital stay beginning or ending in a change of type of care (for example, from acute to rehabilitation). Admitted patients who receive same day procedures (for example, renal dialysis) are included in separation statistics.

**casemix-adjusted separations:** the number of separations adjusted to account for differences across hospitals in the complexity of their episodes of care. Casemix adjustment is an important step to achieving comparable measures of efficiency across hospitals and jurisdictions.

(Continued on next page)

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### Box 10.1 (Continued)

**non-admitted occasion of service:** occasion of examination, consultation, treatment or other service provided to a non-admitted patient in a functional unit of a health service establishment. Services can include emergency department visits, outpatient services (such as pathology, radiology and imaging, and allied health services, including speech therapy and family planning) and other services to non-admitted patients. Hospital non-admitted occasions of service are not yet recorded consistently across states and territories, and relative differences in the complexity of services provided are not yet documented.

#### ***Other common health terms***

**AR-DRG (Australian refined diagnosis related group):** a patient classification system that hospitals use to match their patient services (hospital procedures and diagnoses) with their resource needs. AR-DRG version 5.1 is based on the ICD-10-AM classification.

**ICD-10-AM (the Australian modification of the International Standard Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems):** the current classification of diagnoses and procedures.

*Source:* AIHW (2006, 2008); NCCH (2008).

## Funding

Total recurrent expenditure on public hospitals (excluding depreciation) was \$28.9 billion in 2007-08 (table 10A.1). In real terms, expenditure increased by 6.1 per cent between 2006-07 and 2007-08 (AIHW 2009a).

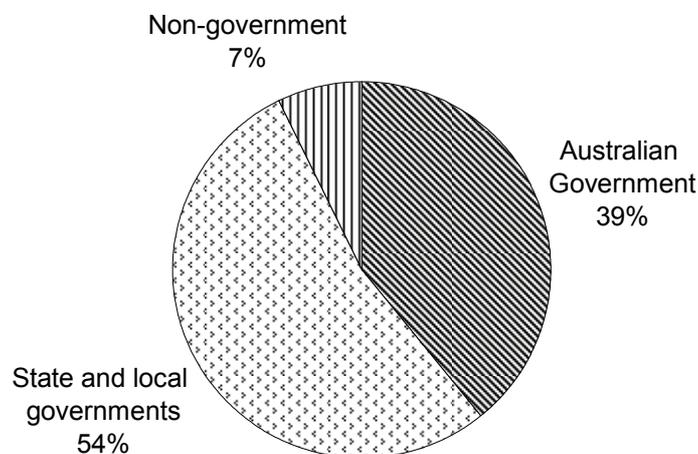
The majority of total public hospital recurrent expenditure is spent on admitted patients. Non-admitted patients account for a much smaller share. For selected public hospitals, in 2007-08, the proportion of total public hospital recurrent expenditure that related to the care of admitted patients (based on the admitted patient cost proportion) ranged from 69.0 per cent to 77.0 per cent across jurisdictions (AIHW 2009a).

Funding for public hospitals comes from a number of sources. The Australian, State and Territory governments, health insurance funds, individuals, and workers compensation and compulsory motor vehicle third party insurance contribute to expenditure on public hospitals. Governments contributed about 92.8 per cent of funding for public hospitals in 2007-08 (figure 10.1). Public hospitals accounted for 41.7 per cent of government recurrent expenditure on health services in 2007-08 (AIHW 2009b).

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**Figure 10.1 Recurrent expenditure, public hospitals, by source of funds, 2007-08**

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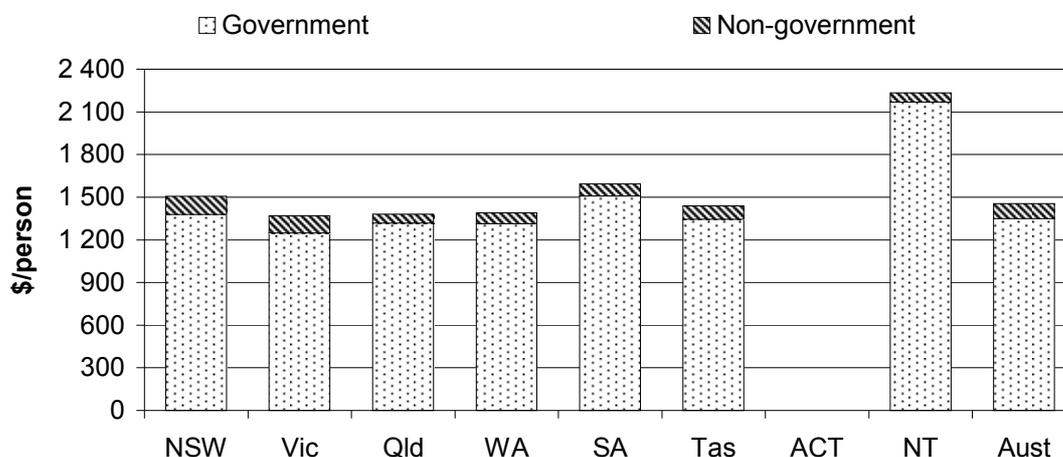


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Source: AIHW (2009), *Health expenditure Australia 2007–08*, Health and Welfare Expenditure Series No. 37, Cat. no. HWE 46.

In 2007-08, public hospitals received \$2.2 billion from non-government sources — an amount that accounted for 7.2 per cent of all recurrent expenditure (figure 10.2 and table 10A.2). Non-government expenditure in each jurisdiction comprised revenue from health insurance funds, individuals and workers' compensation and compulsory third-party motor vehicle insurers as well as other sources. The proportion of hospital revenue per person funded from non-government sources varied across jurisdictions in 2007-08 (figure 10.2).

Figure 10.2 **Source of public hospital recurrent expenditure, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Government expenditure excludes depreciation. Non-government expenditure on depreciation is included in recurrent expenditure. <sup>b</sup> Non-government expenditure includes expenditure by health insurance funds, individuals, workers' compensation, compulsory third-party motor vehicle insurers and other sources. <sup>c</sup> ACT per person figures are not calculated, as the expenditure numbers for the ACT include substantial expenditures for NSW residents. Thus the ACT population is not the appropriate denominator.

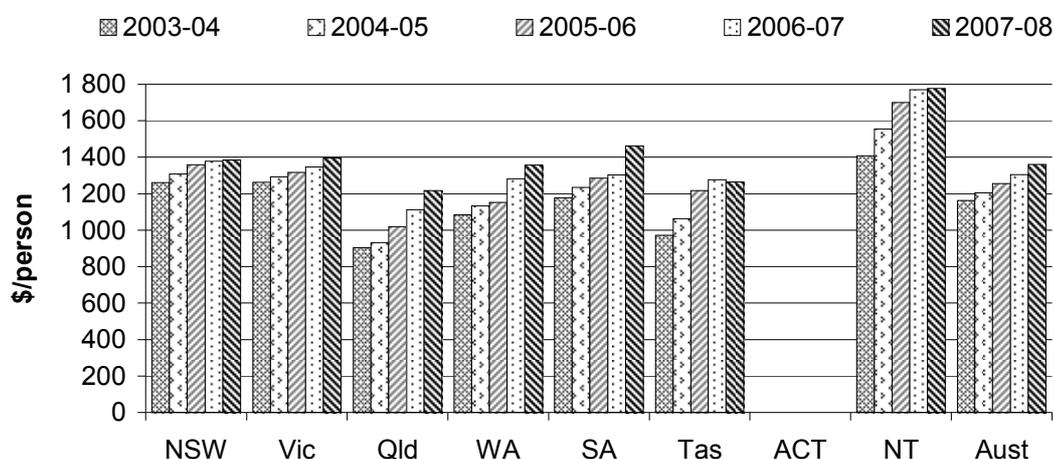
Source: AIHW (2009), *Health expenditure Australia 2007-08*, Health and Welfare Expenditure Series No. 37, Cat. no. HWE 46; ABS (unpublished), Australian Demographic Statistics, December Quarter 2007, Cat. no. 3101.0; table 10A.2.

Expenditure data in figures 10.1 and 10.2 are from *Health Expenditure Australia 2007-08* (AIHW 2009b) and are not directly comparable with other expenditure data used in this chapter, which are drawn from *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08* (AIHW 2009a). The data in *Health Expenditure Australia* have a broader scope than the data in *Australian Hospital Statistics* and include some additional expenditures (such as those relating to blood transfusion services) (AIHW unpublished).

In 2007-08, government real recurrent expenditure on public hospitals was \$1360 per person for Australia, up from \$1163 in 2003-04 (in 2007-08 dollars) (figure 10.3). It is difficult to make comparisons between jurisdictions based on these recurrent expenditure data due to differences in the coverage of the data. Some of the differences are:

- the inclusion, by some jurisdictions, of expenditure on community health services as well as public hospital services
- the exclusion, by some jurisdictions, of expenditure on privately owned or privately operated hospitals that have been contracted to provide public hospital services.

Figure 10.3 **Real recurrent expenditure per person, public hospitals (including psychiatric) (2007-08 dollars)**<sup>a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h</sup>



**a** Expenditure data exclude depreciation and interest payments. **b** Recurrent expenditure on purchase of public hospital services at the State, or area health service level, from privately owned and/or operated hospitals is excluded. **c** Expenditure data are deflated using the hospital/nursing home care price index from AIHW (2009b). **d** From 2003-04, NSW hospital expenditure recorded against special purposes and trust funds is excluded. **e** Queensland pathology services were purchased from a statewide pathology service rather than being provided by hospital employees. **f** Data for WA from 2006-07 include expenditure for public patients at Jondalup and Peel Health Campuses. Expenditures for these patients are not included in previous years. **g** For 2003-04, data for five small Tasmanian hospitals are not included. For 2004-05 and 2005-06, data for one hospital are not included. **h** ACT per person figures are not calculated, as the expenditure numbers for the ACT include substantial expenditures for NSW residents. Thus the ACT population is not the appropriate denominator.

Source: AIHW (various years), *Australian hospital statistics*, Health Services Series, Cat. nos HSE 37, 41, 50, 55 and 71; AIHW (various years), *Health expenditure Australia*, Health and Welfare Expenditure Series, Cat. no. HWE 46; ABS (unpublished), *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December Quarter 2007, Cat. no. 3101.0; table 10A.3.

## Size and scope of sector

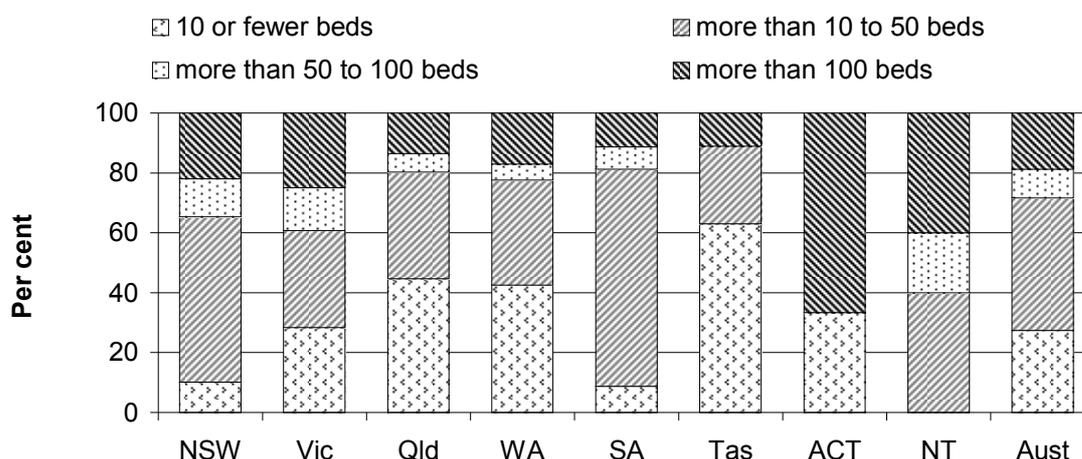
There are several ways to measure the size and scope of Australia's public hospital sector. This chapter reports on: the number and size of hospitals; the number and location of public hospital beds; the number and type of public hospital separations; the proportion of separations by age group of the patient; the number of separations and incidence of treatment, by procedure and Indigenous status of the patient; the number of hospital staff; and types of public hospital activity.

### Hospitals

In 2007-08, Australia had 762 public hospitals (table 10A.4) (including 20 psychiatric hospitals) (AIHW 2009a). Although 71.7 per cent of hospitals had 50

or fewer beds, these smaller hospitals represented only 16.9 per cent of total available beds (figure 10.4 and table 10A.4).

**Figure 10.4 Public hospitals, by size, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c, d</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The number of hospitals reported can be affected by administrative and/or reporting arrangements and is not necessarily a measure of the number of hospital buildings or campuses. <sup>b</sup> Size is based on the average number of available beds. <sup>c</sup> The comparability of bed numbers can be affected by the casemix of hospitals including the extent to which hospitals provide same day admitted services and other specialised services. <sup>d</sup> The count of hospitals in Victoria is a count of the campuses that report data separately to the National Hospital Morbidity Database.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.4.

## Beds

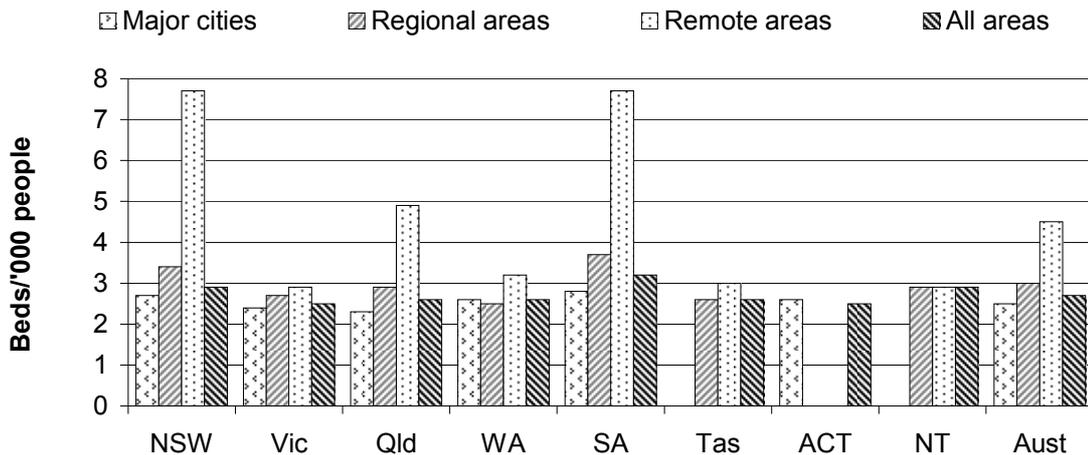
There were 56 467 available beds in public hospitals in 2007-08 (table 10A.4). The concept of an available bed is becoming less important in the overall context of hospital activity, particularly in respect of increasing same day hospitalisations and the provision of hospital-in-the-home care (AIHW 2009a).

The comparability of bed numbers can be affected by the casemix of hospitals, including the extent to which hospitals provide same day admitted services and other specialised services. There are also differences in how available beds are counted, both across jurisdictions and over time.

Nationally, more beds were available per 1000 people in remote areas (figure 10.5). The patterns of bed availability can reflect a number of factors including patterns of availability of other healthcare services, patterns of disease and injury and the relatively poor health of Indigenous people, who have higher population concentrations in remote areas (AIHW 2006). These data also need to be viewed in

the context of the age and sex structure (reported in appendix A) and the morbidity and mortality (reported in 'Health preface') of the population in each State and Territory.

Figure 10.5 Available beds, public hospitals, by location, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c, d</sup>



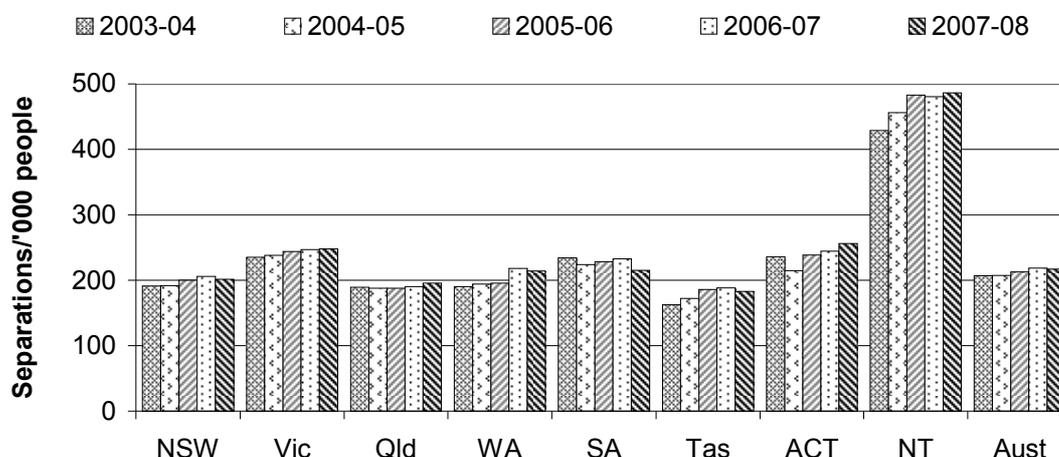
<sup>a</sup> An 'available bed' is one that is immediately available to be used by an admitted patient. A bed is immediately available for use if it is located in a suitable place for care, with nursing and auxiliary staff available within a reasonable period. Both occupied and unoccupied beds are included. Surgical tables, recovery trolleys, delivery beds, cots for normal neonates, emergency stretchers/beds not normally authorised or funded, and beds designated for same day non-admitted patient care are excluded. Beds in wards that were closed for any reason (except weekend closures for beds/wards staffed and available on weekends only) are also excluded (HDSC 2008). <sup>b</sup> Analysis by remoteness area is of less relevance to geographically smaller jurisdictions and those jurisdictions with small populations residing in remote areas (such as Victoria) (AIHW 2009a). <sup>c</sup> Tasmania and the NT do not have major cities and the ACT does not have remote areas. <sup>d</sup> There were no available beds in regional areas in the ACT.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.5.

### Total separation rates

There were approximately 4.7 million separations from public (non-psychiatric) hospitals in 2007-08 (table 10A.6). Nationally, this translates into 216.9 separations per 1000 people (figure 10.6).

Figure 10.6 Separation rates in public (non-psychiatric) hospitals<sup>a, b, c</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Excludes separations for which the care type was reported as 'newborn with no qualified days' and records for hospital boarders and posthumous organ procurement. <sup>b</sup> Rates are directly age standardised to the Australian population at 30 June 2001. <sup>c</sup> Data for WA from 2006-07 include separations for public patients at Joondalup and Peel Health Campuses. Separations for these patients are not included in previous years.

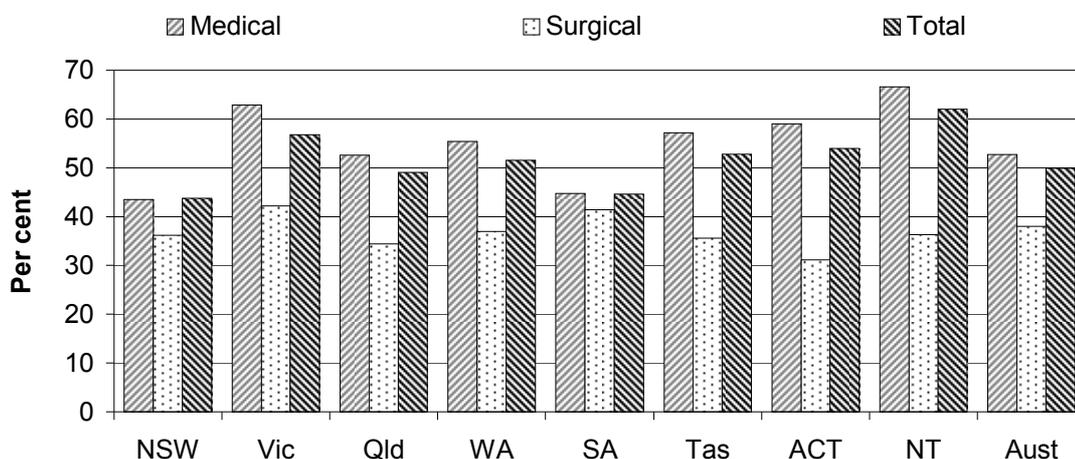
Source: AIHW (various years), *Australian Hospital Statistics*, Health Services Series, Cat. nos HSE 37, 41, 50, 55 and 71; table 10A.7.

Same day separations in public (non-psychiatric) hospitals increased by 1.3 per cent between 2006-07 and 2007-08, although same day separations as a proportion of total separations remained relatively constant over this period. Overnight separations in public (non-psychiatric) hospitals increased by 2.2 per cent between 2006-07 and 2007-08 (table 10A.7).

Differences across jurisdictions in separation rates reflect variations in the health profiles of the people living in each State and Territory, the decisions made by medical staff about the type of care required and people's access to services other than public hospitals (for example, primary care and private hospitals).

Variations in admission rates can reflect different practices in classifying patients as either admitted same day patients or outpatients. The extent of differences in classification practices can be inferred from the variation in the proportion of same day separations across jurisdictions for certain conditions or treatments. This is particularly true of medical separations. Significant variation across jurisdictions in the proportion of same day medical separations was evident in 2007-08 (figure 10.7). Lower jurisdictional variation is likely in admission practices for surgical procedures, as reflected by the lower variability in the proportion of same day surgical separations.

**Figure 10.7 Proportion of medical, surgical and total separations that were same day, public (non-psychiatric) hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a</sup>**



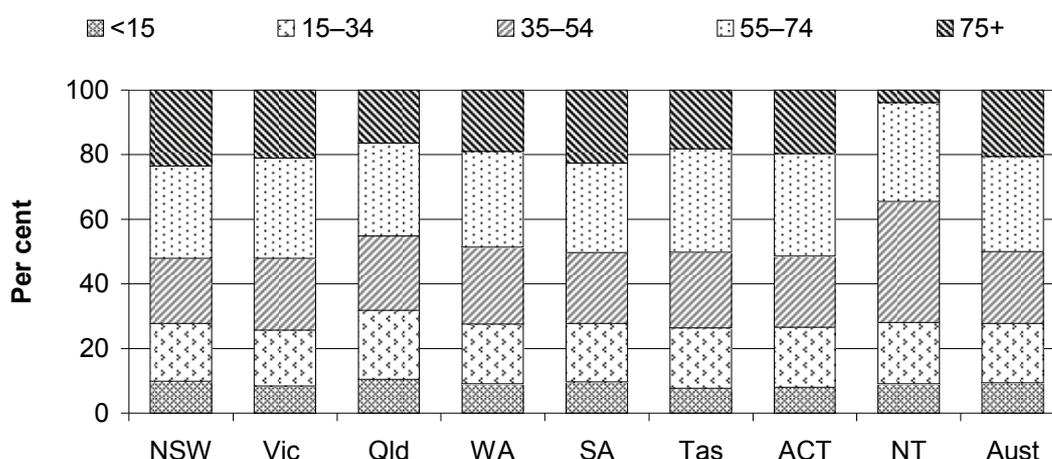
<sup>a</sup> 'Total' includes medical, surgical, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and 'other' separations based on AR-DRG version 5.1 categories.

Source: AIHW (unpublished), National Hospital Morbidity Database; table 10A.8.

### *Separations by age group*

Persons aged 55 years and over accounted for half of the separations in public hospitals (50.0 per cent) in 2007-08, even though they accounted for only 24.3 per cent of the estimated resident population at 31 December 2007 (figure 10.8 and AIHW 2009a). The proportion of hospital separations for this and other age groups varies across states and territories (figure 10.8). This variation largely reflects differences in the age profiles of jurisdictions (table AA.1).

Figure 10.8 Separations by age group, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Excludes separations for which the care type was reported as 'newborn with no qualified days' and records for hospital boarders and posthumous organ procurement.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.9.

### Separation rates for Indigenous patients

The completeness of Indigenous identification in hospital admitted patient data varies across states and territories. The AIHW (2005) report *Improving the Quality of Indigenous Identification in Hospital Separations Data* found that Indigenous patient data was of acceptable quality for analytical purposes only for Queensland, WA, SA, and public hospitals in the NT. Following new assessments of the quality of Indigenous identification in 2007, the National E Health Information Principal Committee (NEHIPC) has approved NSW and Victorian Indigenous patient data as acceptable in quality for analytical purposes, from the 2004-05 reference year. Efforts to improve Indigenous identification across states and territories are ongoing.

The available data are not necessarily representative of other jurisdictions. Also because of improvements in data quality over time, caution should be used in time series analysis of the data.

In 2007-08, separations for Indigenous people accounted for around 3.6 per cent of total separations and 5.5 per cent of separations in public hospitals in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and the NT combined (table 10.1). Indigenous people made up only around 2.2 per cent of the population in these jurisdictions (tables AA.2 and AA.7). Most separations involving Indigenous patients (92.9 per cent) in these jurisdictions occurred in public hospitals (table 10.1).

**Table 10.1 Separations, by Indigenous status of patient and hospital sector, 2007-08<sup>a, b</sup>**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total <sup>c</sup>
Public hospital separations ('000)									
Indigenous	53.1	12.4	64.9	42.7	17.3	2.6	1.9	61.6	252.0
Non-Indigenous	1 399.2	1 327.1	749.6	415.5	339.2	91.2	77.7	28.7	4 259.3
Not reported	14.4	11.8	17.5	–	11.8	2.4	1.6	–	55.4
Total	1 466.7	1 351.2	832.0	458.2	368.3	96.3	81.1	90.3	4 566.7
Private hospital separations ('000)									
Indigenous	1.1	0.6	4.4	12.1	1.1	np	np	np	19.3
Non-Indigenous	843.1	791.5	701.8	313.3	228.2	np	np	np	2 877.9
Not reported	13.8	10.1	74.1	–	14.3	np	np	np	112.3
Total	857.9	802.3	780.3	325.4	243.6	np	np	np	3 009.5
Indigenous separations as proportion of total separations (%)									
Public hospitals	3.6	0.9	7.8	9.3	4.7	2.7	2.3	68.2	5.5
Private hospitals	0.1	0.1	0.6	3.7	0.5	np	np	np	0.6
All hospitals	2.3	0.6	4.3	7.0	3.0	np	np	np	3.6
Separations in public hospitals as a proportion of separations in all hospitals (%)									
Indigenous	98.1	95.2	93.6	77.9	94.0	np	np	np	92.9
Non-Indigenous	62.4	62.6	51.6	57.0	59.8	np	np	np	59.7

<sup>a</sup> Excludes separations for which the care type was reported as 'newborn with no qualified days' and records for hospital boarders and posthumous organ procurement. <sup>b</sup> Identification of Indigenous patients is not considered complete and completeness varies across jurisdictions. The AIHW advised that only data for NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and the NT are considered to be acceptable for the purpose of analysis. Nevertheless, data for these jurisdictions should be interpreted with caution as there are jurisdictional differences in data quality. In addition, these jurisdictions are not necessarily representative of the excluded jurisdictions. <sup>c</sup> The total includes data only for NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA and SA for private hospitals and all hospitals. – Nil or rounded to zero. np Not published.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.10.

In 2007-08, on an age standardised basis, 807.7 public hospital separations (including same day separations) for Indigenous patients were reported per 1000 Indigenous people in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and the NT combined (table 10.2). This rate was markedly higher than the corresponding rate of 217.6 per 1000 for these jurisdictions' combined total population (table 10.2). Incomplete identification of Indigenous people limits the validity of comparisons over time, as well as across jurisdictions.

**Table 10.2 Estimates of public hospital separations per 1000 people, by Indigenous status of patient<sup>a, b</sup>**

	NSW <sup>c</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>c</sup>	WA <sup>c,d</sup>	SA <sup>c</sup>	Tas	ACT	NT <sup>c</sup>	Total <sup>e</sup>
2003-04									
Indigenous	np	np	710.9	789.3	853.9	np	np	1286.2	np
Total population	np	np	189.3	191.0	235.9	np	np	428.9	np
2004-05									
Indigenous	np	np	733.6	821.5	822.2	np	np	1 441.0	907.0
Total population	np	np	188.1	195.2	225.3	np	np	456.2	205.2
2005-06									
Indigenous	495.6	np	745.4	845.2	875.0	np	np	1 548.0	792.1
Total population	204.7	np	188.5	198.8	229.7	np	np	491.4	205.7
2006-07									
Indigenous	528.0	624.3	756.7	876.5	929.3	np	np	1 584.8	787.5
Total population	205.9	246.6	218.7	218.1	232.6	np	np	480.6	218.7
2007-08									
Indigenous	550.5	629.8	785.7	869.4	908.9	np	np	1 670.6	807.7
Total population	202.8	247.8	195.7	215.1	216.4	np	np	486.4	217.6

<sup>a</sup> The rates are directly age standardised to the Australian population at 30 June 2001. <sup>b</sup> Identification of Indigenous patients is not considered complete and completeness varies across jurisdictions and time. <sup>c</sup> AIHW advice on data of acceptable quality limits reporting across jurisdictions for various years. Data for these jurisdictions should be interpreted with caution as there are jurisdictional differences in data quality and changes in hospitalisation rates for Indigenous people over time that can be partly due to improved identification. In addition, these jurisdictions are not necessarily representative of the excluded jurisdictions. <sup>d</sup> Data for WA from 2006-07 include separations for public patients at Joondalup and Peel Health Campuses. Separations for these patients are not included in previous years. <sup>e</sup> Total rates include data for Queensland, WA, SA, and the NT for all years, and from 2005-06 include NSW and from 2006-07 include Victoria. Total rates before 2005-06 are not comparable with the 2005-06 total and total rates before 2006-07 are not comparable with the 2006-07 total. **np** Not published.

Source: AIHW (unpublished), National Hospital Morbidity Database; table 10A.11.

### *Separations with a procedure recorded for Indigenous patients*

While Indigenous Australians are more likely to be hospitalised than non-Indigenous Australians, they are less likely to undergo procedures while in hospital. The underlying reasons for this are not well understood and are likely to reflect a range of factors, including, for example, clinical judgements about the appropriateness of treatment by procedure, patient preferences and concerns, and distance from appropriate facilities (AHMAC 2006). Other factors are also likely to affect the data, including those relating to variations in casemix, comorbidities and stage at presentation.

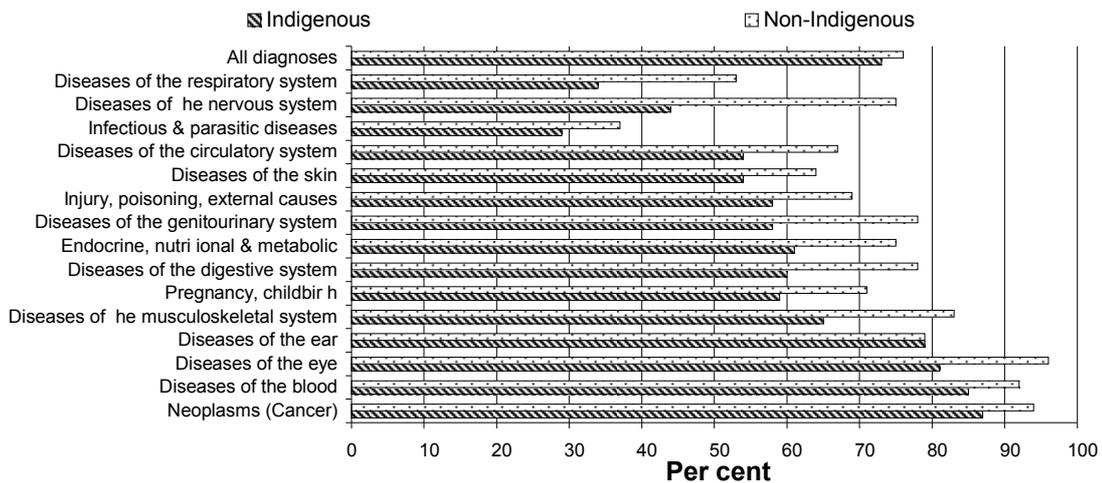
Data for NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and NT public hospitals for separations with a procedure recorded by principal diagnosis are presented in figure 10.9. Separations with a procedure recorded both by jurisdiction and by remoteness are presented in figures 10.10 and 10.11, and include data for all

patients treated in public hospitals and public patients treated in private hospitals. Private hospital data are not published for the NT, but the extent to which public patients are treated in private hospitals in that jurisdiction is limited.

In the period July 2006–June 2008, excluding care involving dialysis, consistently lower proportions of separations with a procedure were recorded for Indigenous patients compared with non-Indigenous patients in almost all categories of principal diagnosis (figure 10.9). The differences can be observed across all jurisdictions for which data are available (figure 10.10). While remoteness is associated with progressively reduced rates of separation with a procedure recorded for all patients, differences were more pronounced for Indigenous patients (figure 10.11).

Care involving dialysis accounts for the greatest number of Indigenous separations, with end-stage renal disease requiring frequent dialysis treatments, often several times per week. The alternative to dialysis is a kidney transplant. Indigenous people have very high levels of end-stage renal disease as a consequence of high rates of diabetes, hypertension and related illnesses. In addition, few Indigenous people receive kidney transplants (AHMAC 2006). Without the exclusion of dialysis the result would overestimate the numbers of Indigenous people being treated by procedure for other conditions.

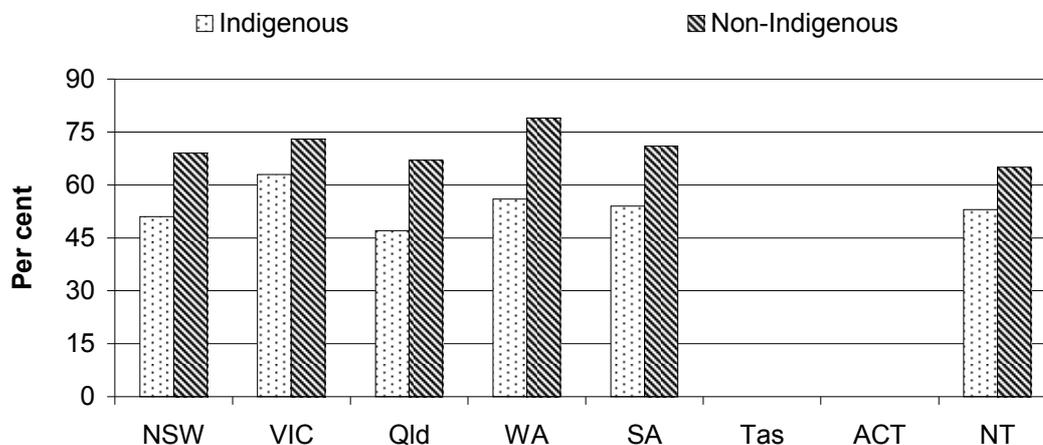
**Figure 10.9 Separations with a procedure recorded by principal diagnosis, by Indigenous status of patient, July 2006–June 2008<sup>a, b</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Includes patients treated in public hospitals and public patients treated in private hospitals in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and NT. <sup>b</sup> 'All diagnoses' excludes care involving dialysis.

Source: AIHW (unpublished), National Hospital Morbidity Database, table 10A.12.

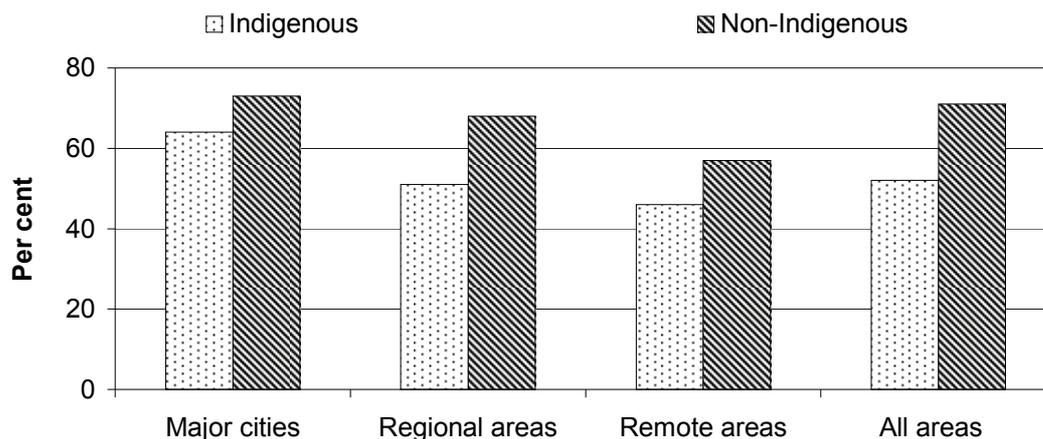
Figure 10.10 Separations with a procedure recorded, by Indigenous status of patient, July 2006–June 2008<sup>a, b, c</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Includes all patients treated in public hospitals and public patients treated in private hospitals. Private hospital data for NT were not available therefore results for NT include public hospital data only. <sup>b</sup> The AIHW advised that only data for NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and the NT are considered to be acceptable for the purpose of analysis. Nevertheless, data for these jurisdictions should be interpreted with caution as there are jurisdictional differences in data quality. In addition, these jurisdictions are not necessarily representative of the excluded jurisdictions. <sup>c</sup> 'All diagnoses' excludes care involving dialysis.

Source: AIHW (unpublished), National Hospital Morbidity Database, table 10A.13.

Figure 10.11 Separations with a procedure recorded, by Indigenous status of patient and remoteness, July 2006–June 2008<sup>a, b</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Includes all patients treated in public hospitals and public patients treated in private hospitals in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and NT. Private hospital data for NT were not available therefore results for NT include public hospital data only. <sup>b</sup> 'All diagnoses' excludes care involving dialysis.

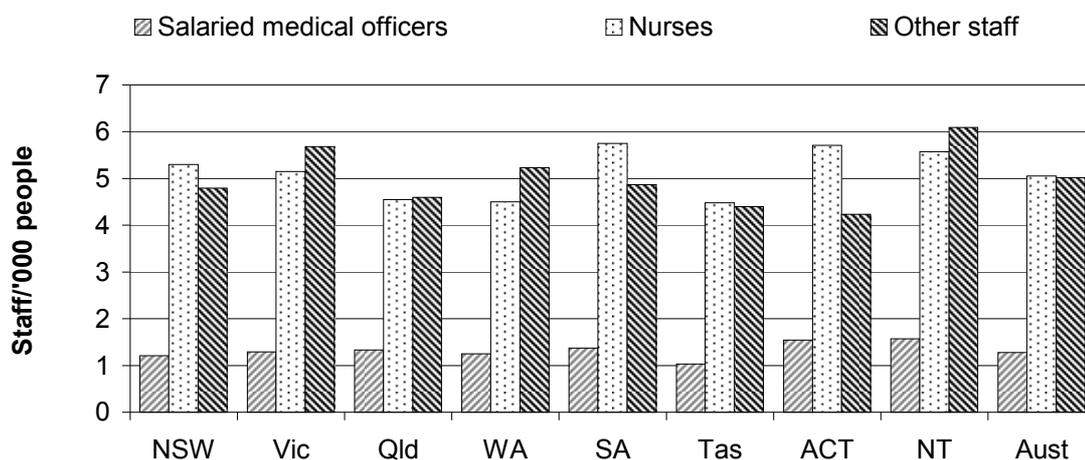
Source: AIHW (unpublished), National Hospital Morbidity Database, table 10A.14.

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## Staff

In 2007-08, nurses comprised the single largest group of full time equivalent (FTE) staff employed in public hospitals (5.1 per 1000 people in Australia) (figure 10.12). Comparing data on FTE staff across jurisdictions needs to be undertaken with care because these data are affected by differences across jurisdictions in the recording and classifying of staff. The outsourcing of services with a large labour related component (for example, food services and domestic services) can have a large impact on hospital staffing figures and can explain some of the differences in FTE staff in some staffing categories and across jurisdictions (AIHW 2009a).

Figure 10.12 **Average FTE staff per 1000 people, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c, d, e</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> 'Other staff' include diagnostic and allied health professionals, other personal care staff, administrative and clerical staff, and domestic and other staff. <sup>b</sup> Staff per 1000 people are calculated from ABS population data at 31 December 2006 (table AA.2). <sup>c</sup> For Victoria, FTEs can be slightly understated. <sup>d</sup> Queensland pathology services staff employed by the State pathology service are not included. <sup>e</sup> Data for two small Tasmanian hospitals are not included.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; ABS (unpublished), *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December Quarter 2007, Cat. no. 3101.0; tables 10A.15 and AA.2.

## Activity — admitted patient care

There were around 4.7 million acute, sub-acute and non-acute separations in public hospitals in 2007-08. Of these, acute separations accounted for 96.1 per cent, newborns with some qualified days accounted for 1.0 per cent and rehabilitation care accounted for 1.8 per cent (table 10A.16). Palliative care, non-acute care and other care made up the remainder. Public psychiatric hospitals accounted for around 0.3 per cent of total separations in public hospitals in 2007-08. Of the total number

of separations in public (non-psychiatric) hospitals, 49.9 per cent were for same day patients (table 10A.6).

Table 10.3 shows the 10 AR-DRGs with the highest number of overnight acute separations in public hospitals for 2007-08. These 10 AR-DRGs accounted for 17.5 per cent of all overnight acute separations.

**Table 10.3 Ten AR-DRGs (version 5.1) with the most overnight acute separations, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b</sup>**

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Separations for AR-DRGs as a proportion of all overnight acute separations (%)									
Vaginal delivery W/O catastrophic or severe CC	4.4	4.9	4.6	4.6	3.4	4.1	5.3	3.9	4.5
Chest pain	2.4	2.1	2.7	1.8	2.7	1.6	1.1	1.9	2.3
Oesophagitis, gastroent & misc digestive systm disorders age>9 W/O Cat/Sev CC	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.7	2.1	1.8	1.3	1.1	1.9
Caesarean delivery W/O catastrophic or severe CC	1.8	1.8	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.5	1.8
Cellulitis (Age >59 W/O catastrophic or severe CC) or age <60	1.4	1.3	1.9	1.9	1.2	1.2	1.3	4.8	1.5
Antenatal & other obstetric admission	1.4	1.1	1.8	1.9	1.2	1.6	1.5	2.4	1.5
Vaginal delivery single uncomplicated W/O other condition	1.2	0.6	1.7	1.0	0.8	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.1
Chronic obstructive airways disease W catastrophic or severe CC	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	1.1	1.0	0.5	1.1	1.0
Abdominal pain or mesenteric adenitis W/O CC	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.7	1.0
Chronic obstructive airway disease W/O catastrophic or severe CC	1.0	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.4	1.4	0.9
<b>Total overnight separations accounted for by top 10 AR-DRGs (%)</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>17.5</b>
<b>Total overnight acute separations ('000)<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>792</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2265</b>

Cat = catastrophic. CC = complications and comorbidities. Sev = severe. W/O = without. W = with. <sup>a</sup> Includes separations for which the care type was reported as 'acute' or 'newborn with qualified days', or was not reported. <sup>b</sup> Excludes same day separations and separations where patients stayed over 365 days. <sup>c</sup> Total is for all overnight separations (not just the 10 listed in the table).

Source: AIHW (unpublished), National Hospital Morbidity Database; table 10A.17.

Table 10.4 lists the 10 AR-DRGs that accounted for the most patient days (18.1 per cent of all patient days recorded) in 2007-08. Schizophrenic disorders associated with mental health legal status accounted for the largest number of

patient days, followed by vaginal delivery without complicating diagnosis (table 10.4 and table 10A.18).

**Table 10.4 Ten AR-DRGs (version 5.1) with the most patient days, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b</sup>**

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Patient days for AR-DRGs as a proportion of patient days (%)									
Schizophrenia disorders W mental health legal status	3.1	3.8	4.6	4.2	3.3	2.0	2.7	1.8	3.6
Vaginal delivery W/O catastrophic or severe CC	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.6	1.8	2.0	2.6	2.5	2.3
Tracheostomy any age, any condition	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.0	2.3
Major affective disorders Age<70 W/O catastrophic or severe CC	2.0	1.7	1.9	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.6	1.0	2.0
Schizophrenia disorders W/O mental health legal status	1.9	1.1	0.9	1.6	1.6	3.4	1.0	1.1	1.5
Chronic obstructive airways disease W catastrophic or severe CC	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.6	1.5	0.6	1.5	1.5
Caesarean delivery W/O catastrophic or severe CC	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.4
Cellulitis (age >59 W/O catastrophic or severe CC) or Age <60	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.1	0.8	1.0	3.2	1.2
Respiratory infections/inflammations W catastrophic CC	1.2	1.4	0.9	0.9	1.2	0.8	1.3	1.1	1.2
Respiratory infections/inflammations W severe or moderate CC	1.2	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.1	2.1	1.1
<b>Ten AR-DRGs with the most patient days (%)</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>18.1</b>
<b>Total patient days ('000)<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>4 464</b>	<b>2 867</b>	<b>2 003</b>	<b>1 097</b>	<b>1 078</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>12 129</b>

Cat = catastrophic. CC = complications and comorbidities. Sev = severe. W/O = without. W = with. <sup>a</sup> Includes separations for which the care type was reported as 'acute' or 'newborn with qualified days', or was not reported. <sup>b</sup> Excludes same day separations and separations where patients stayed over 365 days. <sup>c</sup> Total is for all overnight separations (not just the ten listed in table).

Source: AIHW (unpublished), National Hospital Morbidity Database; table 10A.18.

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### *Activity — non-admitted patient services*

There is no agreed classification system for services to non-admitted patients, so activity is difficult to measure consistently and cannot be compared across jurisdictions. As well as differences in the way data are collected, differing admission practices lead to variation in the services reported across jurisdictions. In addition, states and territories can differ in the extent to which these types of service are provided in non-hospital settings (such as community health centres) (AIHW 2006). Services to non-admitted patients are measured in terms of occasions of service. Differences in the complexity of the occasion of service are not taken into account — for example, a simple urine glucose test is treated equally with a complete biochemical analysis of all body fluids (AIHW 2001).

A total of 48.4 million individual occasions of service were provided to non-admitted patients in public acute hospitals in 2007-08 (table 10.5). In addition, public hospitals also delivered 428 851 group sessions during this time (a group session is defined as a service provided to two or more patients, excluding services provided to two or more family members) (table 10A.19). In public acute hospitals in 2007-08, accident and emergency services comprised 14.7 per cent of all individual occasions of service to non-admitted patients. ‘Other medical, surgical and obstetric services’ (23.9 per cent), ‘pathology services’ (16.7 per cent) and ‘pharmacy’ (9.8 per cent) were the most common types of non-admitted patient care (table 10.5).

**Table 10.5 Non-admitted patient occasions of service, by type of non-admitted patient care, public acute hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a</sup>**

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Aust</i>
Occasions of service for the most common types of non-admitted patient care as a proportion of all occasions of service for non-admitted patients (%)									
Accident and emergency	11.4	20.3	13.8	16.3	24.7	14.2	18.0	28.3	14.7
Pathology	13.2	10.3	34.3	10.6	..	22.0	6.6	20.8	16.7
Radiology and organ imaging	4.2	8.7	9.0	8.9	10.5	8.7	13.8	15.3	7.0
Pharmacy <sup>c</sup>	15.7	6.5	5.7	3.9	..	9.2	0.2	7.9	9.8
Other medical/surgical/obstetric	23.8	21.0	23.0	15.0	45.1	36.9	49.2	25.5	23.9
Mental health	3.5	9.2	0.9	1.1	1.2	..	0.3	..	3.3
Dental	2.5	3.0	2.5	0.2	0.4	..	..	..	2.1
Allied health	3.7	14.1	5.5	20.4	8.3	8.8	4.7	2.3	7.7
Other non-admitted services									
Community health	7.0	3.5	1.8	16.6	0.3	..	3.0	..	5.7
District nursing <sup>d</sup>	7.0	2.9	1.1	3.8	0.3	..	..	..	4.2
<b>Most common types of non-admitted patient care (%)</b>	<b>91.9</b>	<b>99.6</b>	<b>97.8</b>	<b>96.8</b>	<b>90.8</b>	<b>99.8</b>	<b>95.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>95.1</b>
<b>Total occasions of service for non-admitted patients ('000)</b>	<b>21 232</b>	<b>7 502</b>	<b>10 664</b>	<b>4 763</b>	<b>2 204</b>	<b>1 002</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>48 355</b>

<sup>a</sup> Individual non-admitted patient care services. Excludes group sessions. Reporting arrangements vary significantly across jurisdictions. <sup>b</sup> Radiology figures for the NT are underestimated and pathology figures relate to only three of the five hospitals. <sup>c</sup> Justice Health (formerly known as Corrections Health) in NSW reported a large number of occasions of service that may not be typical of pharmacy. <sup>d</sup> Justice Health (formerly known as Corrections Health) in NSW reported a large number of occasions of service that may not be typical of district nursing. .. Not applicable.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.19.

## 10.2 Framework of performance indicators for public hospitals

The performance indicator framework is based on the shared government objectives for public hospitals (box 10.2). The performance indicator framework shows which data are comparable in the 2010 Report (figure 10.13). For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability from a Report-wide perspective. The 'Health preface' explains the performance indicator framework for health services as a whole, including the subdimensions of quality and sustainability that have been added to the standard Review framework.

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COAG has agreed six National Agreements to enhance accountability to the public for the outcomes achieved or outputs delivered by a range of government services, (chapter 1 provides more detail on reforms to federal financial relations). The National Healthcare Agreement covers the area of health, while the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) establishes specific outcomes for reducing the level of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. The agreements include sets of performance indicators, for which the Steering Committee collates annual performance information for analysis by the COAG Reform Council.

The measurement details of relevant National Agreement reporting were under development at the time of preparing this Report. It is anticipated that the performance indicator results reported in this chapter will be revised to align with the performance indicators in the National Agreements for the 2011 Report.

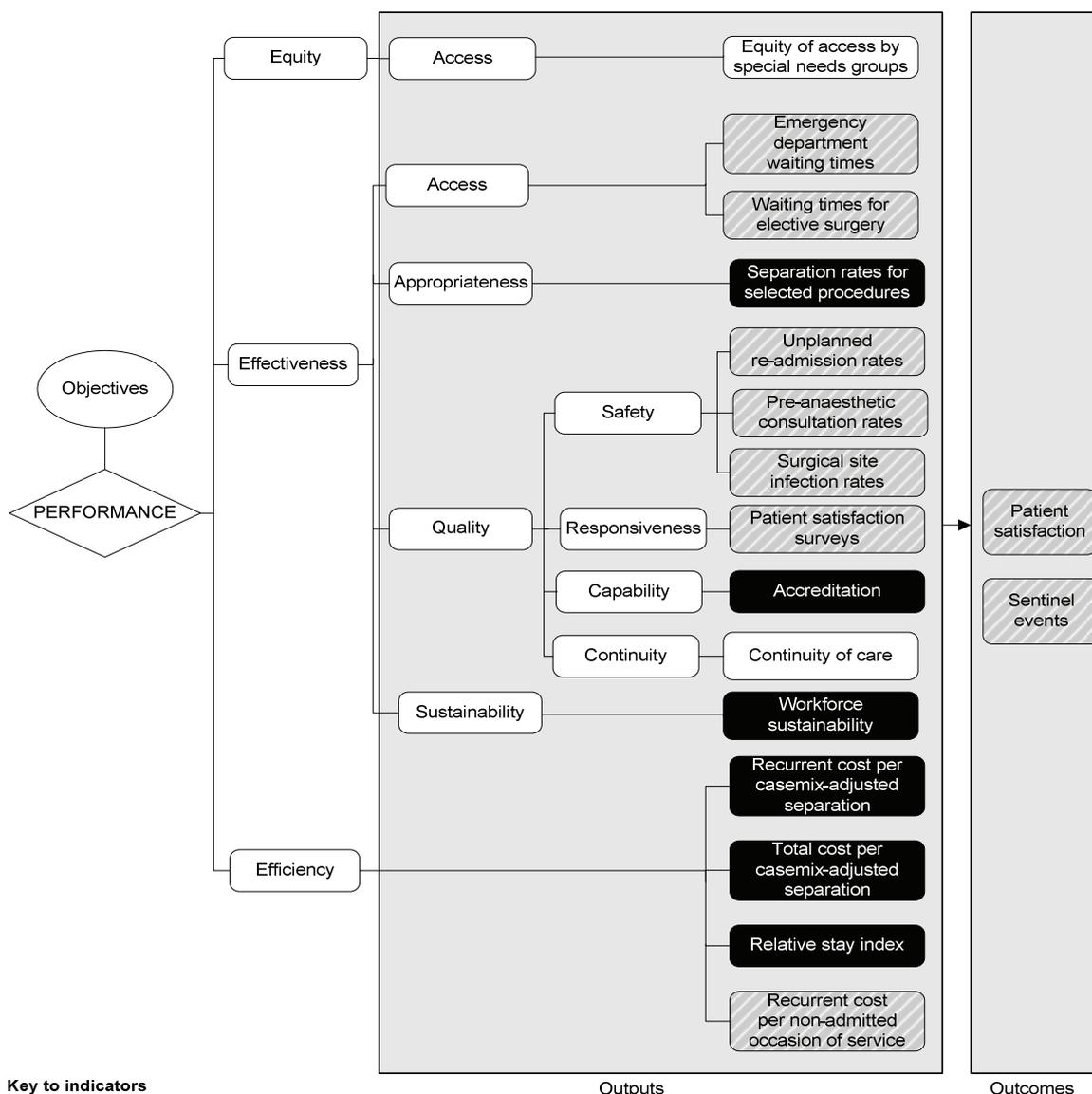
The Report's statistical appendix contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. These data cover a range of demographic and geographic characteristics, including age profile, geographic distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (including Indigenous and ethnic status) (appendix A).

#### **Box 10.2 Objectives for public hospitals**

The common government objectives for public hospitals are to provide cost-effective acute and specialist services that are:

- safe and of high quality
- responsive to individual needs
- accessible
- equitably and efficiently delivered.

Figure 10.13 Performance indicators for public hospitals



**Key to indicators**

- Text** Data for these indicators comparable, subject to caveats to each chart or table
- Text** Data for these indicators not complete or not directly comparable
- Text** These indicators yet to be developed or data not collected for this Report

### 10.3 Key performance indicator results for public hospitals

Different delivery contexts, locations and types of client can affect the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of health services.

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As discussed in section 10.1, public hospitals provide a range of services to admitted patients, including some non-acute services such as rehabilitation and palliative care. The extent to which these non-acute treatments can be identified and excluded from some data differs across jurisdictions. Similarly, psychiatric treatments are provided in public (non-psychiatric) hospitals at different rates across jurisdictions.

## **Outputs**

Outputs are the actual services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see chapter 1, section 1.5).

## **Equity — access**

Equity indicators measure how well a service is meeting the needs of certain groups in society (see chapter 1). Public hospitals have a significant influence on the equity of the overall healthcare system. While access to public hospital services is important to the community in general, it is particularly important for people of low socioeconomic status (and others) who can have difficulty in accessing alternative services, such as those provided by private hospitals.

### *Equity of access by special needs groups*

‘Equity of access by special needs groups’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide accessible services (box 10.3).

#### **Box 10.3 Equity of access by special needs groups**

‘Equity of access by special needs groups’ measures the performance of agencies providing services for three identified special needs groups: Indigenous people; people living in communities outside the capital cities (that is, people living in other metropolitan areas, or rural and remote communities); and people from a non-English speaking background.

‘Equity of access by special needs groups’ has been identified as a key area for development in future Reports.

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## Effectiveness — access

### *Emergency department waiting times*

‘Emergency department waiting times’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide accessible services (box 10.4).

#### **Box 10.4 Emergency department waiting times**

‘Emergency department waiting times’ measures the proportion of patients seen within the benchmarks set according to the urgency of treatment required.

The nationally agreed method of calculation for waiting times is to subtract the time at which the patient presents at the emergency department (that is, the time at which the patient is clerically registered or triaged<sup>a</sup>, whichever occurs earlier) from the time of commencement of service by a treating medical officer or nurse. Patients who do not wait for care after being triaged or clerically registered are excluded from the data.

The benchmarks, set according to triage category, are as follows:

- triage category 1: need for resuscitation — patients seen immediately
- triage category 2: emergency — patients seen within 10 minutes
- triage category 3: urgent — patients seen within 30 minutes
- triage category 4: semi-urgent — patients seen within 60 minutes
- triage category 5: non-urgent — patients seen within 120 minutes (HDSC 2008).

It is desirable that a high proportion of patients are seen within the benchmarks set for each triage category. Non-urgent patients who wait longer are likely to suffer discomfort and inconvenience, and more urgent patients can experience poor health outcomes as a result of extended waits.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

<sup>a</sup> The triage category indicates the urgency of the patient’s need for medical and nursing care.

The comparability of emergency department waiting times data across jurisdictions can be influenced by differences in data coverage (table 10.6) and clinical practices — in particular, the allocation of cases to urgency categories. The proportion of patients in each triage category who were subsequently admitted can indicate the comparability of triage categorisations across jurisdictions and thus the comparability of the waiting times data (table 10A.20).

Nationally, in 2007-08, 100 per cent of patients were seen within the triage category 1 timeframe and 76 per cent of patients were seen within the triage

category 2 timeframe. For all triage categories combined, 69 per cent of patients were seen within triage category timeframes (table 10.6).

**Table 10.6 Emergency department patients seen within triage category timeframes, public hospitals, 2007-08 (per cent)**

<i>Triage category</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1 — Resuscitation <sup>a</sup>	100	100	98	99	100	99	100	100	100
2 — Emergency	81	79	69	69	72	74	81	59	76
3 — Urgent	69	71	56	56	54	54	52	47	63
4 — Semi-urgent	75	65	61	59	60	58	51	47	66
5 — Non-urgent	90	86	87	86	80	86	78	86	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>69</b>
Data coverage <sup>b</sup>	81	89	64	72	67	88	100	100	78

<sup>a</sup> Resuscitation patients whose waiting time for treatment was less than or equal to two minutes are considered to have been seen on time. <sup>b</sup> Data coverage is estimated as the number of occasions of service with waiting times data divided by the number of emergency department occasions of service. This can underestimate coverage because some occasions of service are for other than emergency presentations. For some jurisdictions, the number of emergency department occasions of service reported to the Non-admitted Patient Emergency Department Care Database exceeded the number of accident and emergency occasions of service reported to the National Public Hospital Establishments Database. For these jurisdictions the coverage has been estimated as 100 per cent.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.20.

### *Waiting times for elective surgery*

‘Waiting times for elective surgery’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide accessible services (box 10.5).

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### Box 10.5 **Waiting times for elective surgery**

Two measures are reported for 'Waiting times for elective surgery':

- 'Overall elective surgery waiting times' are calculated by comparing the date on which patients are added to a waiting list with the date on which they are admitted. Days on which the patient was not ready for care are excluded. 'Overall waiting times' are presented as the number of days within which 50 per cent of patients are admitted and the number of days within which 90 per cent of patients are admitted. The proportion of patients who waited more than one year is also shown.
- 'Elective surgery waiting times by clinical urgency category' reports the proportion of patients who were admitted from waiting lists after an extended wait. The three generally accepted clinical urgency categories for elective surgery are:
  - category 1 — admission is desirable within 30 days
  - category 2 — admission is desirable within 90 days
  - category 3 — admission at some time in the future is acceptable.
- There is no specified or agreed desirable wait for category 3 patients, but the term 'extended wait' is used for patients waiting longer than 12 months for elective surgery, as well as for category 1 and 2 patients waiting more than the agreed desirable waiting times of 30 days and 90 days respectively.

For 'Overall elective surgery waiting times' fewer days waited at the 50th and 90th percentile and a smaller proportion of people waiting more than 365 days are desirable. For 'Elective surgery waiting times by clinical urgency category' a smaller proportion of patients who have experienced extended waits at admission is desirable. However, variation in the way patients are classified to urgency categories should be taken into account. Rather than comparing jurisdictions, the results for individual jurisdictions should be viewed in the context of the proportions of patients assigned to each of the three urgency categories (table 10.8).

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

The elective surgery waiting times data are provided for waiting lists managed by public acute hospitals. The data collection covers most public hospitals that undertake elective surgery. In 2007-08, the elective surgery waiting times data covered 91 per cent of separations for elective surgery in public acute hospitals (table 10.7).

Patients on waiting lists who were not subsequently admitted to hospital are excluded from both measures. Patients can be removed from waiting lists because they are admitted as emergency patients for the relevant procedure, no longer need the surgery, die, are treated at another location, decline to have the surgery, or cannot be contacted by the hospital (AIHW 2009a). In 2007-08, 14.5 per cent of patients were removed from waiting lists for reasons other than elective admission (AIHW 2009a).

Comparisons between jurisdictions should be made with caution due to differences in clinical practices and classification of patients across Australia. The two measures are affected by variations across jurisdictions in the method used to calculate waiting times for patients who transferred from a waiting list managed by one hospital to a waiting list managed by a different hospital. For patients who were transferred from a waiting list managed by one hospital to that managed by another, the time waited on the first list is included in the waiting time reported for some but not all states and territories (AIHW 2009a). NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA and the ACT reported the total time waited on all waiting lists. This approach can have the effect of increasing the apparent waiting times for admissions in these jurisdictions compared with other jurisdictions. Queensland has indicated that patients rarely switch between waiting lists managed by different hospitals in their jurisdiction (AIHW 2009a).

Nationally, in 2007-08, 90 per cent of patients were admitted within 235 days and 50 per cent were admitted within 34 days (table 10.7). The proportion of patients who waited more than a year was 3.0 per cent. Nationally, waiting times at the 50th percentile increased by six days between 2003-04 and 2007-08, from 28 to 34 days. However, there were different trends in different jurisdictions and for different sized hospitals over that period (figure 10.14 and table 10A.21).

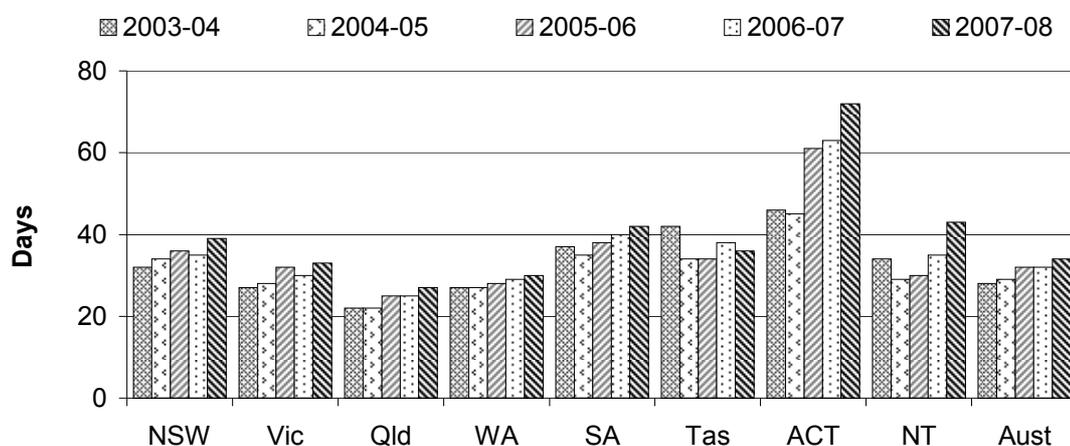
**Table 10.7 Elective surgery waiting times, public hospitals, 2007-08**

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Number of days waited at:										
50th percentile	no.	39	33	27	30	42	36	72	43	34
90th percentile	no.	278	221	137	206	208	369	372	337	235
Proportion who waited more than 365 days	%	1.8	3.6	2.3	3.0	3.9	10.1	10.3	8.6	3.0
Estimated coverage of elective surgery separations <sup>a</sup>	%	100.0	80.0	98.0	79.0	70.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	91.0

<sup>a</sup> The number of separations with urgency of admission reported as 'elective' and a surgical procedure for public hospitals reporting to the National Elective Surgery Waiting Times Data Collection as a proportion of the number of separations with urgency of admission of 'elective' and a surgical procedure for all public hospitals.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.21.

Figure 10.14 **Days waited for elective surgery by the 50th percentile, public hospitals**



Source: AIHW (various years), *Australian Hospital Statistics*, Health Services Series, Cat nos. HSE 37, 41, 50, 55 and 71; table 10A.21.

‘Elective surgery waiting times by urgency category’ data not only provide an indication of the extent to which patients are seen within a clinically desirable time, but also draw attention to the variation in the way in which patients are classified across jurisdictions. Jurisdictional differences in the classification of patients by urgency category in 2007-08 are shown in table 10.8. The states and territories with lower proportions of patients in category 1 also had relatively smaller proportions of patients in this category who were ‘not seen on time’. NSW, Victoria and the ACT, for example, had the lowest proportions of patients in category 1 and also had the lowest proportions of patients in category 1 who had extended waits (tables 10.8, 10A.24, 10A.26 and 10A.35).

The system of urgency categorisation for elective surgery in public hospitals is important to ensure that priority is given to patients according to their needs. While elective surgery waiting times by urgency category are not comparable across jurisdictions, this measure has the advantage over other measures in that it provides an indication of the extent to which patients are seen within a clinically desirable time period according to the urgency category to which they have been assigned.

**Table 10.8 Classification of elective surgery patients, by clinical urgency category, 2007-08 (per cent)**

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>
Patients on waiting lists								
Category 1	3.7	2.8	9.2	6.2	8.6	6.9	3.1	9.4
Category 2	22.1	47.4	42.1	34.2	23.8	48.4	53.7	43.2
Category 3	74.2	49.7	48.7	59.6	67.5	44.7	43.2	47.4
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Patients admitted from waiting lists								
Category 1	30.1	26.1	38.6	31.8	35.8	44.5	28.7	42.7
Category 2	35.0	46.4	43.5	33.7	29.9	35.8	49.7	39.9
Category 3	34.9	27.5	17.9	34.5	34.3	19.7	21.6	17.4
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished).

Reporting of 'elective surgery waiting times by clinical urgency category' includes the proportions of patients with extended waits at admission across jurisdictions. The proportions of patients on waiting lists who had already had an extended wait at the date of the census are reported in tables 10A.24, 10A.26, 10A.28, 10A.30, 10A.32, 10A.34, 10A.35 and 10A.37. Census data do not represent the completed waiting time of patients (unlike patients with extended waits at admission).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in NSW in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 30.1 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom 7.9 per cent had an extended wait
- 35.0 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 24.3 per cent had an extended wait
- 34.9 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 4.6 per cent had an extended wait.

Overall in NSW, 12.5 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.24).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in Victoria in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 26.1 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom zero per cent had an extended wait
- 46.4 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 29.9 per cent had an extended wait

- 
- 27.5 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 9.7 per cent had an extended wait.

Overall in Victoria, 16.5 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.26).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in Queensland in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 38.6 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom 14.7 per cent had an extended wait
- 43.5 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 16.9 per cent had an extended wait
- 17.9 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 11.2 per cent had an extended wait.

Overall in Queensland, 15.0 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.28).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in WA in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 31.8 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom 12.3 per cent had an extended wait
- 33.7 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 30.2 per cent had an extended wait
- 34.5 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 5.4 per cent had an extended wait.

Overall in WA, 16.0 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.30).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in SA in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 35.8 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom 21.5 per cent had an extended wait
- 29.9 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 27.1 per cent had an extended wait
- 34.3 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 11.4 per cent had an extended wait.

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Overall in SA, 19.2 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.32).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in Tasmania in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 44.5 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom 23.4 per cent had an extended wait
- 35.8 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 51.2 per cent had an extended wait
- 19.7 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 28.8 per cent had an extended wait.

Overall in Tasmania, 34.4 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.34).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in the ACT in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 28.7 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom 4.1 per cent had an extended wait
- 49.7 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 53.4 per cent had an extended wait
- 21.6 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 29.0 per cent had an extended wait.

Overall in the ACT, 34.0 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.35).

Of patients admitted from waiting lists in NT in 2007-08, the percentage of patients classified to each category and the percentage with an extended wait were:

- 42.7 per cent were classified to category 1, of whom 19.6 per cent had an extended wait
- 39.9 per cent were classified to category 2, of whom 37.9 per cent had an extended wait
- 17.4 per cent were classified to category 3, of whom 29.1 per cent had an extended wait.

Overall in the NT, 28.6 per cent of all patients experienced extended waits (table 10.8 and table 10A.37).

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Attachment 10A includes data on ‘elective surgery waiting times’ by hospital peer group, specialty of surgeon and indicator procedure (tables 10A.21, 10A.22 and 10A.23). All jurisdictions (except Tasmania) also provided data on urgency category waiting times by clinical specialty (tables 10A.25, 10A.27, 10A.29, 10A.31, 10A.33, 10A.36 and 10A.38).

## **Effectiveness — appropriateness**

### *Separation rates for selected procedures*

‘Separation rates for selected procedures’ is an indicator of the appropriateness of public hospital services (box 10.6).

#### **Box 10.6 Separation rates for selected procedures**

‘Separation rates for selected procedures’ is defined as separations per 1000 people for certain procedures, and for caesarean section separations per 100 in-hospital births. The procedures are selected for their frequency, for being elective and discretionary, and because alternative treatments are sometimes available.

Higher/lower rates are not necessarily associated with inappropriate care. However, large jurisdictional variations in rates for particular procedures can require investigation to determine whether service levels are appropriate.

Care needs to be taken when interpreting the differences in the separation rates for the selected procedures. Variations in rates can be attributable to variations in the prevalence of the conditions being treated, or to differences in clinical practice across states and territories. Higher rates can be acceptable for certain conditions and not for others. Higher rates of angioplasties and lens insertions, for example, can represent appropriate levels of care, whereas higher rates of hysterectomies or tonsillectomies can represent an over-reliance on procedures. No clear inference can be drawn from higher rates of arthroscopies or endoscopies. Some of the selected procedures, such as angioplasty and coronary artery bypass graft, are alternative treatment options for people diagnosed with similar conditions.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

The ‘separation rates for selected procedures’ reported here include all hospitals and reflect the activities of both public and private health systems. The most common procedures of those reported in 2007-08 were lens insertions, caesarean sections and cholecystectomies (table 10.9).

For all procedures, separation rates varied across jurisdictions. Statistically significant and material differences in the separation rates for these procedures can highlight variations in treatment methods across jurisdictions. Table 10A.39 presents standardised separation rate ratios — comparing the separation rate in each jurisdiction with the national rate — along with confidence intervals for each ratio.

**Table 10.9 Separations for selected procedures or diagnoses per 1000 people, all hospitals, by patient's usual residence, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total <sup>d</sup>
<i>Procedure/diagnosis</i>									
Coronary artery bypass	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6
Coronary angioplasty	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	0.9	1.5
Caesarean section: separation rate	4.2	4.1	4.9	4.8	4.3	4.4	3.6	3.2	4.4
separations per 100 in-hospital births <sup>e</sup>	31.7	30.6	33.2	33.4	31.6	28.6	28.2	27.3	31.8
Cholecystectomy	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.2	1.8	1.4	2.2
Hip replacement	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.5	0.8	1.4
Revision of hip replacement	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2
Hysterectomy <sup>f</sup>	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.2	0.6	1.3
Lens insertion	8.3	7.9	9.6	8.9	7.3	7.6	5.7	6.5	8.4
Tonsillectomy	2.1	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.8	1.3	2.2	0.7	2.1
Myringotomy	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.9	2.7	1.3	1.7	0.4	1.6
Knee replacement	1.7	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.8	0.7	1.6
Prostatectomy	1.3	1.5	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.2	0.8	1.3

<sup>a</sup> Excludes separations for which the care type was reported as 'newborn with no qualified days' and records for hospital boarders and posthumous organ procurement. Excludes multiple procedures/diagnoses for the same separation within the same group. <sup>b</sup> The procedures and diagnoses are defined using ICD-10-AM codes. <sup>c</sup> Rates per 1000 people were directly age standardised to the Australian population at 30 June 2001.

<sup>d</sup> Includes other territories. Excludes non-residents and unknown state or territory of residence. <sup>e</sup> Caesarean sections divided by separations for which in-hospital birth was reported. This is an approximate measure of the proportion of all births that are by caesarean section because births out of hospital are not included.

<sup>f</sup> Includes hysterectomies for females aged 15–69 years only. Rate is determined using total population for state or territory.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.39.

## Effectiveness — quality

There is no single definition of quality in healthcare, but the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) has defined quality as 'the extent to which the properties of a service or product produces a desired outcome' (Runciman 2006). No single indicator can measure quality across all providers. An alternative approach is to identify and report on aspects of quality of care. The

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aspects of quality recognised in the performance indicator framework are safety, responsiveness, capability and continuity. Data are reported against all of these aspects except continuity.

There has been considerable debate and research to develop suitable indicators of the quality of healthcare both in Australia and overseas. All Australian health ministers agreed to the establishment of the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care in January 2000, with a view to taking a systematic approach to assessing and improving the quality of healthcare. The Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care was replaced in January 2006 by the ACSQHC. A key objective of the ACSQHC is to achieve safe, effective and responsive care for consumers. The ACSQHC has maintained the Council's focus on improving the safety of hospitals and sought to improve the quality of primary healthcare and the private health sector.

Various states and territories publicly report performance indicators for public hospital quality. Some have adopted the same indicators reported in this chapter. For example:

- In NSW reporting of Australian Council on Health Care Standards (ACHS) 'surgical site infection rates' is mandatory for public hospitals.
- All Victorian hospitals are required to publish annual quality care reports that include safety and quality indicators for infection control, medication errors, falls monitoring and prevention, and pressure wound monitoring and prevention.
- Queensland Health releases an annual public hospitals performance report, which shows a wide range of hospital performance information including clinical performance, efficiency and patient satisfaction. There are currently 31 clinical indicators that monitor clinical performance in Queensland Health hospitals spanning medical, surgical and obstetrics, and gynaecology.
- Both the WA and Tasmanian health departments' annual reports include information on 'unplanned re-admission rates' and WA also includes a section on patient satisfaction.
- SA Health publishes an annual report on patient safety which provides a summary of the types of incidents that occurred in public hospitals, actions taken on coronial findings and progress against priority areas in The South Australian Patient Safety Framework and Strategy 2007-2011.

### *Safety*

Improving patient safety is an important issue for all hospitals. Studies on medical errors have indicated that adverse healthcare related events occur in public hospitals

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in Australia and internationally, and that their incidence is potentially high (for example, Thomas et al. 2000; Runciman and Moller 2001, Runciman et al. 2000 and Davis et al. 2001). These adverse events can result in serious consequences for individual patients, and the associated costs can be considerable (Kohn et al. 1999).

Data for the ‘safety’ indicators come from the ACHS Comparative Report Service (Clinical Indicators). The ACHS data are collected for internal clinical review by individual hospitals. They are predominantly used to demonstrate the potential for improvement across Australian hospitals, if all hospitals could achieve the same outcomes as the hospitals that achieve the best outcomes for patients. When interpreting results of these indicators, emphasis needs to be given to the potential for improvement. Statewide conclusions cannot be drawn because participation by public hospitals in the Comparative Report Service (Clinical Indicators) is generally voluntary, so the data are not necessarily drawn from representative samples of hospitals (box 10.7).

#### **Box 10.7 Reporting of ACHS clinical indicators**

Data for the clinical indicators of ‘unplanned re-admissions to hospital’, ‘pre-anaesthetic consultation rates’ and ‘surgical site infection rates’ come from the ACHS. The ACHS’s method for reporting clinical indicators is explained in *Determining the Potential to Improve Quality of Care* (ACHS 2007). The ACHS reports the average (that is, mean) rate of occurrence of an event and the performance of hospitals at the 20th and 80th centiles. Where a lower rate implies better quality, national performance at the 20th centile represents the rate at, or below which, the best performing 20 per cent of ACHS reporting hospitals performed. Where a higher rate implies better quality, national performance at the 80th centile represents the rate at, or above which, the best performing 20 per cent of ACHS reporting hospitals performed. This method is designed to allow hospitals to determine whether their performance is above or below average, and what scope exists for improvement.

Particular attention is paid to systematic variation between hospitals and between different categories of hospital (including different jurisdictions), and to individual hospitals that vary significantly from the average for all hospitals (that is, outliers).

The ACHS calculates the average occurrence of an event for all hospitals and uses the shrinkage estimation method to estimate shrunken rates for individual hospitals. From these shrunken rates, the performance of hospitals at the 20th and 80th centiles is calculated. The potential gains from shifting ‘mean’ hospitals to the 20th/80th centile are obtained by calculating the change in the occurrence of the event measured if the mean were equal to performance at the 20th/80th centile.

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**Box 10.7 (continued)**

Shrunken rates are used rather than actual rates because actual rates of zero per cent and 100 per cent can be obtained for individual hospitals based on random variation where there are low denominators. Shrinkage estimators adjust each hospital's observed rate using the hospital's numerator and denominator, together with the mean and standard deviations of other hospitals to obtain corrected rates. The smaller the denominator for an individual hospital, the larger is the shift to the overall mean.

Using the shrunken rates, mean rates are calculated for individual categories of hospital (including jurisdictions) to determine stratum rates. If the stratum explains more than 10 per cent of the variation in rates, this is reported as a possible explanatory variable. The potential gains of each category shifting performance to the stratum with the lowest mean are also calculated.

Finally, using the shrunken rates for individual hospitals, the observed occurrence of the event measured is compared to the expected occurrence of the event, to measure difference from the mean. To avoid responding to random variation, three standard deviations are plotted, and values outside the three standard deviations are assumed to be systematically different from the average rate. The potential gains from shifting the performance of these outliers to the performance of mean hospitals are calculated (outlier gains).

*Source:* ACHS (unpublished, 2003).

***Safety — unplanned re-admission rates***

'Unplanned re-admission rates' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide public hospital services that are safe and of high quality. The aim of this indicator is to measure unintentional additional hospital care (box 10.8).

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### Box 10.8 **Unplanned re-admission rates**

'Unplanned re-admission rates' show the rate at which patients unexpectedly return to hospital within 28 days for further treatment of the same condition or a condition related to the initial admission. The 'unplanned re-admission rate' is the total number of unplanned and unexpected re-admissions within 28 days of separation as a percentage of the total number of separations (excluding patient deaths).

Patients might be re-admitted unexpectedly if the initial care or treatment was ineffective or unsatisfactory, if post discharge planning was inadequate, or for other reasons outside the control of the hospital (for example poor post-discharge care). High rates for this indicator suggest the quality of care provided by hospitals, or post-discharge care or planning, should be examined, because there may be scope for improvement.

There are some difficulties in identifying re-admissions that were unplanned. A re-admission is considered unplanned if there is no documentation to verify that the re-admission was planned and/or if the re-admission occurred through the accident and emergency department of a hospital.

This indicator identifies only those patients re-admitted to the same hospital, so there is some under-reporting (for example, where patients go to another hospital). Unplanned re-admission rates are not adjusted for casemix or patient risk factors, which can vary across hospitals and across jurisdictions.

Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

Nationally, among all public hospitals participating in the ACHS Comparative Report Service in 2008, the mean rate of 'unplanned re-admissions' was 3.7 per 100 admissions (table 10.10). The ACHS estimated that if the performance of all ACHS reporting public hospitals in Australia matched national performance at the 20th centile, there would be 2.3 per cent (or 19 622) fewer re-admissions to these public hospitals (ACHS unpublished). National performance at the 20th centile shows the rate at, or below which, the best performing 20 per cent of ACHS reporting hospitals performed.

These estimates should be viewed in the context of the statistical (standard) errors. High standard errors signal that data are potentially unreliable. The statistical terms used to describe this indicator are explained in box 10.9.

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### Box 10.9 Definition of terms for ACHS clinical indicators

**centile:** any of the 99 numbered points that divide an ordered set of scores into 100 parts, each of which contains one 100th of the total. Where a lower rate implies better quality, national performance at the 20th centile represents the rate at, or below which, the best performing 20 per cent of ACHS reporting hospitals performed. Where a higher rate implies better quality, national performance at the 80th centile represents the rate at, or above which, the best performing 20 per cent of ACHS reporting hospitals performed.

**centile gains:** the potential gains from shifting mean (average) hospitals to the performance at the 20th/80th centile (depending on whether a high or low rate is desirable), is obtained by calculating the change in the occurrence of an event if the mean were equal to performance at the 20th/80th centile.

**denominator:** the term of a fraction or equation showing the number of parts into which the numerator is being divided (usually written below the line). For the unplanned re-admissions indicator, for example, the denominator is the total number of admissions in the participating hospital.

**mean:** the sum of a set of numbers divided by the amount of numbers in the set, often referred to as an average.

**numerator:** the term of a fraction or equation showing how many parts of the fraction are taken (usually written above the line). For the unplanned re-admissions indicator, the numerator is the total number of unplanned re-admissions in the participating hospital; for the infections indicators, the numerator is the number of infections for the selected procedure in the participating hospital.

**outlier gains:** the potential gains from moving the performance of outlier hospitals to the performance of mean (average) hospitals, obtained by calculating the change in the occurrence of an event if the outlier performance were equal to performance at the mean.

**rate:** the sum of the numerators divided by the sum of the denominators, which is also the weighted mean of the individual rates of the ACHS reporting hospitals. This weighted mean may not be the same as the unweighted mean of the rates, especially if a few ACHS reporting hospitals with large denominators have different rates (extremely high or low) from the other ACHS reporting hospitals.

**stratum gains:** the potential gains from a particular category of hospitals moving to the performance of the stratum with the lowest mean.

**stratum rate:** mean rates for a particular jurisdiction.

*Source:* ACHS (2001).

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These national results are based on approximately one fifth of total public hospital separations. The number of ACHS reported hospital separations used to derive this indicator was 840 480 in 2008 (ACHS unpublished), whereas the total number of separations in 2007-08 was around 4.7 million (AIHW 2009a). For jurisdictions with five or more hospitals reporting ‘unplanned re-admissions’ to the ACHS Comparative Report Service, the mean rates of unplanned re-admissions in 2008 are shown in table 10.10. The coverage of the ACHS data can differ across these states. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT are not reported separately because fewer than five hospitals reported ‘unplanned re-admissions’ in each of those jurisdictions.

**Table 10.10 Unplanned re-admissions, ACHS reporting public hospitals, 2008<sup>a</sup>**

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Results</i>
National rate (per 100 separations)	%	3.7
National performance at 80th centile (rate)	(%)	5.4
National performance at 20th centile (rate)	(%)	1.3
<b>NSW</b>		
Numerator (re-admissions)	no.	9 992
Denominator (separations)	no.	288 392
Rate (per 100 separations)	%	3.5
Standard error (±)		0.5
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	56
<b>Victoria</b>		
Numerator (re-admissions)	no.	10 694
Denominator (separations)	no.	172 576
Rate (per 100 separations)	%	6.2
Standard error (±)		0.7
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	30
<b>Queensland</b>		
Numerator (re-admissions)	no.	3 288
Denominator (separations)	no.	107 862
Rate (per 100 separations)	%	3.0
Standard error (±)		0.8
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	15
<b>WA</b>		
Numerator (re-admissions)	no.	2 089
Denominator (separations)	no.	99 431
Rate (per 100 separations)	%	2.1
Standard error (±)		0.9
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	24
<b>SA</b>		
Numerator (re-admissions)	no.	823
Denominator (separations)	no.	28 862
Rate (per 100 separations)	%	2.9
Standard error (±)		1.6
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	5

<sup>a</sup> The ACHS data are not designed to measure the performance of states and territories, but are for internal clinical review by individual hospitals. In addition, health organisations contribute data voluntarily to the ACHS, so the samples are not necessarily representative of all hospitals in each jurisdiction. As a result, statewide comparisons and conclusions regarding the performance of individual states cannot be drawn.

Source: ACHS (unpublished); tables 10A.40; 10A.41, 10A.42; 10A.43 and 10A.44.

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## *Safety — pre-anaesthetic consultation rates*

‘Pre-anaesthetic consultation rates’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide public hospital services that are safe and of high quality (box 10.10).

### **Box 10.10 Pre-anaesthetic consultation rates**

‘Pre-anaesthetic consultation rate’ is the number of procedures where there is documented evidence that the patient has seen an anaesthetist before entering the operating theatre suite, anaesthetic room, or procedure room, as a percentage of the total number of procedures with an anaesthetist in attendance.

Consultation by an anaesthetist is essential for the medical assessment of a patient before anaesthesia for surgery (or another procedure), to ensure that the patient is in an optimal state for anaesthesia and surgery. Low rates for this indicator suggest the quality of pre-anaesthetic care provided by hospitals should be examined because there can be scope for improvement.

This indicator identifies only pre-anaesthetic consultations for which there is documented evidence, so there can be some under-reporting due to some consultations not being documented. In addition, the data include some pre-anaesthetic consultations not conducted by the attending anaesthetist but by one of the medical members of the same anaesthetic department or group. Consultations by the attending anaesthetist are preferable.

Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

Following a redevelopment of the ACHS’s anaesthetic indicators between their 2004 and 2005 data collections, there has been a reduction in the number of hospitals providing data for this indicator. Pre-anaesthetic consultation rate estimates should be viewed in the context of the statistical (standard) errors. High standard errors signal that data are potentially unreliable. The statistical terms used to describe this indicator are explained in box 10.9.

Nationally, among all public hospitals participating in the ACHS Comparative Report Service in 2008, the mean rate of ‘pre-anaesthetic consultations’ was 72.1 per 100 procedures (table 10.11). The ACHS estimated that if the performance of all ACHS reporting public hospitals in Australia matched national performance at the 80th centile, there would be 27.9 per cent (or 6970) more pre-anaesthetic consultations in these public hospitals (ACHS unpublished). National performance at the 80th centile shows the rate at, or above which, the best performing 20 per cent of ACHS reporting hospitals performed.

These national results are based on approximately 1.7 per cent of total public acute hospital anaesthetic procedures. The number of ACHS reporting hospital

procedures used to derive this indicator was 24 998 in 2007 (ACHS unpublished). The estimated total number of anaesthetic procedures in 2007-08 was 1.5 million (AIHW unpublished).

NSW was the only jurisdiction with five or more hospitals reporting ‘pre-anaesthetic consultations’ to the ACHS Comparative Report Service in 2008 (table 10.11). Data for 2008 for other jurisdictions are not reported separately because fewer than five hospitals reported ‘pre-anaesthetic consultations’ in each of those jurisdictions. Data for 2006 are reported for Victoria in table 10A.46.

**Table 10.11 Pre-anaesthetic consultation rates, ACHS reporting public hospitals, 2008<sup>a</sup>**

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Results</i>
National rate (per 100 separations)	%	72.1
National performance at 80th centile (rate)	(%)	100.0
National performance at 20th centile (rate)	(%)	31.7
<b><i>New South Wales</i></b>		
Numerator (pre anaesthetic consultations)	no.	7 800
Denominator (procedures)	no.	10 833
Rate (per 100 separations)	%	72
Standard error (±)		17
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	6.0

<sup>a</sup> The ACHS data are not designed to measure the performance of states and territories, but are for internal clinical review by individual hospitals. In addition, health organisations contribute data voluntarily to the ACHS, so the samples are not necessarily representative of all hospitals in each jurisdiction. As a result, statewide comparisons and conclusions regarding the performance of individual states cannot be drawn.

Source: ACHS (unpublished); table 10A.45.

### *Safety — surgical site infection rates*

‘Surgical site infection rates’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide public hospital services that are safe and of high quality (box 10.11).

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### **Box 10.11 Surgical site infection rates**

‘Surgical site infection rates’ is calculated as the average (that is, mean) rate of post-operative in-hospital occurrence of surgical site infection rates for selected surgical procedures (see section 10.8 for definitions). Rates are reported for four frequently performed procedures — hip and knee prosthesis, lower segment caesarean section and abdominal hysterectomy.

Surgical site infections can result in serious consequences for individual patients, place a significant burden on the health system and are influenced by the safety of hospital practices and procedures. Low ‘surgical site infection rates’ are consistent with the quality standards required in the public hospital sector.

Reporting by procedure reduces the potential for casemix to influence the rates of infection, but some cases are more susceptible to infection than others. Reporting is also affected by the time period during which infections are recorded — for example, some surgical infections do not present until after discharge from hospital. Only infections that occur within the patient’s admission period are included. Post-discharge infections are excluded. Surgical infection rates are not reported for each procedure where fewer than five hospitals are included in the data.

Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

Nationally, among all public hospitals participating in the ACHS Comparative Report Service in 2008, the mean ‘surgical site infection rate’ for hip prosthesis surgery was 1.3 per 100 separations (table 10.12). The ACHS estimated that if the performance of all ACHS reporting public hospitals in Australia matched national performance at the 20th centile, there would be 0.18 per cent (or 16) fewer infections after hip prosthesis surgery in these public hospitals (ACHS unpublished). National performance at the 20th centile shows the rate at, or below which, the best performing 20 per cent of ACHS reporting hospitals performed.

These estimates should be viewed in the context of the statistical (standard) errors. High standard errors signal that the data can be potentially unreliable. The statistical terms used to describe this indicator are explained in box 10.9.

The mean ‘surgical site infection rate’ following knee prosthesis surgery was 0.7 per 100 separations (table 10.12). The ACHS estimated that if the performance of all ACHS reporting public hospitals in Australia matched national performance at the 20th centile, there would be 0.23 per cent (or 22) fewer infections following knee prosthesis surgery in these public hospitals (ACHS unpublished).

The mean ‘surgical site infection rate’ following lower segment caesarean section surgery was 0.9 per 100 separations (table 10.12). The ACHS estimated that if the performance of all ACHS reporting public hospitals in Australia matched national

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performance at the 20th centile, there would be 0.57 per cent (or 146) fewer infections following lower segment caesarean section surgery in these public hospitals (ACHS unpublished).

The mean 'surgical site infection rate' following abdominal hysterectomy surgery was 1.3 per 100 separations (table 10.12). The ACHS estimated that if the performance of all Australian public hospitals matched national performance at the 20th centile, there would be 0.35 per cent (or 5) fewer infections following abdominal hysterectomy surgery (ACHS unpublished).

These national results are based on approximately 59.7 per cent of hip prosthesis, 77.3 per cent of knee prosthesis, 46.7 per cent of lower segment caesarean section and 19.4 per cent of abdominal hysterectomy surgical procedures. The number of ACHS reporting hospital surgical procedures in 2008 used to derive this indicator was 8680 for hip prosthesis, 9511 for knee prosthesis, 25 509 for lower segment caesarean section and 1530 for abdominal hysterectomy. The total number of these surgical procedures in 2007-08 was 14 551 for hip prosthesis, 12 298 for knee prosthesis, 54 644 for lower segment caesarean section and 7872 for abdominal hysterectomy surgical procedures (AIHW unpublished).

For jurisdictions with five or more hospitals reporting 'surgical site infections' to the ACHS Comparative Report Service, the mean rates in 2008 are shown in table 10.12. The coverage of the ACHS data can differ across these states. 'Surgical site infection rates' for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT are not reported separately because fewer than five hospitals participated in the ACHS Comparative Report Service in each jurisdiction.

**Table 10.12 Surgical site infections, ACHS reporting public hospitals, by selected procedure, 2008<sup>a, b</sup>**

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Hip prosthesis</i>	<i>Knee prosthesis</i>	<i>Lower segment caesarean section</i>	<i>Abdominal hysterectomy</i>
National rate (per 100 separations)	%	1.3	0.7	0.9	1.3
National performance at 80th centile (rate)	(%)	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.2
National performance at 20th centile (rate)	(%)	1.2	0.5	0.3	1.0
<b>NSW</b>					
Numerator (infections)	no.	37	23	35	–
Denominator (procedures)	no.	2 643	3 139	6 543	470
Infection rate (per 100 separations)	%	1.4	0.7	0.5	–
Standard error (±)		0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	16	16	14	7
<b>Victoria</b>					
Numerator (infections)	no.	31	7	np	np
Denominator (procedures)	no.	1 764	1 287	np	np
Infection rate (per 100 separations)	%	1.8	0.5	np	np
Standard error (±)		0.1	0.1	np	np
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	7	8	np	np
<b>Queensland</b>					
Numerator (infections)	no.	6	5	70	np
Denominator (procedures)	no.	1 430	1 944	8 516	np
Infection rate (per 100 separations)	%	0.4	0.3	0.8	np
Standard error (±)		0.1	0.1	17.0	np
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	9	9	10	np
<b>WA</b>					
Numerator (infections)	no.	21	17	29	np
Denominator (procedures)	no.	1 083	1 387	2 778	np
Infection rate (per 100 separations)	%	1.9	1.2	1.0	np
Standard error (±)		0.1	0.1	1.0	np
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	6	7	8	np

(Continued on next page)

Table 10.12 (Continued)

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Hip prosthesis</i>	<i>Knee prosthesis</i>	<i>Lower segment caesarean section</i>	<i>Abdominal hysterectomy</i>
<b>SA</b>					
Numerator (infections)	no.	12	8	30	np
Denominator (procedures)	no.	1 080	1 114	4 602	np
Infection rate (per 100 separations)	%	1	1	1	np
Standard error (±)		0.1	0.1	0.0	np
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	6	6	5	np

<sup>a</sup> The ACHS data are not designed to measure the performance of states and territories, but are for internal clinical review by individual hospitals. In addition, health organisations contribute data voluntarily to the ACHS, so the samples are not necessarily representative of all hospitals in each jurisdiction. As a result, statewide comparisons and conclusions regarding the performance of individual states cannot be drawn. <sup>b</sup> Since 2003, the ACHS surgical site infection indicators have been collected in pairs, one for each of superficial and deep/organ space surgical site infections. An indirectly standardised rate was derived for each pair. The rate for each combined pair was estimated as the sum of the two rates (deep and superficial). The final rate for each State was calculated as the sum of observed infections divided by the sum of expected infections, multiplied by the rate for the combined pair. **np** Not published. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: ACHS (unpublished); tables 10A.49, 10A.50, 10A.51, 10A.52, 10A.53.

### *Responsiveness — patient satisfaction surveys*

‘Patient satisfaction surveys’ is a proxy indicator of governments’ objective to deliver services that are high quality and responsive to individual patient needs (box 10.12). This section reports how jurisdictions use patient satisfaction surveys to improve the quality of public hospital services. The ‘patient satisfaction’ indicator reports satisfaction ratings taken from each jurisdiction’s patient surveys (box 10.20).

#### **Box 10.12 Patient satisfaction surveys**

‘Patient satisfaction surveys’ provides information on how jurisdictions used patient satisfaction surveys to improve public hospital quality in recent years.

Surveys can be useful for obtaining information on patient views of both clinical and non-clinical hospital care (such as whether patients feel they were treated with respect and provided with appropriate information regarding their treatment). If public hospitals respond to patient views and modify services, service quality can be improved to better meet patients’ needs. The more public hospitals use patient satisfaction surveys the greater the potential for increasing the quality of public hospital services to better meet patients’ needs.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

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Some jurisdictions have provided general information about use of patient satisfaction surveys. Over time this information will be refined to identify more specific examples of how public hospital quality has improved. Jurisdictions provided the following information in relation to their most recent survey.

- In NSW a mailout survey was conducted for patients treated during February 2009 in the categories of overnight inpatients, day only patients, paediatric inpatients, outpatients, non-admitted emergency patients, community health patients, adult rehabilitation inpatients and inpatients treated for cancer. Area health services produced an annual action plan in response to the 2007 and 2008 surveys. Data are used to inform statewide service improvement programs. A key performance indicator regarding the patient survey results is included in the annual Area Health Service Performance Agreements (table 10A.73).
- In Victoria a survey was conducted between 1 March 2008 and 28 February 2009 using a mailout questionnaire to admitted adult patients in public acute and sub acute care hospitals. Hospitals are provided with a six monthly report (if they have had more than 30 respondents), which provides them with information and an Overall Care Index score as well as scores for six sub-indices. The scores are benchmarked with similar hospitals and the state average for all hospitals. Using this information the health services can identify areas for improvement (table 10A.74).
- In Queensland, computer assisted telephone interviews were conducted from September 2008 to April 2009 of surgical patients discharged between July and December 2008. Each hospital's detailed results are fed back and are used in planning service improvements as follows:
  - hospital survey results are provided to hospitals
  - hospitals review their results in detail and determine areas for improvement
  - hospitals develop Management Action Plans to address areas for improvement
  - hospitals implement Management Action Plans
  - governance units at a district or State level monitor the implementation of Action Plans (table 10A.75).
- In WA, a computer assisted telephone interview survey was conducted between February 2009 and June 2009 for admitted patients and emergency department patients. Each participating hospital receives detailed information from the survey, which is used to inform service improvement. Hospitals can also request a workshop to assist in the interpretation of the survey results. Many hospitals use patient satisfaction as a performance indicator and as part of their accreditation process. Some examples of how hospitals have used the survey to

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improve public hospital quality include: a process to record and cross reference for food allergies; improved communication with patients on rights and services available; employment of a Customer Liaison Officer to increase patient involvement; improved access to patient care plans; improved discharge coordination procedures; and the introduction of brochures to inform patients on how the emergency department works (table 10A.76).

- In SA, a computer assisted telephone interview survey was conducted between May 2008 and July 2008 of adult patients aged 16 years and over who received at least one night of care in the SA public hospital system in May through to July 2008. The survey results have been provided to the relevant hospitals and will inform the public hospital system of the key areas of care and service that are important to patients presenting for an overnight stay in hospital, as well as the areas of care and service that require improvement from the patients' perspective (table 10A.77).
- Tasmania is currently reviewing its approach to conducting consumer satisfaction surveys and therefore has not conducted a statewide survey since 2007 (table 10A.78).
- In the ACT, the two most recent surveys were conducted in 2009 at two different hospitals. One survey was conducted in February to May 2009 and another survey was conducted in March to June 2009. Survey 1 involved discharged patients from clinical areas of inpatients, emergency department, palliative care, day surgery and mental health. Survey 2 involved eligible patients who had consented and who had been discharged from the hospital during the reporting period. Survey 1 introduced a program called Simply Better that seeks to improve patient and staff satisfaction through aligned goals, behaviours and processes. Targets were set including 'increase patient satisfaction' and 'improve staff satisfaction' (table 10A.79).
- In the NT, face to face surveys were conducted at various times of the year in 2009 of admitted patients and emergency department attendees in public acute care hospitals. Survey information is provided to relevant hospital staff and committees for review and development of action plans to address identified issues. Examples of outcomes include development of resources in Indigenous languages, improved access to Aboriginal Liaison Officers and/or interpreters, introduction of a bed dial to measure the angle of elevation of patient beds, changed meal times and the identification of a need for cultural training for staff (table 10A.80).

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### *Capability — hospital accreditation*

‘Accreditation’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide public hospital services that are of high quality (box 10.13). Data for this indicator are shown in figure 10.15.

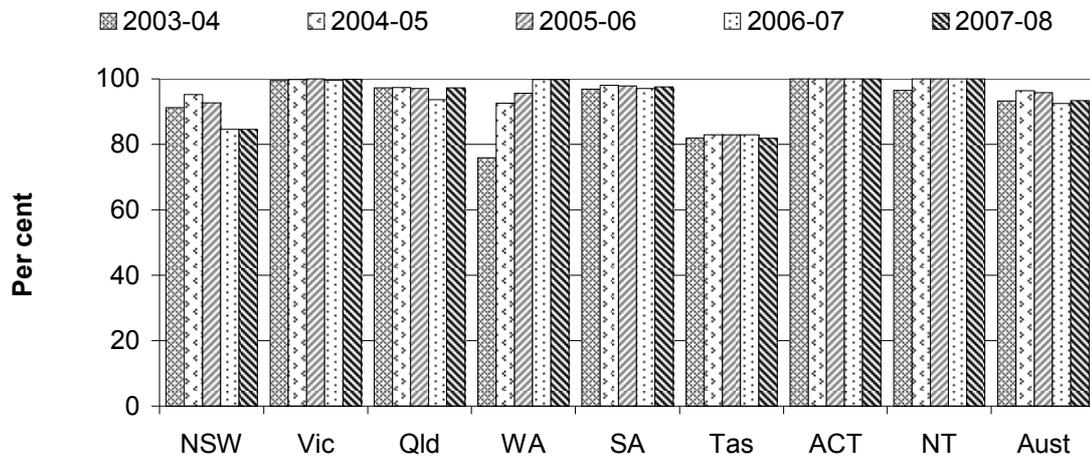
#### **Box 10.13 Accreditation**

‘Accreditation’ is defined as the ratio of accredited beds to all beds in public hospitals. The number of beds indicates the level of hospital capacity or activity. ‘Accreditation’ signifies professional and national recognition awarded to hospitals and other healthcare facilities that meet defined industry standards. Public hospitals can seek accreditation through the ACHS Evaluation and Quality Improvement Program, Business Excellence Australia (previously known as the Australian Quality Council), the Quality Improvement Council, and through certification as compliant with the International Organisation for Standardization’s (ISO) 9000 quality family or other equivalent programs. Jurisdictions apply specific criteria to determine which accreditation programs are suitable. Quality programs require hospitals to demonstrate continual adherence to quality improvement standards to gain and retain accreditation.

It is not possible to draw conclusions about the quality of care in those hospitals that do not have ‘accreditation’. Public hospital accreditation is voluntary in all jurisdictions except Victoria, where it is mandatory for all public hospitals (excluding those that provide only dental or mothercraft services). The costs of preparing a hospital for accreditation are significant, and a low level of accreditation can reflect cost constraints rather than poor quality. Also, the cost of accreditation may not rise proportionally with hospital size. This would be consistent with larger hospitals being more active in seeking accreditation (because it is relatively less costly for them).

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

Figure 10.15 **Proportion of accredited beds, public hospitals<sup>a, b</sup>**



**a** Where average available beds for the year were not available, bed numbers at 30 June were used.

**b** Includes psychiatric hospitals.

Source: AIHW (various years), *Australian Hospital Statistics*, Health Services Series, Cat nos. HSE 37, 41, 50, 55 and 71; table 10A.54.

### *Continuity — continuity of care*

‘Continuity of care’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide public hospital services that are of high quality (box 10.14).

#### **Box 10.14 Continuity of care**

‘Continuity of care’ measures the provision of uninterrupted, timely, coordinated healthcare, interventions and actions across programs, practitioners and organisations.

Continuity of care has been identified as a key area for development in future Reports.

### **Effectiveness — sustainability**

#### *Workforce sustainability*

‘Workforce sustainability’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide sustainable public hospital services (box 10.15).

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### Box 10.15 **Workforce sustainability**

'Workforce sustainability' reports age profiles for nurse and medical practitioner workforces. It shows the proportions of registered nurses and medical practitioners in ten year age brackets, both by jurisdiction and by region.

The 'workforce sustainability' indicator helps determine whether sustainability problems might arise in the delivery of current/future public hospitals' services. Labour is the most significant and costly resource used in providing public hospital services (figure 10.22). Nurses and medical practitioners are the most significant groups of skilled professionals employed in public hospitals (figure 10.12). The sustainability of the 'public hospital' workforce is affected by a number of factors, in particular, whether the number of new entrants are sufficient to maintain the existing workforce, and the proportion of the workforce who are close to retirement.

The smaller the proportion of the workforce who are new entrants and/or the larger the proportion of the workforce who are close to retirement, the more likely sustainability problems are to arise in the coming decade as the older age group starts to retire.

All registered nurses and medical practitioners are included in these measures as crude indicators of the potential respective workforces for public hospitals.

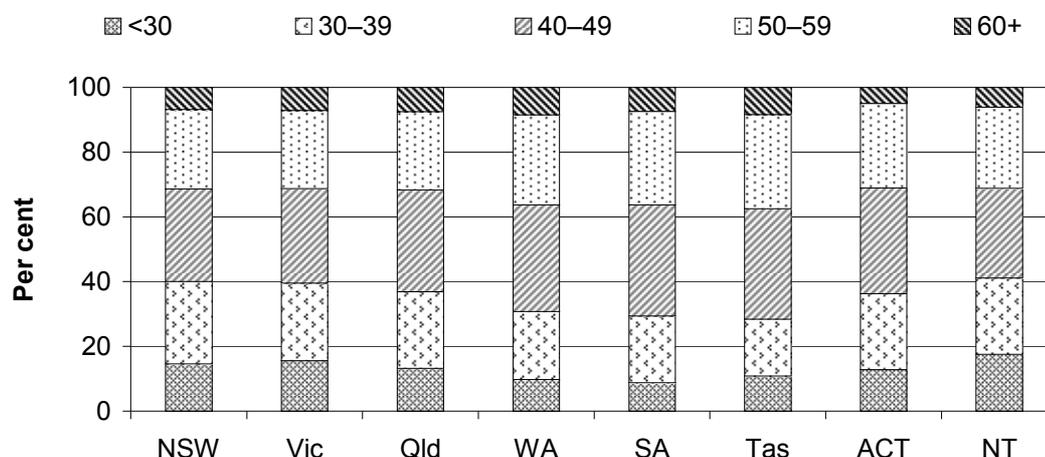
These measures are not a substitute for a full workforce analysis that allows for migration, trends in full-time work and expected demand increases. They can, however, indicate that further attention should be given to workforce sustainability for public hospitals.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

*Source:* National Health Performance Committee (2004).

The age profile of the nursing workforce for 2007 (which includes midwives) for each jurisdiction is shown in figure 10.16. Nursing workforce data by remoteness area for 2007 are shown in figure 10.17.

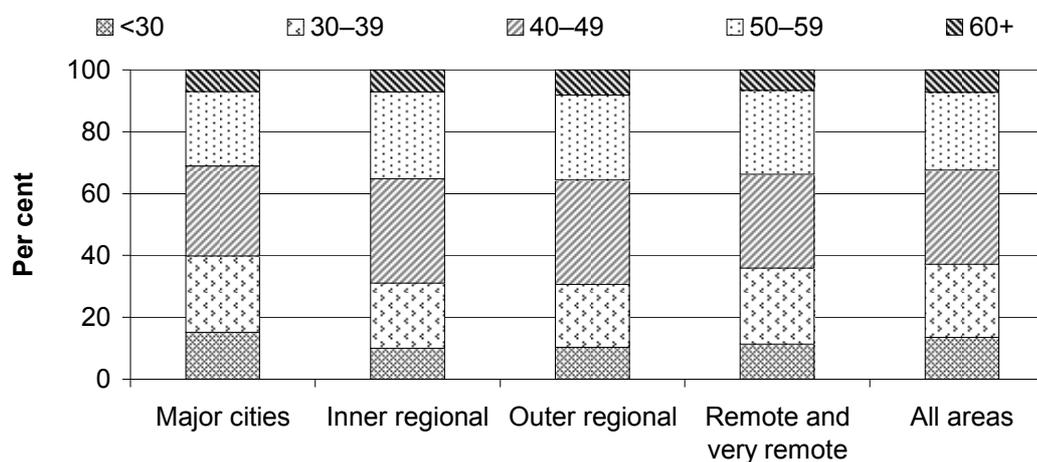
Figure 10.16 Nursing workforce, by age group, 2007<sup>a, b</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Includes registered and enrolled nurses (including midwives) who are employed in nursing, on extended leave and looking for work in nursing. <sup>b</sup> Estimates for the NT are not separately published due to the very low response rate (13.7 per cent) in that jurisdiction to the AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey*; table 10A.56.

Figure 10.17 Nursing workforce, by age group and remoteness area, 2007<sup>a</sup>

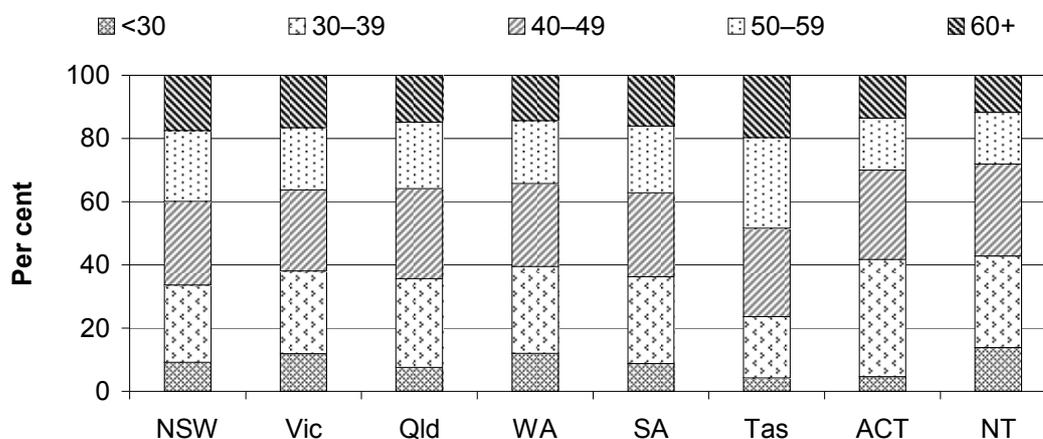


<sup>a</sup> Includes registered and enrolled nurses (including midwives) who are employed in nursing, on extended leave and looking for work in nursing.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey*; table 10A.55.

The age profile of the medical practitioner workforce in 2007 for each jurisdiction is shown in figure 10.18. Medical practitioner workforce data for 2007 by remoteness area are shown in figure 10.19.

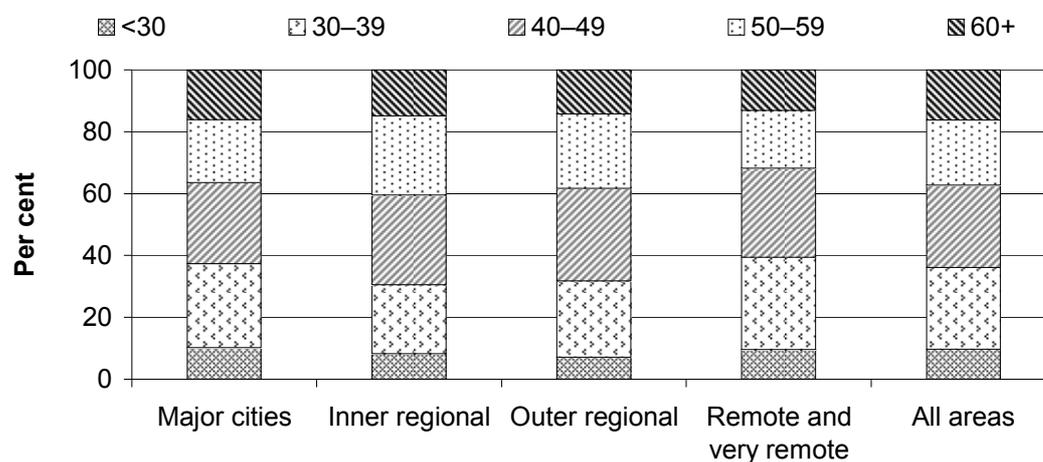
Figure 10.18 Medical practitioner workforce, by age group, 2007<sup>a, b</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Includes employed medical practitioners, registered medical practitioners on extended leave and registered medical practitioners looking for work in medicine. <sup>b</sup> Estimates for the NT should be treated with caution due to the low response rate (27.1 per cent) in that jurisdiction to the AIHW Medical Labour Force Survey.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Medical Labour Force Survey*; table 10A.58.

Figure 10.19 Medical practitioner workforce, by age group and remoteness area, 2007<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Includes employed medical practitioners, registered medical practitioners on extended leave and registered medical practitioners looking for work in medicine.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) *Medical Labour Force Survey*; table 10A.57.

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## Efficiency

Two approaches to measuring the efficiency of public hospital services are used in this Report: the ‘cost per casemix-adjusted unit of output’ (the unit cost) and the ‘casemix-adjusted relative length of stay index’. The latter is used because costs are correlated with the length of stay at aggregate levels of reporting.

The Steering Committee’s approach is to report the full costs of a service where they are available. Where the full costs of a service cannot be accurately measured, the Steering Committee seeks to report estimated costs that are comparable. Where differences in comparability remain, the differences are documented. The Steering Committee has identified financial reporting issues that have affected the accuracy and comparability of unit costs for acute care services. These include the treatment of payroll tax, superannuation, depreciation and the user cost of capital associated with buildings and equipment. A number of issues remain to further improve the quality of these estimates.

Costs associated with non-current physical assets (such as depreciation and the user cost of capital) are potentially important components of the total costs of many services delivered by government agencies. Differences in the techniques for measuring non-current physical assets (such as valuation methods) can reduce the comparability of cost estimates across jurisdictions. In response to concerns regarding data comparability, the Steering Committee initiated a study, reported in *Asset Measurement in the Costing of Government Services* (SCRCSSP 2001). The study examined the extent to which differences in asset measurement techniques applied by participating agencies can affect the comparability of reported unit costs.

The results reported in the study for public hospitals indicate that different methods of asset measurement could lead to quite large variations in reported capital costs. However, considered in the context of total unit costs, the differences created by these asset measurement effects were relatively small, because capital costs represent a small proportion of total cost (although the differences can affect cost rankings across jurisdictions). A key message from the study was that the adoption of nationally uniform accounting standards across all service areas would be a desirable outcome. The results are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Care needs to be taken, therefore, in comparing unit costs across jurisdictions. Differences in counting rules, the treatment of various expenditure items (for example, superannuation) and the allocation of overhead costs have the potential to affect such comparisons. In addition, differences in the use of salary packaging can allow hospitals to lower their wage bills (and thus State or Territory government expenditure) while maintaining the after-tax income of their staff. No data were

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available for reporting on the effect of salary packaging and any variation in its use across jurisdictions.

Differences in the scope of services being delivered by public hospitals can also reduce the comparability of efficiency measures. Some jurisdictions admit patients who can be treated as non-admitted patients in other jurisdictions (AIHW 2000).

### *Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation*

‘Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver services in a cost effective manner (box 10.16). ‘Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation’ data are presented in figure 10.20.

#### **Box 10.16 Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation**

‘Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation’ measures the average cost of providing care for an admitted patient (overnight stay or same day) adjusted with AR-DRG cost weights for the relative complexity of the patient’s clinical condition and of the hospital services provided (AIHW 2000).

This measure includes overnight stays, same day separations, private patient separations in public hospitals and private patient recurrent costs. It excludes non-acute hospitals, mothercraft hospitals, multipurpose hospitals, multipurpose services, hospices, rehabilitation hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and hospitals in the ‘unpeered and other’ peer groups. The data exclude expenditure on non-admitted patient care, the user cost of capital and depreciation, and research costs.

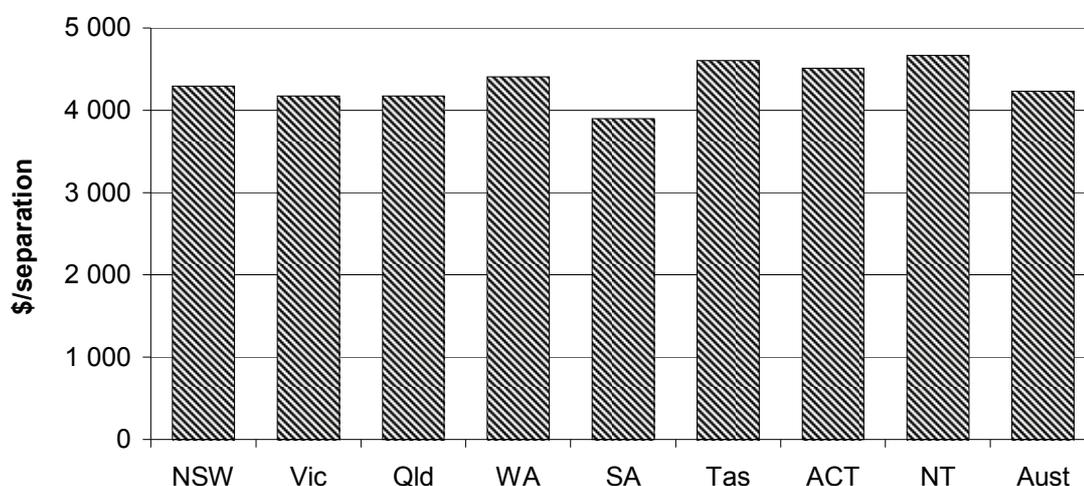
All admitted patient separations and their costs are included, and most separations are for acute care. Cost weights are not available for admitted patients who received non-acute care (2.3 per cent of total separations in 2006-07), so the same cost weights for acute care are applied to non-acute separations. The admitted patient cost proportion is an estimate only.

Some jurisdictions have developed experimental cost estimates for non-psychiatric acute patients which are also reported here. Separations for non-acute patients and psychiatric acute care patients are excluded from these estimates because AR-DRG cost weights are a poor predictor of these separations.

Lower ‘recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation’ can reflect more efficient service delivery in public hospitals. However, this indicator needs to be viewed in the context of the set of performance indicators as a whole, as cost is not necessarily related to quality and efficiency.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

Figure 10.20 **Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation, 2007-08<sup>a</sup>**  
b, c, d, e, f, g

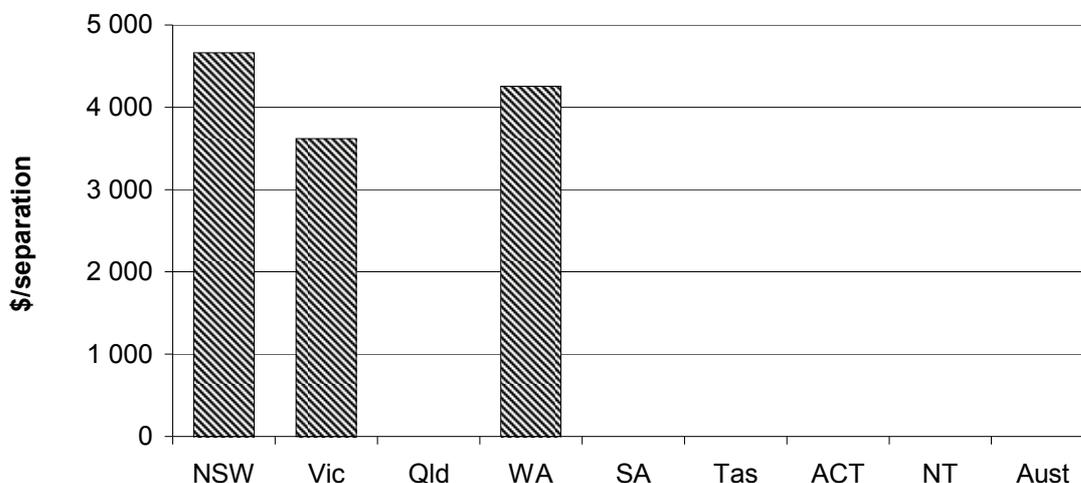


<sup>a</sup> Excludes depreciation and the user cost of capital, spending on non-admitted patient care and research costs. <sup>b</sup> Casemix-adjusted separations are the product of total separations and average cost weight. Average cost weights are from the National Hospital Cost Data Collection, based on acute and unspecified separations and newborn episodes of care with qualified days, using the 2006-07 AR-DRG v 5.1 cost weights (DoHA 2006). <sup>c</sup> Excludes separations for which the care type was reported as 'newborn with no qualified days', and records for hospital boarders and posthumous organ procurement. <sup>d</sup> Psychiatric hospitals, drug and alcohol services, mothercraft hospitals, unpeered and other hospitals, hospices, rehabilitation facilities, small non-acute hospitals and multi-purpose services are excluded from these data. The data are based on hospital establishments for which expenditure data were provided, including networks of hospitals in some jurisdictions. Some small hospitals with incomplete expenditure data were not included. <sup>e</sup> Of the selected hospitals, three small hospitals had their admitted patient cost proportion estimated by the Health and Allied Services Advisory Council ratio. Admitted patient cost proportion was previously called the inpatient fraction. <sup>f</sup> Hospital recurrent expenditures on Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can differ. These differences can influence jurisdictional variation in unit costs. <sup>g</sup> NT data need to be interpreted in conjunction with the cost disabilities associated with hospital service delivery in the NT.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.59.

Experimental estimates of 'recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation' for acute non-psychiatric patients are reported for NSW, Victoria and WA (figure 10.21). (These estimates relate to a subset of the selected public hospitals reported in figure 10.20 and are not available for other jurisdictions.) The experimental estimates aim to overcome the need to apply cost weights for acute care to non-acute care separations (box 10.16). The effect of restricting the analysis to acute non-psychiatric admitted patients was to increase the estimated recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation for the subset of hospitals by 3.4 per cent for NSW, and to decrease this cost by 13.5 per cent for Victoria and 5.0 per cent for WA (AIHW 2009a).

**Figure 10.21 Recurrent cost per acute non-psychiatric casemix-adjusted separation, subset of hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c, d, e</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Excludes psychiatric hospitals, sub-acute, non-acute and unpeered hospitals. This subset excludes hospitals where the inpatient fraction was equal to the acute inpatient fraction and more than 1000 non-acute patient days were recorded. Also excludes hospitals where the apparent cost of non-acute patients exceeded \$1000 per day and more than \$1 million of apparent expenditure on non-acute patients days was reported.

<sup>b</sup> Separations are those where the care type is acute, newborn with qualified days, or not reported. Psychiatric separations are those with psychiatric care days. <sup>c</sup> Average cost weight from the National Hospital Cost Data Collection, based on acute, newborn with at least one qualified day, or not reported, using the 2006-07 AR-DRG version 5.1 cost weights (DoHA 2006). <sup>d</sup> Cost estimates include adjustment for private patient medical costs: \$258 for NSW, \$127 for Victoria and \$173 for WA. <sup>e</sup> These estimates are not available for Queensland, SA, Tasmania, the ACT or the NT.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.59.

‘Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation’ is affected by differences in the mix of admitted patient services produced by hospitals in each jurisdiction. Hospitals have been categorised by ‘peer groups’ to enable those with similar activities to be compared. The public hospital peer groups include ‘Principal referral and Specialist women’s and children’s hospitals’, ‘Large hospitals’, ‘Medium hospitals’ and ‘Small acute hospitals’.

The dominant peer classification is the ‘Principal referral and Specialist women’s and children’s’ category. The 80 hospitals representing this group had an average of 42 163 separations each at a cost of \$4223 (table 10A.60 and table 10.13). Data for each of the hospital peer groups are presented in table 10.13. Detailed data for all peer groups are presented in table 10A.60.

**Table 10.13 Recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation, by hospital peer group, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Hospital peer group									
Principal referral and Specialist women's and children's	4 295	4 178	4 201	4 315	3 883	4 449	np	4 561	4 223
Large	4 102	3 985	3 975	4 329	4 144	np	np	..	4 160
Medium	4 430	4 080	3 561	4 683	3 723	..	..	..	4 199
Small acute	4 716	4 941	4 822	5 133	3 847	4 436	..	5 520	4 803
All hospitals <sup>d</sup>	4 295	4 172	4 172	4 405	3 900	4 605	4 513	4 668	4 232

<sup>a</sup> Data exclude depreciation and the user cost of capital, spending on non-admitted patient care and research costs. <sup>b</sup> The data are based on hospital establishments for which expenditure data were provided, including networks of hospitals in some jurisdictions. Some small hospitals with incomplete expenditure data were not included. <sup>c</sup> Separations for which the care type was reported as newborn with no qualified days, and records for hospital boarders and posthumous organ procurement have been excluded. <sup>d</sup> Includes all hospitals in this cost per casemix-adjusted analysis. .. Not applicable. np Not published

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.60.

### *Total cost per casemix-adjusted separation*

'Total cost per casemix-adjusted separation' is an indicator of governments' objective to deliver services in a cost effective manner (box 10.17).

#### **Box 10.17 Total cost per casemix-adjusted separation**

'Total cost per casemix-adjusted separation' is defined as the recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation plus the capital costs per casemix-adjusted separation. Recurrent costs include labour and material costs, and capital costs include depreciation and the user cost of capital for buildings and equipment. The indicator is included because it allows the full cost of hospital services to be considered in a single measure. The hospitals included in this measure are the same as for recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation (box 10.16).

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### Box 10.17 (Continued)

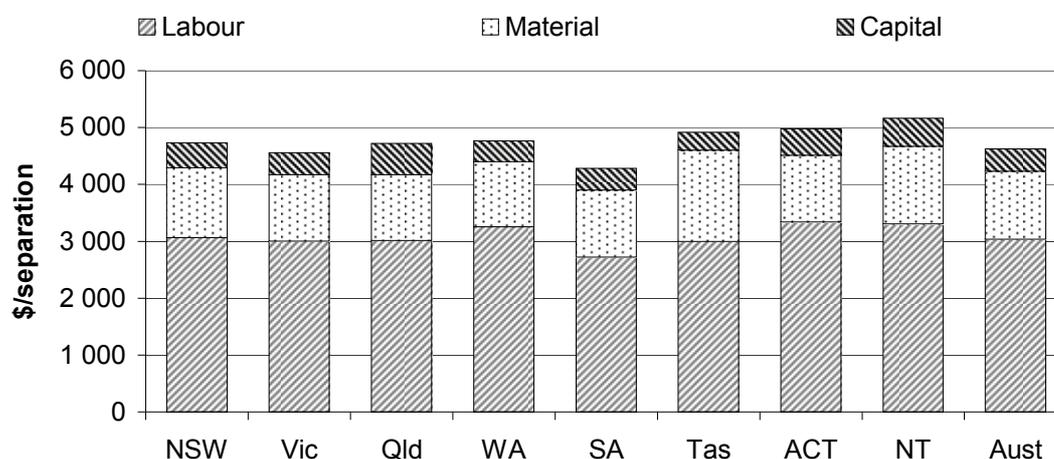
Depreciation is defined as the cost of consuming an asset's services. It is measured by the reduction in value of an asset over the financial year. The user cost of capital is the opportunity cost of the capital invested in an asset, and is equivalent to the return foregone from not using the funds to deliver other government services or to retire debt. Interest payments represent a user cost of capital, so are deducted from capital costs in all jurisdictions to avoid double counting.

A lower 'total cost per casemix-adjusted separation' can reflect more efficient service delivery in public hospitals. However, this indicator needs to be viewed in the context of the set of performance indicators as a whole, as cost is not necessarily related to quality and efficiency.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

Total cost includes both the recurrent costs (as discussed above) and the capital costs associated with hospital services. Results for this indicator in 2007-08 are reported in figure 10.22. Labour costs accounted for the majority of costs in all jurisdictions.

Figure 10.22 **Total cost per casemix-adjusted separation, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Labour includes medical and non-medical labour costs. Material includes other non-labour recurrent costs, such as repairs and maintenance (table 10A.59). <sup>b</sup> Capital cost includes depreciation and the user cost of capital for buildings and equipment that is associated with the delivery of admitted patient services in the public hospitals as described in the data for recurrent cost per casemix-adjusted separation. Capital cost excludes the user cost of capital associated with land (reported in table 10A.61). <sup>c</sup> Variation across jurisdictions in the collection of capital related data suggests the data are only indicative. The capital cost per casemix-adjusted separation is equal to the capital cost adjusted by the inpatient fraction, divided by the number of casemix-adjusted separations.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; State and Territory governments (unpublished); tables 10A.59 and 10A.61.

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### *Relative stay index*

‘Relative stay index’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver services efficiently (box 10.18).

#### **Box 10.18 Relative stay index**

‘Relative stay index’ is defined as the actual number of acute care patient days divided by the expected number of acute care patient days adjusted for casemix. Casemix adjustment allows comparisons to take account of variation in types of service provided but not other influences on length of stay, such as the Indigenous status of the patient. Acute care separations only are included. Section 10.8 contains a more detailed definition outlining exclusions from the analysis.

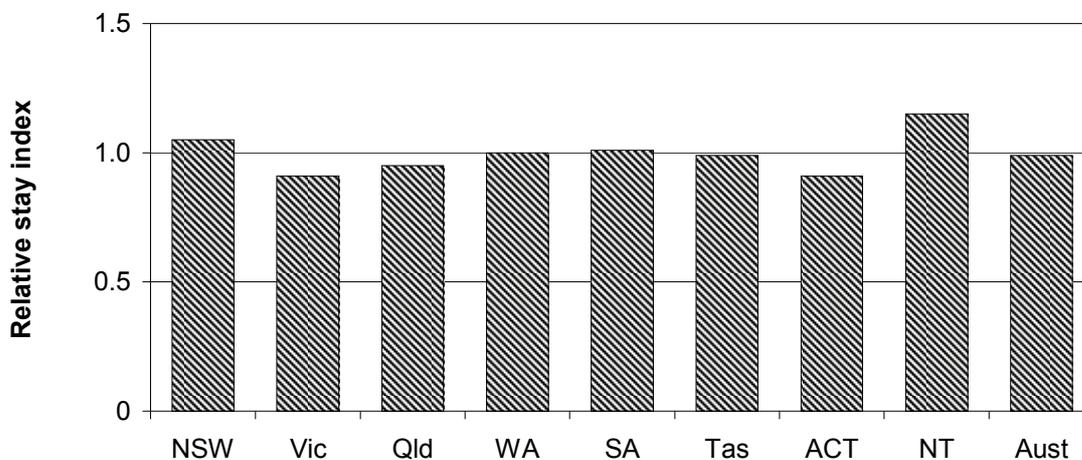
‘Relative stay index’ for Australia for all hospitals (public and private) is one. A ‘relative stay index’ greater than one indicates that average length of patient stay is higher than expected given the jurisdiction’s casemix distribution. A ‘relative stay index’ of less than one indicates that the number of bed days used was less than expected. A low ‘relative stay index’ is desirable if it is not associated with poorer health outcomes or significant extra costs outside the hospital systems (for example, in-home care).

States and territories vary in their thresholds for classifying patients as either same day admitted patients or outpatients. These variations affect the ‘relative stay index’.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

Data for this indicator are reported in figure 10.23. The ‘relative stay index’ is reported by patient election status and by medical, surgical and other AR-DRGs in tables 10A.62 and 10A.63 respectively.

Figure 10.23 **Relative stay index, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b</sup>**



**a** Separations exclude newborn with unqualified days, organ procurement posthumous and hospital boarders.

**b** The relative stay index is based on all hospitals and is estimated using the indirect standardisation method and AR-DRG version 5.1. The indirectly standardised relative stay index is not strictly comparable between jurisdictions but is a comparison of the jurisdiction with the national average based on the casemix of the jurisdiction.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; table 10A.62.

### *Recurrent cost per non-admitted occasion of service*

‘Recurrent cost per non-admitted occasion of service’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver services in a cost effective manner (box 10.19).

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**Box 10.19 Recurrent cost per non-admitted occasion of service**

'Recurrent cost per non-admitted occasion of service' is the proportion of recurrent expenditure allocated to patients who were not admitted, divided by the total number of non-admitted patient occasions of service in public hospitals. Occasions of service include examinations, consultations, treatments or other services provided to patients in each functional unit of a hospital.

Non-admitted occasions of service (including emergency department presentations and outpatient services) account for a significant proportion of hospital expenditure.

Lower recurrent cost per non-admitted occasion of service can reflect more efficient service delivery in public hospitals. However, this indicator needs to be viewed in the context of the set of performance indicators as a whole, as cost is not necessarily related to quality and efficiency. This indicator does not adjust for the complexity of service — for example, a simple urine glucose test is treated equally with a complete biochemical analysis of all body fluids (AIHW 2000).

Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

These data are not comparable across jurisdictions. Reporting categories vary across jurisdictions, and further inconsistencies arise as a result of differences in outsourcing practices. In some cases, for example, outsourced occasions of service can be included in expenditure on non-admitted services, but not in the count of occasions of service. Jurisdictions able to supply 2007-08 data for this indicator reported the following results for non-admitted patient services:

- In NSW, the emergency department cost per occasion of service was \$197 for 2.3 million occasions, the outpatient cost per occasion of service was \$92 for 15.3 million occasions and the overall cost per occasion of service (emergency plus outpatient plus other) was \$104 for 20.5 million occasions (table 10A.64).
- In WA, the emergency department cost per occasion of service was not available. The outpatient cost per occasion of service was \$186 for 3.0 million occasions and the overall cost per occasion of service (emergency plus outpatient plus other) was \$182 for 4.1 million occasions (table 10A.66).
- In SA, the emergency department cost per occasion of service was \$302 for 527 000 occasions, the outpatient cost per occasion of service was \$261 for 1.4 million occasions and the overall cost per occasion of service (emergency plus outpatient) was \$272 for 1.9 million occasions (table 10A.67).
- In Tasmania, the emergency department cost per occasion of service was not available. The outpatient cost per occasion of service was \$164 for 460 000 occasions. An overall cost per occasion of service was not available (table 10A.68).

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- In the ACT, the emergency department cost per occasion of service was \$600 for 98 000 occasions, the outpatient cost per occasion of service was \$102 for 254 000 occasions and the overall cost per occasion of service (emergency plus outpatient) was \$170 for 729 000 occasions (table 10A.69).

Victoria collects data on the basis of cost per non-admitted patient encounter. An encounter includes the clinic visit and all ancillary services provided within a 30 day period either side of the clinic visit. Based on cost data from 14 hospitals, the average cost per encounter was \$158 for 1.2 million encounters in 2007-08 (table 10A.65).

Given the lack of a nationally consistent non-admitted patient classification system, this Report includes national data from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing's National Hospital Cost Data Collection (NHCDC). The NHCDC collects data across a sample of hospitals that is expanding over time. The sample for each jurisdiction is not necessarily representative because hospitals contribute data on a voluntary basis. The NHCDC data are affected by differences in costing and admission practices across jurisdictions and hospitals. Therefore, an estimation process has been carried out to create representative national activity figures from the sample data. In addition, the purpose of the NHCDC is to calculate between-DRG cost weights, not to compare the efficiency of hospitals.

Outpatient data were contributed by 177 public hospitals for all types of public hospital outpatient clinics (tier 0). These data suggest that 'cost per non-admitted clinic occasions of service' for the public hospitals sector in 2007-08 was \$246 for 10.0 million occasions (table 10A.70). 'Cost per non-admitted clinic occasions of service' data are also shown for seven categories of outpatient clinics (tier 1) (table 10.14). These tier 1 outpatient clinics data were provided by 177 public hospitals. Emergency department data, provided by 153 public hospitals, show the 'cost per occasion of service for emergency departments' by triage class (table 10.15).

**Table 10.14 Non-admitted clinic occasions of service for tier 1 clinics, sample results, public sector, 2007-08<sup>a, b, c, d, e</sup>**

	<i>Occasions of service</i>		<i>Average cost</i>
		no.	\$/occasion of service
Allied health and/or clinical nurse specialist	1 429 222		143
Dental	21 271		250
Medical	3 290 546		380
Obstetrics and gynaecology	1 647 903		145
Paediatric	334 393		294
Psychiatric	239 824		276
Surgical	2 406 795		190
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 369 954</b>		<b>248</b>

<sup>a</sup> Not all hospitals that submit data to the NHCDC submit emergency department data. The emergency department national database contains only acute hospitals with emergency department cost and activity.

<sup>b</sup> Costing and admission practices vary across jurisdictions and hospitals. <sup>c</sup> Includes depreciation costs. <sup>d</sup> Based on 177 public sector hospitals. <sup>e</sup> Excludes Victorian outpatient data.

Source: DoHA (2009), *National Hospital Cost Data Collection Cost Report, Round 12 (2007-08)*; table 10A.72.

**Table 10.15 Emergency department average cost per occasion of service, public hospitals, by triage class, 2007-08 (dollars)<sup>a, b, c, d, e</sup>**

<i>Triage category</i>	<i>Population estimated — average cost per occasion of service<sup>f</sup></i>	<i>Actual — average cost per occasion of service</i>
Admitted triage 1	1 170	1 188
Admitted triage 2	640	652
Admitted triage 3	544	558
Admitted triage 4	443	456
Admitted triage 5	241	237
Non-admitted triage 1	702	739
Non-admitted triage 2	492	505
Non-admitted triage 3	416	431
Non-admitted triage 4	311	321
Non-admitted triage 5	184	197
Did not wait <sup>g</sup>	31	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>383</b>

<sup>a</sup> Not all hospitals that submit data to the NHCDC submit emergency department data. The emergency department national database contains only acute hospitals with emergency department cost and activity.

<sup>b</sup> Based on data from 153 public sector hospitals. <sup>c</sup> Victorian emergency department data are not included.

<sup>d</sup> Costing and admission practices vary across jurisdictions and hospitals. <sup>e</sup> Depreciation costs are included.

<sup>f</sup> Estimated population costs are obtained by weighting the sample results according to the known characteristics of the population. <sup>g</sup> 'Did not wait' means those presentations to an emergency department who were triaged but did not wait until the completion of their treatment, at which time they would have been either admitted to hospital or discharged home.

Source: DoHA (2009), *National Hospital Cost Data Collection Cost Report, Round 12 (2007-08)*; table 10A.71.

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## Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact of services on the status of an individual or group (while outputs are the actual services delivered) (see chapter 1, section 1.5).

### *Patient satisfaction*

‘Patient satisfaction’ provides a proxy measure of governments’ objective to deliver services that are high quality and responsive to individual patient needs (box 10.20).

#### **Box 10.20 Patient satisfaction**

‘Patient satisfaction’ reports satisfaction ratings taken from each jurisdiction’s patient surveys. Results are expressed in percentage terms or as scale scores. Patient satisfaction surveys are different from other sources of hospital quality data, because they provide information on hospital quality from the patient’s perspective.

A higher proportion of patients who were satisfied (or a higher score) is desirable, because it suggests the hospital care received was of high quality and better met the expectations and needs of patients.

Given that ‘patient satisfaction surveys’ differ in content, timing and scope across jurisdictions, it is not possible to compare these results nationally. This indicator will be further developed over time as data become more comparable.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

In 2005, the Steering Committee engaged Health Policy Analysis Pty Ltd to undertake a study reviewing patient satisfaction and responsiveness surveys. The study examined patient satisfaction surveys conducted by State and Territory governments that are relevant to measuring ‘public hospital quality’. A major objective of the study was to identify points of commonality and difference between patient satisfaction surveys and their potential for concordance and/or for forming the basis of a minimum national data set on public hospital ‘patient satisfaction’ or ‘patient experience’.

The study found that, although there is some potential for harmonising approaches (as most surveys assess similar aspects of patient experience and satisfaction), different survey methodologies posed significant impediments to achieving comparable information. It suggested that a starting point for harmonising approaches would be to identify an auspicing body and create a forum through which jurisdictions can exchange ideas and develop joint approaches (Pearse 2005). A copy of this study can be found on the Review web page ([www.pc.gov.au/gsp](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp)).

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Jurisdictions reported the following results from patient satisfaction surveys:

- In NSW, a mailout survey was conducted in February 2007, 2008 and 2009 of overnight inpatients, day only inpatients, paediatric inpatients, outpatients, non-admitted emergency patients, community health patients, adult rehabilitation inpatients and admitted patients with cancer. The sample size was 216 000 and the response rate was 38 per cent. In 2009, 90 per cent of patients rated their care very positively (good, very good or excellent) when asked how they would rate their overall care. In 2009 66 per cent reported they would definitely recommend the service to others. Both measures have increased from 2007 when 88 per cent rated overall care as good, very good or excellent and 62 per cent reported they would recommend the service to others (table 10A.73).
- In Victoria, a survey was conducted between 1 March 2008 and 28 February 2009 using a mailout questionnaire to admitted adult patients in public acute and sub acute care hospitals. The sample size was 15 587 and the response rate was 39 per cent. The overall care index was 78.2 out of a possible range of 20–100 (table 10A.74).
- In Queensland, computer assisted telephone interviews were conducted from Septembers 2008 to April 2009 of surgical patients discharged between July and December 2008. The sample size was 6201 and the response rate was 86 per cent. Across Queensland 95 per cent of patients were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with all aspects of their hospital stay, with 68 per cent stating they were very satisfied (table 10A.75).
- In WA, a computer assisted telephone interview survey was conducted between February 2009 and June 2009 for admitted patients and emergency department patients. The sample size was 6863 admitted patients and 1593 emergency patients and the response rate was 92 per cent for both admitted and emergency patients. The overall indicator of satisfaction score was 77.8 for admitted patients and 77.4 for emergency department patients (table 10A.76).
- In SA, a computer assisted telephone interview survey was conducted between May 2008 and July 2008 of adult patients aged 16 years and over who received at least one night of care in the SA public hospital system in May through to July 2008. The sample size was 4785 and the response rate was 73 per cent. The overall satisfaction score for the 2008 Public Hospital Inpatients, Patient Satisfaction Survey was 88.0 (scored from 0 to 100, being least to most satisfied) (table 10A.77).
- Tasmania is currently reviewing its approach to conducting consumer satisfaction surveys and therefore has not conducted a statewide survey since 2007 (table 10A.78).

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- In the ACT, the two most recent surveys were conducted in 2009 at two different hospitals. One survey was conducted in February to May 2009 and another survey was conducted in March to June 2009. Survey 1 involved discharged patients from clinical areas of inpatients, emergency department, palliative care, day surgery and mental health. Survey 2 involved eligible patients who had consented and who had been discharged from the hospital during the reporting period. Survey 1 used samples of 172 inpatients, 120 emergency department patients, 191 day surgery patients, 23 mental health patients and 112 palliative care patients. Survey 1 had a 35.8 per cent response rate for inpatients, a 24 per cent response rate for emergency department patients, a 54 per cent response rate for day surgery patients and a 23.9 per cent response rate for mental health patients. Data are not yet available for survey 2. Survey 1 overall satisfaction results were as follows:
    - 78.2 mean points out of 100 for inpatients
    - 77.8 mean points out of 100 for emergency department patients
    - 88.2 mean points out of 100 for day surgery patients
    - 77.8 mean points out of 100 for public mental health patients
    - 88.6 mean points out of 100 for palliative care patients (table 10A.79).
  - In the NT, face to face surveys were conducted at various times of the year in 2009 of admitted patients and emergency department attendees in public acute care hospitals. Sample sizes have varied and response rates have been low. The overall satisfaction with hospital stay was 83 per cent (table 10A.80).

### *Sentinel events*

‘Sentinel events’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver public hospital services that are safe and of high quality (box 10.21).

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### Box 10.21 Sentinel events

'Sentinel events' is defined as the number of reported adverse events that occur because of hospital system and process deficiencies and which result in the death of, or serious harm to, a patient. Sentinel events occur relatively infrequently and are independent of a patient's condition (DHS 2004). Sentinel events have the potential to seriously undermine public confidence in the healthcare system.

Australian health ministers have agreed on a national core set of sentinel events for which all public hospitals are required to provide data. The eight nationally agreed core sentinel events are:

1. Procedures involving the wrong patient or body part resulting in death or major permanent loss of function.
2. Suicide of an admitted patient.
3. Retained instruments or other material after surgery requiring re-operation or further surgical procedure.
4. Intravascular gas embolism resulting in death or neurological damage.
5. Haemolytic blood transfusion reaction resulting from ABO (blood group) incompatibility.
6. Medication error leading to the death of a patient reasonably believed to be due to incorrect administration of drugs.
7. Maternal death or serious morbidity associated with labour or delivery.
8. Infant discharged to the wrong family.

A high number of sentinel events can indicate hospital system and process deficiencies that compromise the quality and safety of public hospitals.

Over time an increase in the number of sentinel events reported might reflect improvements in incident reporting mechanisms at a health service level and organisational cultural change, rather than an increase in the frequency of such events. However, trends need to be monitored to establish whether this is the underlying reason (DHS 2004).

Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

*Source:* DHS (2004); NSW Department of Health (2005).

Sentinel event programs have been implemented by all State and Territory governments. The purpose of these programs is to facilitate a safe environment for patients by reducing the frequency of these events (DHS 2004). The programs are not punitive, and are designed to facilitate self reporting of errors so that the underlying causes of the events can be examined, and action taken to reduce the risk of these events re-occurring.

Data for 2007-08 are shown in table 10.16. Data for 2006-07 are reported in table 10A.81. The definition of sentinel event 1 has been revised for the 2010 Report to include only those events that result in death or major permanent loss of function. In previous reports less serious events had been included by some jurisdictions for this event. As a result, data reported for this event in the 2010 Report are not comparable with the data reported in previous Reports.

In 2007 the AIHW, in conjunction with the ACSQHC, published a report that included national sentinel event data for 2004-05 (AIHW and ACSQHC 2007). The report notes that nationally consistent sentinel event definitions have not been agreed and as a result the data are not considered comparable across jurisdictions.

**Table 10.16 Nationally agreed core sentinel events, 2007-08 (number)<sup>a</sup>**

<i>Sentinel event</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
1. Procedures involving the wrong patient or body part resulting in death or major permanent loss of function. <sup>c, d</sup>	4	1	8	1	1	–	–	–	15
2. Suicide of an admitted patient	5	7	5	9	5	1	–	–	32
3. Retained instruments or other material after surgery requiring re-operation or further surgical procedure	14	11	–	3	3	1	np	–	32
4. Intravascular gas embolism resulting in death or neurological damage	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	1
5. Haemolytic blood transfusion reaction resulting from ABO incompatibility	–	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	4
6. Medication error leading to the death of a patient reasonably believed to be due to incorrect administration of drugs	6	2	5	4	–	1	–	–	18
7. Maternal death or serious morbidity associated with labour or delivery	–	6	1	5	2	–	–	1	15
8. Infant discharged to the wrong family	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>np</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>119</b>

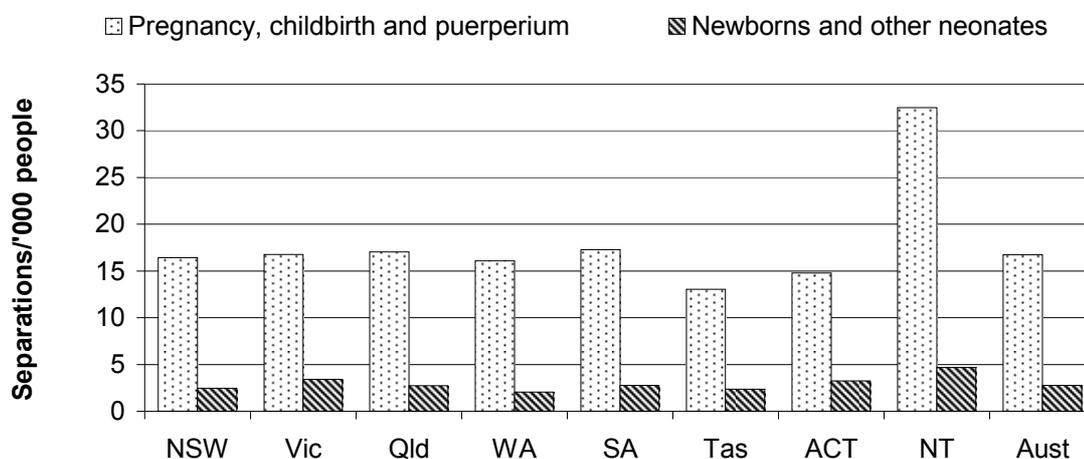
<sup>a</sup> Sentinel event definitions can vary across jurisdictions. <sup>b</sup> Includes public and private hospitals. <sup>c</sup> The definition of sentinel event 1 has been revised for the 2010 Report to include only those events that result in death or major permanent loss of function. In previous reports less serious events had been included by some jurisdictions for this event. <sup>d</sup> Data reported for this event in the 2010 Report are not comparable with the data reported in previous Reports. – Nil or rounded to zero. np Not published.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 10A.81.

## 10.4 Profile of maternity services

Maternity services (defined as AR-DRGs relating to pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium, and newborns and other neonates) accounted for 9.0 per cent of total acute separations in public hospitals (table 10A.83) and around 10.8 per cent of the total cost of all acute separations in public hospitals in 2007-08 (table 10A.82). Figure 10.24 shows the rate of acute separations per 1000 people for maternity services across jurisdictions in 2007-08.

Figure 10.24 **Separation rates for maternity services, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The puerperium refers to the period of confinement immediately after labour (around six weeks).

<sup>b</sup> Newborns and other neonates include babies aged less than 28 days or babies aged less than one year with admission weight of less than 2500 grams.

Source: AIHW (2009), *Australian Hospital Statistics 2007-08*, Health Services Series No. 33, Cat no. HSE 71; ABS (unpublished), *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December Quarter 2007, Cat. no. 3101.0; tables AA.2 and 10A.83.

In Australian public hospitals in 2007-08, vaginal deliveries without complicating diagnosis accounted for a substantial proportion of the separations for pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium (29.5 per cent) (tables 10A.83 and 10A.84). In the context of all AR-DRGs in public hospitals, vaginal deliveries without complicating diagnosis comprised the largest number of overnight acute separations (2.3 per cent of all separations) (table 10.3) and the third highest cost of all separation categories (\$451.3 million) (table 10A.84).

The complexity of cases across jurisdictions for maternity services is partly related to the mother's age at the time of giving birth. The mean age of mothers giving birth varied across jurisdictions in 2006, 2007 and 2008 (table 10.17).

**Table 10.17 Mean age of mothers at time of giving birth, public hospitals**

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>NT</i>
2006								
First birth	27.1	27.7	25.5	26.0	26.8	24.8	27.7	23.8
Second birth	30.4	29.9	28.1	28.5	29.4	27.7	30.1	26.3
Third birth	31.6	31.5	29.6	29.8	31.0	29.6	31.5	28.2
All births	29.3	29.5	27.9	28.1	29.0	27.2	29.6	26.5
2007								
First birth	28.1	27.8	25.6	26.0	26.9	26.0	27.7	24.1
Second birth	30.2	30.0	28.0	28.5	29.4	28.5	30.2	26.4
Third birth	31.4	31.5	29.7	30.0	31.1	29.9	31.4	27.8
All births	29.1	29.6	27.9	28.1	29.0	28.1	29.6	26.6
2008								
First birth	27.9	27.7	25.5	26.0	26.9	na	28.1	24.5
Second birth	30.2	30.0	28.1	28.6	29.5	na	30.2	26.4
Third birth	31.5	31.5	29.8	32.0	31.0	na	31.9	28.5
All births	29.8	29.6	28.0	28.2	29.1	na	29.8	26.8

<sup>a</sup> The 2006 data exclude mothers whose age was 'not stated'. <sup>b</sup> Age is based on exact age (years) to 4 decimal places. <sup>c</sup> ACT 2008 data are preliminary. Care must be taken when interpreting percentages as these data include both ACT and non-ACT residents where the birth occurred in the ACT. Between 2006 and 2008, 16.2 per cent of women who gave birth in the ACT were not ACT residents. **na** Not available.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished).

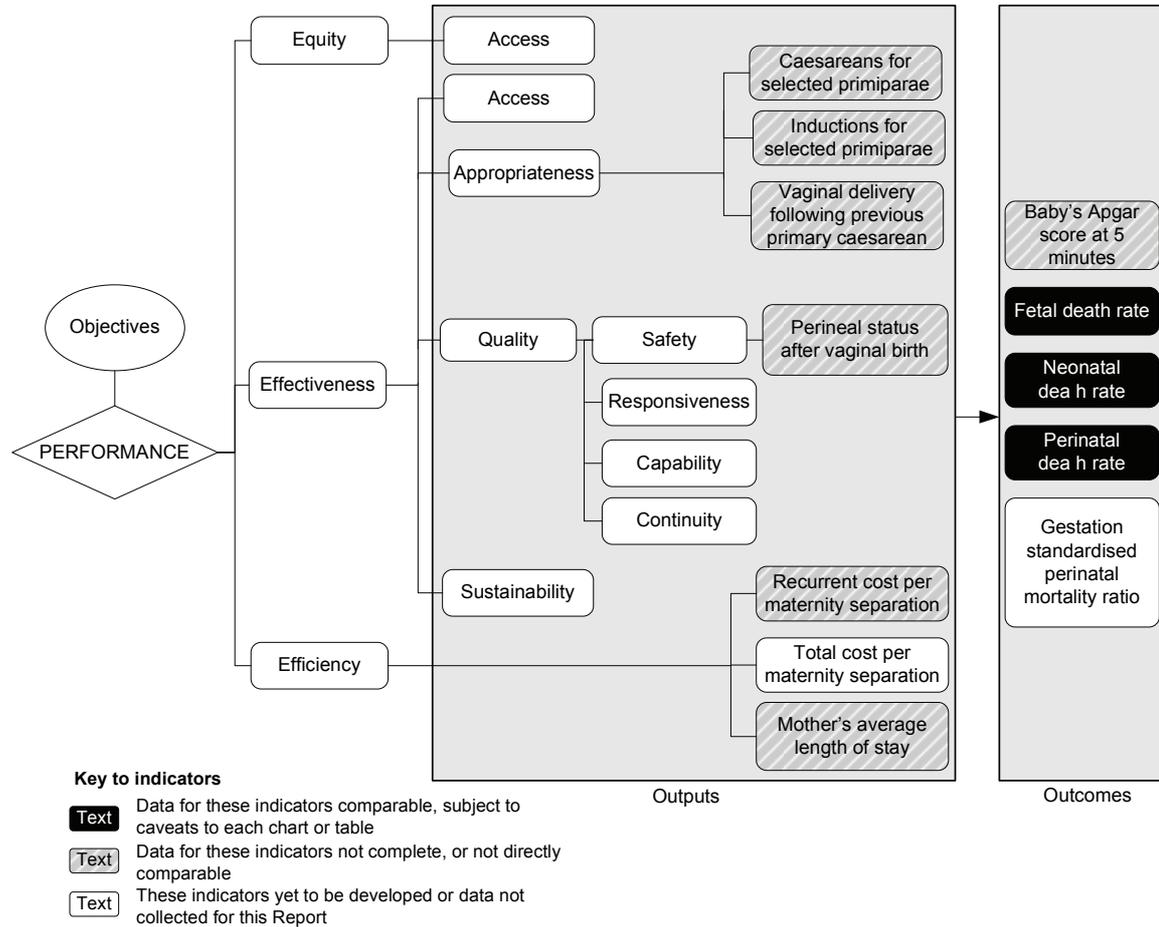
## 10.5 Framework of performance indicators for maternity services

The performance framework for maternity services is outlined in figure 10.25, and is based on the same objectives as those for public hospitals in general. The framework is under development by the Steering Committee and, as with all the performance indicator frameworks, will be subject to regular review. The performance indicator framework shows which data are comparable in the 2010 Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability from a Report-wide perspective (see section 1.6). The 'Health preface' explains the performance indicator framework for health services as a whole, including the subdimensions for quality and sustainability that have been added to the standard Review framework for health services.

The Report's statistical appendix contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. These data cover a range of demographic and geographic characteristics, including age profile, geographic

distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (including Indigenous and ethnic status) (appendix A).

**Figure 10.25 Performance indicators for maternity services**



## 10.6 Key performance indicator results for maternity services

### Outputs

Outputs are the actual services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see chapter 1, section 1.5).

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## Equity — access

The Steering Committee has identified equity of access as an area for development in future Reports. Equity of access indicators will measure access to maternity services by special needs groups such as Indigenous people or people in rural and remote areas.

## Effectiveness — access

The Steering Committee has identified the effectiveness of access to maternity services as an area for development in future Reports. Effectiveness of access indicators will measure access to appropriate services for the population as a whole, particularly in terms of affordability and/or timeliness.

## Effectiveness — appropriateness

### *Caesareans and inductions for selected primiparae*

‘Caesareans for selected primiparae’ and ‘Inductions for selected primiparae’ are indicators of the appropriateness of maternity services in public hospitals (box 10.22).

#### **Box 10.22 Caesareans and inductions for selected primiparae**

‘Caesareans and inductions for selected primiparae’ are reported for women aged between 25 and 29 years who have had no previous deliveries, with a vertex presentation (that is, the crown of the baby’s head is at the lower segment of the mother’s uterus) and a gestation length of 37 to 41 weeks. This group is considered to be low risk parturients<sup>a</sup>, so caesarean or induction rates should be low in their population.

These indicators are defined as the number of inductions or caesareans for the selected primiparae divided respectively by the number of the selected primiparae who give birth. High intervention rates can indicate a need for investigation, although labour inductions and birth by caesarean section are interventions that are appropriate in some circumstances, depending on the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies.

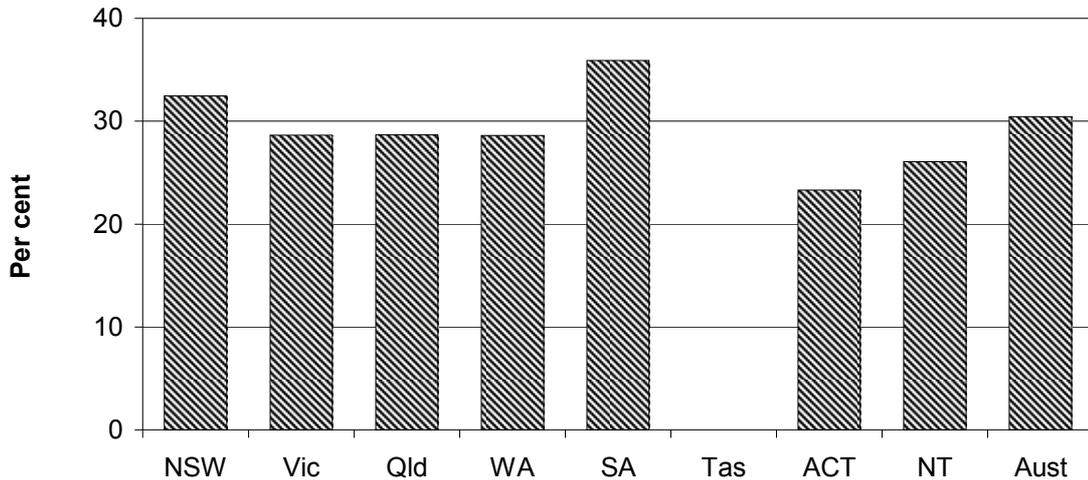
Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

<sup>a</sup> Parturient means ‘about to give birth’. Primiparae refers to pregnant women who have had no previous pregnancy resulting in a live birth or stillbirth (Laws and Hilder 2008).

Induction rates for selected primiparae in public hospitals are reported in figure 10.26. Induction rates for private hospitals are shown in table 10A.85 for comparison. They are higher than the rate for public hospitals in all jurisdictions for

which data are available. Data for all jurisdictions for earlier years are included in tables 10A.86–93.

Figure 10.26 **Inductions for selected primiparae, public hospitals, 2008<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

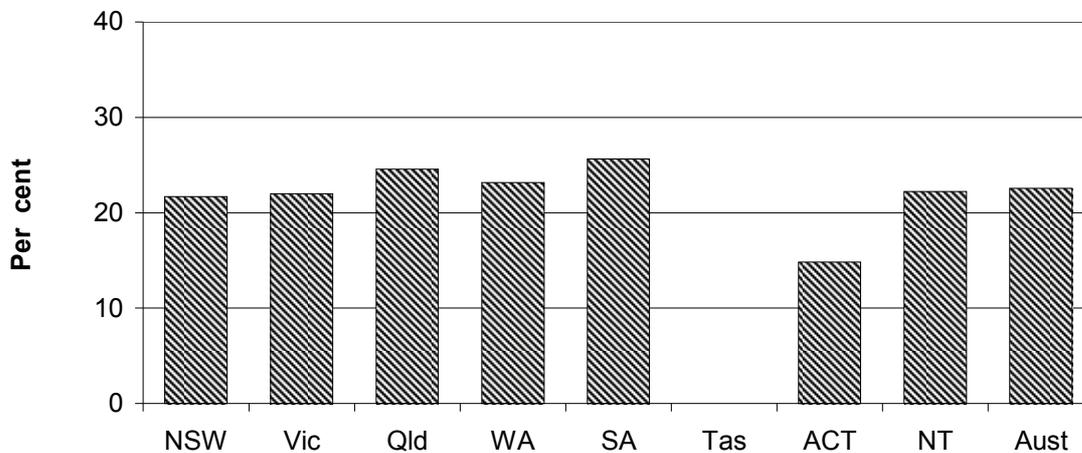


<sup>a</sup> Data for Tasmania are not available. <sup>b</sup> ACT data are preliminary. Care must be taken when interpreting percentages as these data include both ACT and non-ACT residents where the birth occurred in the ACT. In 2008, 15.7 per cent of women who gave birth in the ACT were not ACT residents. <sup>c</sup> Rate for Australia includes only jurisdictions for which data are available.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 10A.85.

Caesarean rates for selected primiparae in public hospitals are reported in figure 10.27. Caesarean rates for private hospitals are shown in table 10A.85 for comparison. They are higher than the rate for public hospitals in all jurisdictions for which data are available. Data for all jurisdictions for earlier years are included in tables 10A.86–93.

Figure 10.27 **Caesareans for selected primiparae, public hospitals, 2008<sup>a, b, c</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Data for Tasmania are not available. <sup>b</sup> ACT data are preliminary. Care must be taken when interpreting percentages as these data include both ACT and non-ACT residents where the birth occurred in the ACT. In 2008, 15.7 per cent of women who gave birth in the ACT were not ACT residents. <sup>c</sup> Rate for Australia includes only jurisdictions for which data are available.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 10A.85.

### *Vaginal birth following previous primary caesarean*

‘Vaginal birth following previous primary caesarean’ is an indicator of the appropriateness of maternity services in public hospitals (box 10.23).

#### **Box 10.23 Vaginal birth following previous primary caesarean**

‘Vaginal delivery following previous primary caesarean section’ is defined as the number of women delivering vaginally following a previous primary (first) caesarean section, as a proportion of the total number of women delivering who have had a previous primary caesarean section and no intervening pregnancies of longer than 20 weeks gestation (ACHS 2002).

Interpretation of this indicator is ambiguous. There is ongoing debate about the relative risk to both mother and baby of a repeat caesarean section compared with a vaginal birth following a previous primary caesarean. Low rates of vaginal birth following a previous primary caesarean may warrant investigation, or on the other hand, they can indicate appropriate clinical caution. When interpreting this indicator, emphasis needs to be given to the potential for improvement.

Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

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Data for ‘vaginal birth following a previous primary caesarean’ are sourced from the ACHS Comparative Report Service (Clinical Indicators) and collected for internal clinical review by individual hospitals. The ACHS data are predominantly used to demonstrate the potential for improvement across Australian hospitals if all hospitals could achieve the same outcomes as those of hospitals with the best outcomes for patients. Statewide conclusions cannot be drawn from the data because healthcare organisations contribute to the ACHS on a voluntary basis, so the data are not necessarily drawn from representative samples (box 10.7). Estimated rates should be viewed in the context of the statistical (standard) errors. High standard errors signal that data are potentially unreliable. The statistical terms used to describe this indicator are explained in box 10.9.

The mean rates of ‘vaginal birth following a primary caesarean’ in 2008 are shown in table 10.18 for jurisdictions with five or more hospitals reporting to the ACHS Comparative Report Service. The coverage of the ACHS data can differ across these states. Data for Tasmania, the ACT and the NT are not reported separately because fewer than five hospitals reported ‘vaginal birth following a primary caesarean’ in each of those jurisdictions.

Nationally, among all public hospitals participating in the ACHS Comparative Report Service in 2008, the mean rate of ‘vaginal birth following a previous primary caesarean’ was 17.0 per 100 deliveries (table 10.18). Given the uncertainty regarding whether high/low rates of vaginal birth following a previous primary caesarean are desirable, this Report does not include potential centile gains for this indicator.

**Table 10.18 Vaginal births following previous primary caesarean, ACHS reporting public hospitals, 2008<sup>a, b</sup>**

	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Results</i>
National rate	(%)	17.0
National performance at 80th centile (rate)	(%)	19.9
National performance at 20th centile (rate)	(%)	13.0
<b>NSW</b>		
Numerator (no. of VBACs)	no.	258
Denominator (no. of DACs)	no.	1 905
Rate	%	13.5
Standard error (±)		0.9
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	25
<b>Victoria</b>		
Numerator (no. of VBACs)	no.	453
Denominator (no. of DACs)	no.	2 627
Rate	%	17.2
Standard error (±)		0.8
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	22
<b>Queensland</b>		
Numerator (no. of VBACs)	no.	297
Denominator (no. of DACs)	no.	1 770
Rate	%	16.8
Standard error (±)		1.0
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	9
<b>WA</b>		
Numerator (no. of VBACs)	no.	234
Denominator (no. of DACs)	no.	1 232
Rate	%	19.0
Standard error (±)		1.2
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	9
<b>SA</b>		
Numerator (no. of VBACs)	no.	152
Denominator (no. of DACs)	no.	781
Rate	%	19.5
Standard error (±)		1.5
ACHS reporting hospitals	no.	9

VBAC = vaginal birth following primary caesarean. DAC = delivery following primary caesarean. <sup>a</sup> Defined as the number of patients delivering vaginally following a previous primary caesarean section divided by the total number of patients delivering who had a previous primary caesarean section and no intervening pregnancies of longer than 20 weeks gestation. <sup>b</sup> The ACHS data are not designed to measure the performance of states and territories, but are for internal clinical review by individual hospitals. In addition, health organisations contribute data voluntarily to the ACHS, so the samples are not necessarily representative of all hospitals in each jurisdiction. As a result, statewide comparisons and conclusions regarding the performance of individual states cannot be drawn.

Source: ACHS (unpublished); tables 10A.94, 10A.95, 10A.96, 10A.97 and 10A.98.

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## Effectiveness — quality

The performance indicator framework for maternity services identifies four subdimensions of quality for health services: safety; responsiveness; capability; and continuity. For maternity services in this Report, data are reported against the subdimension of safety only. Other subdimensions of quality have been identified by the Steering Committee for future development.

### *Safety — perineal status after vaginal birth*

‘Perineal status after vaginal birth’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to provide safe and high quality services (box 10.24).

#### **Box 10.24 Perineal status after vaginal birth**

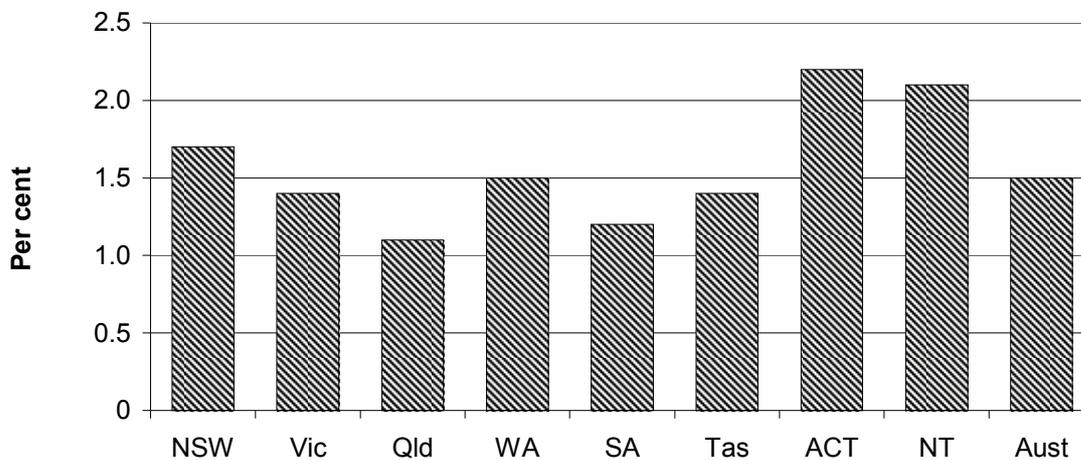
‘Perineal status after vaginal birth’ is the state of the perineum following a vaginal birth (HDSC 2008). A third or fourth degree laceration is a perineal laceration or rupture (or tear following episiotomy) extending to, or beyond, the anal sphincter (see section 10.8 for definitions) (NCCH 2008).

Perineal lacerations caused by childbirth are painful, take time to heal and can result in ongoing discomfort and debilitating conditions such as faecal incontinence. Maternity services staff aim to minimise lacerations, particularly more severe lacerations (third and fourth degree), through labour management practices. Severe lacerations (third and fourth degree laceration) of the perineum are not avoidable in all cases and so safe labour management is associated with a low (rather than zero) proportion of third or fourth degree lacerations.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

The proportion of mothers with third or fourth degree lacerations to their perineum following vaginal births is shown in figure 10.28. More information on ‘perineal status after vaginal birth’ (including the proportion of mothers with intact perineum following vaginal births) is contained in attachment table 10A.99.

Figure 10.28 **Perineal status — mothers with third or fourth degree lacerations after vaginal births, 2006<sup>a, b, c</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> For multiple births, the perineal status after birth of the first child was used. <sup>b</sup> Data include all women who gave birth vaginally, including births in public hospitals, private hospitals and outside of hospital, such as homebirths. <sup>c</sup> Care must be taken when interpreting percentages as these data include both ACT and non-ACT residents where the birth occurred in the ACT. In 2006, 16.3 per cent of women who gave birth in the ACT were not residents.

Source: Laws P. and Hilder L. (2008), *Australia's Mothers and Babies 2006*, Perinatal Statistics Series No. 22, Cat. No. PER 46; table 10A.99.

### *Responsiveness, capability, continuity*

The Steering Committee has identified the responsiveness of maternity services as an area for development in future Reports. While there is currently no indicator for the responsiveness of maternity services, the patient satisfaction surveys reported earlier in this chapter generally cover maternity patients. The Steering Committee has also identified the capability of maternity services and continuity of care as areas for development in future Reports.

### **Effectiveness — sustainability**

The Steering Committee has identified the sustainability of maternity services as an area for development in future Reports.

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## Efficiency

### *Recurrent cost per maternity separation*

‘Recurrent cost per maternity separation’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver cost effective services (box 10.25).

#### **Box 10.25 Recurrent cost per maternity separation**

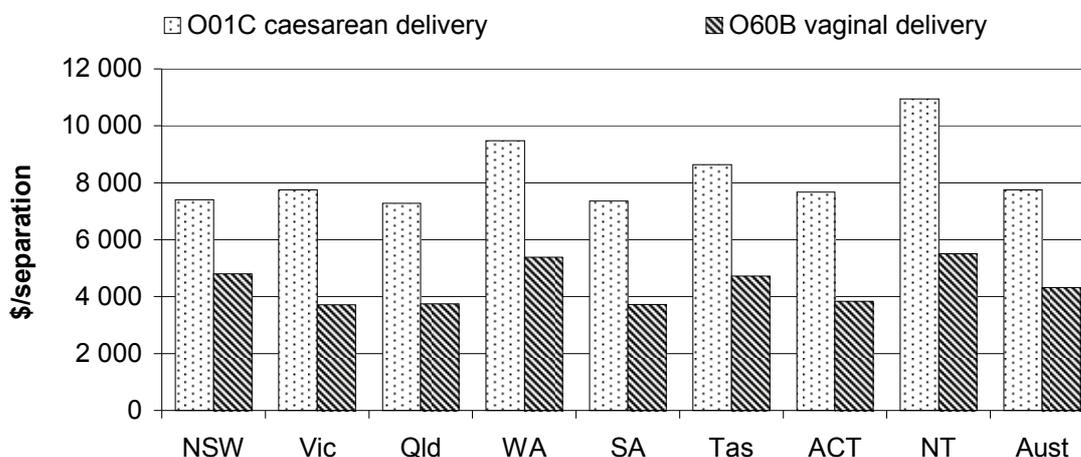
‘Recurrent cost per maternity separation’ is presented for the two AR-DRGs (version 5.1) that account for the largest number of maternity patient days: caesarean delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities; and vaginal delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities.

Lower ‘recurrent costs per maternity separation’ can reflect higher efficiency in providing maternity services to admitted patients. However, this is only likely to be the case where the low cost maternity services are provided at equal or superior effectiveness.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

Data are reported for the two most common maternity AR-DRGs: caesarean delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities; and vaginal delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities (figure 10.29). Data for a number of other maternity related AR-DRGs are shown in table 10A.100. Data are sourced from the NHCDC. The NHCDC is a voluntary annual collection, the purpose of which is to calculate DRG cost weights. The samples are not necessarily representative of the set of hospitals in each jurisdiction. An estimation process has been carried out to create representative national activity figures from the sample data.

**Figure 10.29 Estimated average cost per separation for selected maternity related AR-DRGs, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a, b</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Includes AR-DRG O01C caesarean delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities and AR-DRG O60B vaginal delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities.

<sup>b</sup> Average cost is affected by a number of factors including admission practices, sample size, remoteness and the types of hospital contributing to the collection. Direct comparisons between jurisdictions are difficult because there are differences in hospital costing systems.

Source: DoHA (2009), *National Hospital Cost Data Collection Cost Report, Round 12 (2007-08)*; table 10A.100.

### *Total cost per maternity separation*

‘Total cost per maternity separation’ (recurrent cost plus capital cost) is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver cost effective services (box 10.26).

#### **Box 10.26 Total cost per maternity separation**

‘Total cost per maternity separation’ as a measure of the efficiency of public hospital maternity services.

Total cost per maternity separation has been identified as a key area for development in future Reports.

### *Mother’s average length of stay*

‘Mother’s average length of stay’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver services efficiently (box 10.27).

### Box 10.27 Mother's average length of stay

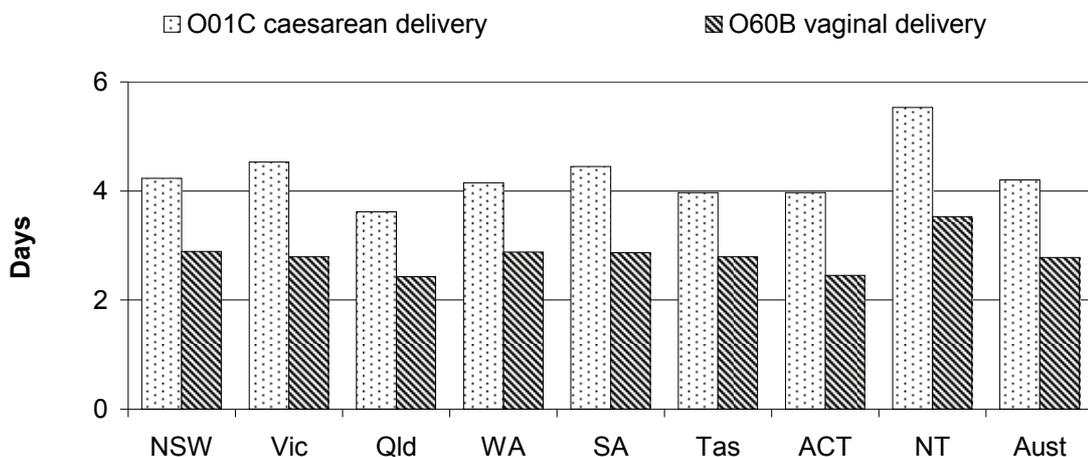
'Mother's average length of stay' is defined as the total number of patient days for the selected maternity AR-DRG (version 5.1), divided by the number of separations for that AR-DRG.

Shorter stays for mothers reduce hospital costs but whether they represent genuine efficiency improvements depends on a number of factors. Shorter stays can, for example, have an adverse effect on the health of some mothers and result in additional costs for in-home care. The indicator is not adjusted for multiple births born vaginally and without complications but requiring a longer stay to manage breastfeeding.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

Data are reported for the two most common maternity AR-DRGs: caesarean delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities; and vaginal delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities (figure 10.30).

Figure 10.30 **Average length of stay for selected maternity-related AR-DRGs, public hospitals, 2007-08<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Includes AR-DRG O01C caesarean delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities and AR-DRG O60B vaginal delivery without catastrophic or severe complications and comorbidities.

Source: DoHA (2009), *National Hospital Cost Data Collection Cost Report, Round 12 (2007-08)*; table 10A.100.

## Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact of services on the status of an individual or group (while outputs are the actual services delivered) (see chapter 1, section 1.5).

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## *Apgar score*

‘Apgar score at five minutes’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver maternity services that are safe and of high quality (box 10.28).

### **Box 10.28 Apgar score at five minutes**

The Apgar score is a numerical score that indicates a baby’s condition shortly after birth. Apgar scores are based on an assessment of the baby’s heart rate, breathing, colour, muscle tone and reflex irritability. Between 0 and 2 points are given for each of these five characteristics and the total score is between 0 and 10. The Apgar score is routinely assessed at one and five minutes after birth, and subsequently at five minute intervals if it is still low at five minutes (Day et al. 1999). The future health of babies with lower Apgar scores is often poorer than those with higher scores.

This indicator is defined as the number of live births with an Apgar score of 3 or less, at five minutes post-delivery, as a proportion of the total number of live births by specified birthweight categories.

Low Apgar scores (defined as less than 4) are strongly associated with babies’ birthweights being low. The management of labour in hospitals does not usually affect birthweights, but can affect the prevalence of low Apgar scores for babies with similar birthweights. Within birthweight categories therefore, Apgar scores can indicate relative performance.

Factors other than hospital maternity services can influence Apgar scores within birthweight categories — for example antenatal care, multiple births and socioeconomic factors.

Data reported for this indicator are not complete or directly comparable.

‘Low’ Apgar scores for babies by birthweight category are contained in table 10.19. The range of Apgar scores for 2004 to 2008 are reported in table 10A.101.

**Table 10.19 Live births with an Apgar score of 3 or lower, 5 minutes post-delivery, public hospitals, 2008**

<i>Birthweight (grams)</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>NT</i>
Less than 1500	no.	849	584	562	297	204	na	66	47
Low Apgar	%	20.1	15.8	16.0	8.8	15.7	–	15.2	21.3
1500-1999	no.	1 052	626	600	332	240	na	72	43
Low Apgar	%	1.1	0.7	1.5	0.9	0.8	–	np	2.3
2000-2499	no.	2 880	1 914	1 703	817	605	na	158	185
Low Apgar	%	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.3	–	–	–
2500 and over	no.	67 810	46 496	39 328	16 366	13 402	na	3 353	2 742
Low Apgar	%	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	–	0.4	0.2

<sup>a</sup> ACT data are preliminary. Care must be taken when interpreting percentages as these data include both ACT and non-ACT residents where the birth occurred in the ACT. In 2008, 15.7 per cent of women who gave birth in the ACT were not ACT residents. **na** Not available. **np** Not published. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 10A.101.

### *Fetal death rate*

‘Fetal death rate’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver maternity services that are safe and of high quality (box 10.29).

#### **Box 10.29 Fetal death rate**

Fetal death (stillbirth) is the birth of a child who did not at any time after delivery breathe or show any other evidence of life, such as a heartbeat. Fetal deaths by definition include only infants weighing at least 400 grams or of a gestational age of at least 20 weeks.

‘Fetal death rate’ is reported as an indicator because maternity services for admitted patients have some potential to reduce the likelihood of fetal deaths. However, this potential is limited and other factors (such as the health of mothers and the progress of pregnancy before hospital admission) are also important.

The ‘fetal death rate’ is calculated as the number of fetal deaths divided by the total number of births (live births and fetal deaths combined), by State or Territory of usual residence of the mother. The rate of fetal deaths is expressed per 1000 total births. This indicator is also reported by the Indigenous status of the mother.

(Continued on next page)

### Box 10.29 (Continued)

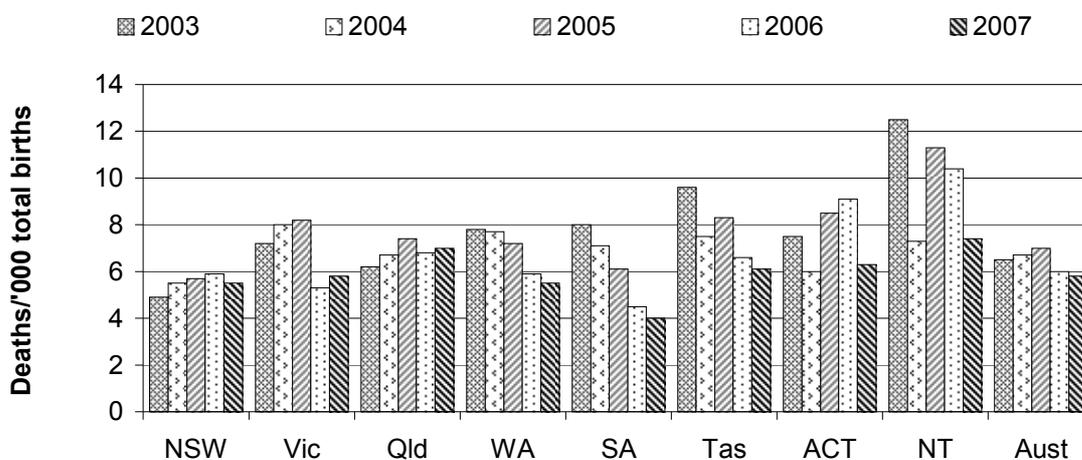
Low fetal death rates can indicate high quality maternity services. In jurisdictions where the number of fetal deaths is low, small annual fluctuations in the number affect the annual rate of fetal deaths.

Differences in the 'fetal death rate' between jurisdictions are likely to be due to factors outside the control of maternity services for admitted patients. To the extent that the health system influences fetal death rates, the health services that can have an influence include outpatient services, general practice services and maternity services.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

Fetal death rates are reported in figure 10.31. Nationally, fetal death rates remained reasonably stable over the period 2003–2007. National time series for fetal death rates for the period 1995 to 2007 are included in table 10A.104. Fetal deaths rates by the Indigenous status of the mother are shown in figure 10.34.

Figure 10.31 **Fetal death rate<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Annual rates fluctuate (in particular, for smaller jurisdictions) as a result of a low incidence of fetal deaths and small populations.

Source: ABS (unpublished) *Perinatal deaths, Australia*, Cat. no. 3304.0; table 10A.102.

### Neonatal death rate

'Neonatal death rate' is an indicator of governments' objective to deliver maternity services that are safe and of high quality (box 10.30).

### Box 10.30 Neonatal death rate

Neonatal death is the death of a live born infant within 28 days of birth (see section 10.8 for a definition of a live birth). As for fetal deaths, a range of factors contribute to neonatal deaths. However, the influence of maternity services for admitted patients is greater for neonatal deaths than for fetal deaths, through the management of labour and the care of sick and premature babies.

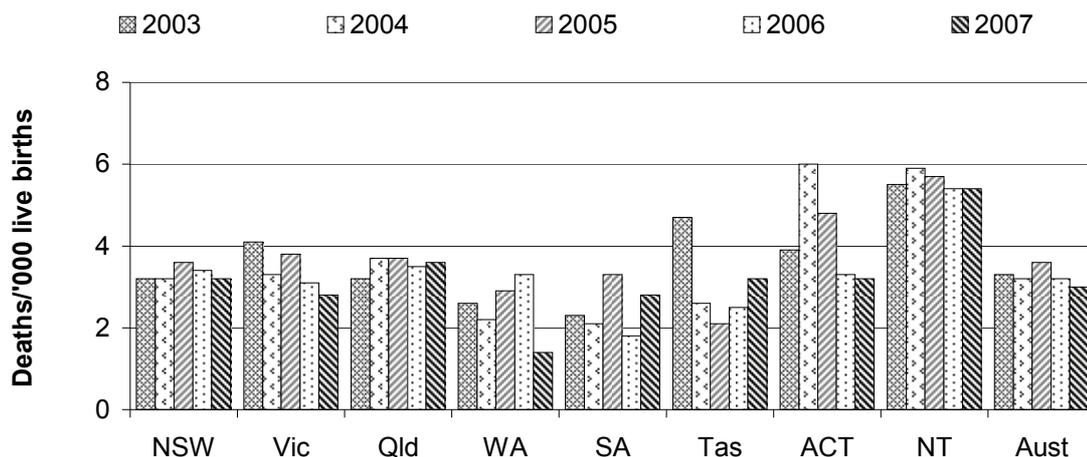
The 'neonatal death rate' is calculated as the number of neonatal deaths divided by the number of live births registered. The rate of neonatal deaths is expressed per 1000 live births, by state or territory of usual residence of the mother. This indicator is also reported by the Indigenous status of the mother.

Low 'neonatal death rates' can indicate high quality maternity services. The rate tends to be higher among premature babies, so a lower neonatal death rate can also indicate a lower percentage of pre-term births.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

Neonatal death rates are reported in figure 10.32. Nationally, neonatal death rates have been reasonably steady over the period 2003–2007. National time series for neonatal death rates for the period 1995 to 2007 are included in table 10A.104. Neonatal death rates by the Indigenous status of the mother are shown in figure 10.34.

Figure 10.32 Neonatal death rate<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Annual rates fluctuate (in particular, for smaller jurisdictions) as a result of a low incidence of neonatal deaths and small populations.

Source: ABS (unpublished) *Perinatal deaths, Australia*, Cat. no. 3304.0; table 10A.103.

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## Perinatal death rate

‘Perinatal death rate’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to deliver maternity services that are safe and of high quality (box 10.31).

### Box 10.31 Perinatal death rate

A perinatal death is a fetal or neonatal death (boxes 10.29 and 10.30).

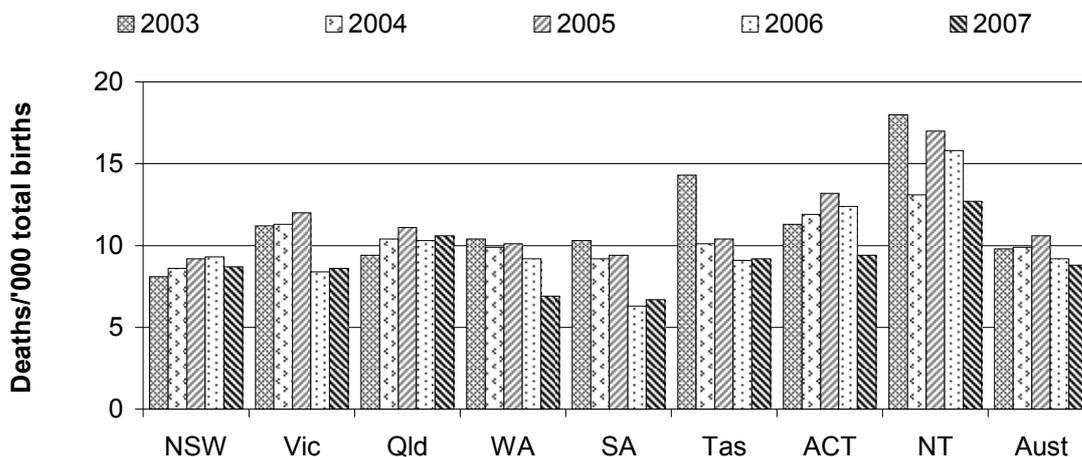
The ‘perinatal death rate’ is calculated as the number of perinatal deaths divided by the total number of births (live births registered and fetal deaths combined) in each jurisdiction. It is expressed per 1000 total births. This indicator is also reported by the Indigenous status of the mother.

The caveats that apply to fetal and neonatal death rates also apply to perinatal death rates.

Data reported for this indicator are comparable.

Perinatal death rates are shown in figure 10.33. Perinatal death rates by the Indigenous status of the mother are shown in figure 10.34. National time series for perinatal death rates for the period 1995 to 2007 are included in table 10A.104.

Figure 10.33 Perinatal death rate<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Annual rates fluctuate (in particular, for smaller jurisdictions) as a result of a low incidence of perinatal deaths.

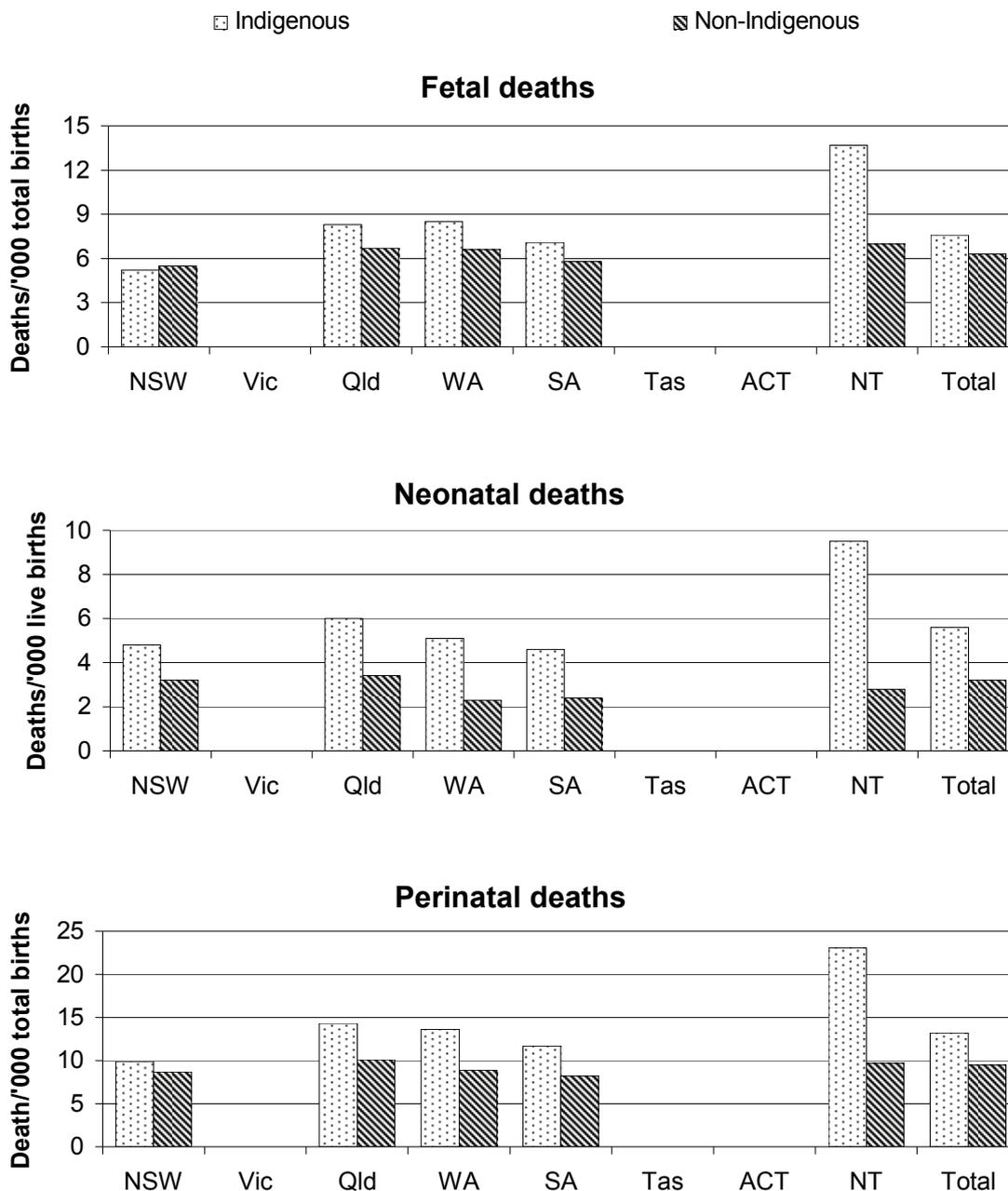
Source: ABS (unpublished) *Perinatal deaths, Australia*, Cat. no. 3304.0; table 10A.105.

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*Fetal, neonatal and perinatal deaths for Indigenous people*

Fetal, neonatal and perinatal deaths data by the Indigenous status of the mother are available for NSW, Queensland, WA, SA and the NT only. Data for other jurisdictions are not included due to small numbers or poor coverage rates (ABS 2004). In those jurisdictions for which data are available, the fetal, neonatal and perinatal death rates for Indigenous people are generally higher than those for non-Indigenous people (figure 10.34).

Figure 10.34 **Fetal, neonatal and perinatal deaths, by Indigenous status of mother 2003–2007<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The total relates to those jurisdictions for which data are published. Data are not available for other jurisdictions.

Source: ABS (unpublished) *Perinatal deaths, Australia*, Cat. no. 3304.0; table 10A.106.

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### *Gestation standardised perinatal mortality ratio*

The Steering Committee has identified Gestation standardised perinatal mortality ratio an indicator of the outcomes of maternity services (box 10.32).

#### **Box 10.32 Gestation standardised perinatal mortality ratio**

This measure of perinatal mortality (box 10.31) is standardised according to gestational age. It excludes infants less than 20 weeks gestation or where gestation is unknown, weighing less than 400 grams, terminations of pregnancy and deaths due to congenital malformations (DHS 2007). This indicator has been identified for development and reporting in the future. Data were not available for the 2010 Report.

## **10.7 Future directions in performance reporting**

Priorities for future reporting on public hospitals and maternity services include the following:

- Improving the comprehensiveness of reporting by filling in gaps in the performance indicator frameworks. Important gaps in reporting for public hospitals include indicators of equity of access to services for special needs groups (particularly Indigenous people), and indicators of continuity of care. Gaps in the maternity services framework include equity of access, effectiveness of access, three aspects of quality — responsiveness, capability and continuity — and the effectiveness subdimension of sustainability.
- Improving currently reported indicators for public hospitals and maternity services where data are not complete or not directly comparable. There is scope to improve reporting of the quality and access dimensions of the public hospitals framework, and the output indicators for maternity services.
- Improving the reporting of elective surgery waiting times by urgency category in order to achieve greater comparability across jurisdictions in assessing the extent to which patients are seen within a clinically desirable period.
- Improving the reporting of hospital accreditation in order to provide more meaningful comparative information about the capability of public hospitals across jurisdictions. The ACSQHC is currently undertaking a review of safety and quality accreditation standards in Australia with a view to recommending an alternative model for accreditation including a national set of health standards by which health services would be assessed. The outcomes of the review may inform options for future reporting in this area.

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## **COAG developments**

### *Report on Government Services alignment with National Agreement reporting*

It is anticipated that future editions of the Health chapters and preface will align with applicable National Agreement indicators, including the NIRA. Further alignment between the Report and National Agreement indicators, and other reporting changes, might result from future developments in National Agreement and National Partnership reporting.

### *Outcomes from review of Report on Government Services*

COAG agreed to Terms of Reference for a Heads of Treasuries/Senior Officials review of the Report in November 2008, to report to COAG by end-September 2009. The review examined the ongoing usefulness of the Report in the context of new national reporting under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations.

No significant changes from this review are reflected in the 2010 Report. Any COAG endorsed recommendations from the review are likely to be implemented for the 2011 Report.

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## 10.8 Definitions of key terms and indicators

<b>Accreditation</b>	Professional recognition awarded to hospitals and other healthcare facilities that meet defined industry standards. Public hospitals can seek accreditation through the ACHS Evaluation and Quality Improvement Program, the Australian Quality Council (now known as Business Excellence Australia), the Quality Improvement Council, the International Organisation for Standardization 9000 Quality Management System or other equivalent programs.
<b>Acute care</b>	Clinical services provided to admitted or non-admitted patients, including managing labour, curing illness or treating injury, performing surgery, relieving symptoms and/or reducing the severity of illness or injury, and performing diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. Most episodes involve a relatively short hospital stay.
<b>Admitted patient</b>	A patient who has undergone a formal admission process in a public hospital to begin an episode of care. Admitted patients can receive acute, sub-acute or non-acute care services.
<b>Admitted patient cost proportion</b>	The ratio of admitted patient costs to total hospital costs, also known as the inpatient fraction.
<b>Allied health (non-admitted)</b>	Occasions of service to non-admitted patients at units/clinics providing treatment/counselling to patients. These include units providing physiotherapy, speech therapy, family planning, dietary advice, optometry and occupational therapy.
<b>Apgar score</b>	Numerical score used to evaluate a baby's condition after birth. The definition of the reported indicator is the number of babies born with an Apgar score of 3 or lower at 5 minutes post delivery, as a proportion of the total number of babies born. Excludes fetal deaths in utero before commencement of labour.
<b>AR-DRG</b>	Australian Refined Diagnosis Related Group - a patient classification system that hospitals use to match their patient services (hospital procedures and diagnoses) with their resource needs. AR-DRG version 5.1 is based on the ICD-10-AM classification.
<b>Average length of stay</b>	The mean length of stay for all patient episodes, calculated by dividing total occupied bed days by total episodes of care.
<b>Caesarean section</b>	Operative birth through an abdominal incision.
<b>Casemix adjusted</b>	Adjustment of data on cases treated to account for the number and type of cases. Cases are sorted by AR-DRG into categories of patients with similar clinical conditions and requiring similar hospital services. Casemix adjustment is an important step to achieving comparable measures of efficiency across hospitals and jurisdictions.
<b>Casemix adjusted separations</b>	The number of separations adjusted to account for differences across hospitals in the complexity of episodes of care.
<b>Catastrophic</b>	An acute or prolonged illness usually considered to be life threatening or with the threat of serious residual disability. Treatment can be radical and is frequently costly.
<b>Community health services</b>	Health services for individuals and groups delivered in a community setting, rather than via hospitals or private facilities.

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<b>Cost of capital</b>	The return foregone on the next best investment, estimated at a rate of 8 per cent of the depreciated replacement value of buildings, equipment and land. Also called the 'opportunity cost' of capital.
<b>Cost per casemix adjusted separation</b>	Recurrent expenditure multiplied by the inpatient fraction and divided by the total number of casemix-adjusted separations plus estimated private patient medical costs.
<b>Cost per non-admitted occasion of service</b>	Recurrent expenditure divided by the inpatient fraction and divided by the total number of non-admitted occasions of service.
<b>Elective surgery waiting times</b>	The time elapsed for a patient on the elective surgery waiting list, from the date on which he or she was added to the waiting list for a procedure to admission or a designated census date.
<b>Emergency department waiting times to service delivery</b>	The time elapsed for each patient from presentation to the emergency department (that is, the time at which the patient is clerically registered or triaged, whichever occurs earlier) to the commencement of service by a treating medical officer or nurse.
<b>Emergency department waiting times to admission</b>	The time elapsed for each patient from presentation to the emergency department to admission to hospital.
<b>Episiotomy</b>	An obstetrics procedure. A surgical incision into the perineum and vagina to prevent traumatic tearing during delivery.
<b>Fetal death</b>	Delivery of a child who did not at any time after delivery breathe or show any other evidence of life, such as a heartbeat. Excludes infants that weigh less than 400 grams or that are of a gestational age of less than 20 weeks.
<b>Fetal death rate</b>	The number of fetal deaths divided by the total number of births (that is, by live births registered and fetal deaths combined).
<b>General practice</b>	The organisational structure with one or more GPs and other staff such as practice nurses. A general practice provides and supervises healthcare for a 'population' of patients and can include services for specific populations, such as women's health or Indigenous health.
<b>ICD-10-AM</b>	The Australian modification of the International Standard Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems. This is the current classification of diagnoses and procedures in Australia.
<b>Inpatient fraction</b>	The ratio of admitted patient costs to total hospital costs, also known as the admitted patient cost proportion.
<b>Labour cost per casemix-adjusted separation</b>	Salary and wages plus visiting medical officer payments, multiplied by the inpatient fraction, divided by the number of casemix-adjusted separations.
<b>Length of stay</b>	The period from admission to separation less any days spent away from the hospital (leave days).
<b>Live birth</b>	Birth of a child who, after delivery, breathes or shows any other evidence of life, such as a heartbeat. Includes all registered live births regardless of birthweight.
<b>Medicare</b>	Australian Government funding of private medical and optometrical services (under the Medicare Benefits Schedule). Sometimes defined to include other forms of Australian Government funding such as subsidisation of selected pharmaceuticals (under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) and public hospital funding

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	(under the Australian Health Care Agreements), which provides public hospital services free of charge to public patients.
<b>Mortality rate</b>	The number of deaths per 100 000 people.
<b>Neonatal death</b>	Death of a live born infant within 28 days of birth. Defined in Australia as the death of an infant that weighs at least 400 grams or that is of a gestational age of at least 20 weeks.
<b>Neonatal death rate</b>	Neonatal deaths divided by the number of live births registered.
<b>Nursing workforce</b>	Registered and enrolled nurses who are employed in nursing, on extended leave or looking for work in nursing.
<b>Medical practitioner workforce</b>	Registered medical practitioners who are employed as medical practitioners, on extended leave or looking for work as a medical practitioner.
<b>Non-acute episode of care</b>	Clinical services provided to admitted and non-admitted patients, including planned geriatric respite, palliative care, geriatric evaluation and management and services for nursing home type patients. Clinical services delivery by designated psychiatric or psychogeriatric units, designated rehabilitation units and mothercraft services are also considered non-acute.
<b>Non-admitted occasions of service</b>	Occasion of examination, consultation, treatment or other service provided to a non-admitted patient in a functional unit of a health service establishment. Services can include emergency department visits, outpatient services (such as pathology, radiology and imaging, and allied health services, including speech therapy and family planning) and other services to non-admitted patients. Hospital non-admitted occasions of service are not yet recorded consistently across states and territories, and relative differences in the complexity of services provided are not yet documented.
<b>Non-admitted patient</b>	A patient who has not undergone a formal admission process, but who may receive care through an emergency department, outpatient or other non-admitted service.
<b>Perinatal death</b>	Fetal death or neonatal death of an infant that weighs at least 400 grams or that is of a gestational age of at least 20 weeks.
<b>Perinatal death rate</b>	Perinatal deaths divided by the total number of births (that is, live births registered and fetal deaths combined).
<b>Perineal laceration (third or fourth degree)</b>	A 'third degree' laceration or rupture during birth (or a tear following episiotomy) involves the anal sphincter, rectovaginal septum and sphincter NOS. A 'fourth degree' laceration, rupture or tear also involves the anal mucosa and rectal mucosa (NCCH 2008).
<b>Perineal status</b>	The state of the perineum following a birth.
<b>Pre-anaesthetic consultation rate</b>	The number of procedures where there is documented evidence that the patient has seen an anaesthetist before entering the operating theatre suite, anaesthetic room, or procedure room as a percentage of the total number of procedures with an anaesthetist in attendance (ACHS 2004).
<b>Primary care</b>	Essential healthcare based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community.
<b>Primipara</b>	Pregnant woman who has had no previous pregnancy resulting in a live birth or a still birth.

<b>Public hospital</b>	A hospital that provides free treatment and accommodation to eligible admitted persons who elect to be treated as public patients. It also provides free services to eligible non-admitted patients and can provide (and charge for) treatment and accommodation services to private patients. Charges to non-admitted patients and admitted patients on discharge can be levied in accordance with the Australian Health Care Agreements (for example, aids and appliances).
<b>Puerperium</b>	The period or state of confinement after labour.
<b>Real expenditure</b>	Actual expenditure adjusted for changes in prices.
<b>Relative stay index</b>	The actual number of patient days for acute care separations in selected AR-DRGs divided by the expected number of patient days adjusted for casemix. Includes acute care separations only. Excludes: patients who died or were transferred within 2 days of admission, or separations with length of stay greater than 120 days, AR-DRGs which are for 'rehabilitation', AR-DRGs which are predominantly same day (such as R63Z chemotherapy and L61Z admit for renal dialysis), AR DRGs which have a length of stay component in the definition, and error AR-DRGs.
<b>Same day patients</b>	A patient whose admission date is the same as the separation date.
<b>Sentinel events</b>	Adverse events that cause serious harm to patients and that have the potential to undermine public confidence in the healthcare system.
<b>Separation</b>	A total hospital stay (from admission to discharge, transfer or death) or a portion of a hospital stay beginning or ending in a change in the type of care for an admitted patient (for example, from acute to rehabilitation). Includes admitted patients who receive same day procedures (for example, renal dialysis).
<b>Separation rate</b>	Hospital separations per 1000 people or 100 000 people.
<b>Selected primiparae</b>	Primiparae with no previous deliveries, aged 25–29 years, singleton, vertex presentation and gestation of 37–41 weeks (inclusive).
<b>Sub-acute and non-acute care</b>	Clinical services provided to patients suffering from chronic illnesses or recovering from such illnesses. Services include rehabilitation, planned geriatric care, palliative care, maintenance care, geriatric care evaluation and management, and services for nursing home type patients. Clinical services delivered by designated psychogeriatric units, designated rehabilitation units and mothercraft services are considered non-acute.
<b>Surgical site infection rate for selected surgical procedures</b>	<p>The number of surgical site infections for a selected procedure (hip and knee prosthesis, lower segment caesarean section or abdominal hysterectomy) performed during the surveillance period divided by the total number of the selected procedures performed during the surveillance period.</p> <p>Since 2003, the ACHS surgical site infection indicators have been collected in pairs, one for each of superficial and deep/organ space surgical site infections.</p> <p>An indirectly standardised rate was derived for each pair. The rate for each combined pair was estimated as the sum of the two rates (deep and superficial). The indirectly standardised rate for each Jurisdiction was calculated as:</p>

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Jurisdiction rate = (sum of observed infections in Jurisdiction /sum of expected infections for Jurisdiction)\*rate for indicator pair

Where

Rate of indicator pair = rate of superficial infection + rate of deep/organ infection.

**Triage category**

The urgency of the patient's need for medical and nursing care:

category 1 — resuscitation (immediate within seconds)

category 2 — emergency (within 10 minutes)

category 3 — urgent (within 30 minutes)

category 4 — semi-urgent (within 60 minutes)

category 5 — non-urgent (within 120 minutes).

**Unplanned hospital re-admission**

An unexpected hospital admission for treatment of: the same condition for which the patient was previously hospitalised; a condition related to one for which the patient was previously hospitalised; or a complication of the condition for which the patient was previously hospitalised.

**Unplanned hospital re-admission rate**

The number of unplanned re-admissions to the same hospital within 28 days of separation, during the time period under study, divided by the total number of separations (excluding deaths) for the same time period, including day stay patients.

**Urgency category for elective surgery**

Category 1 patients — admission is desirable within 30 days for a condition that has the potential to deteriorate quickly to the point that it can become an emergency.

Category 2 patients — admission is desirable within 90 days for a condition that is causing some pain, dysfunction or disability, but that is not likely to deteriorate quickly or become an emergency.

Category 3 patients — admission at some time in the future is acceptable for a condition causing minimal or no pain, dysfunction or disability, that is unlikely to deteriorate quickly and that does not have the potential to become an emergency.

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## 10.9 Attachment tables

Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an ‘10A’ suffix (for example, table 10A.3). Attachment tables are provided on the CD-ROM enclosed with the Report and on the Review website ([www.pc.gov.au/gsp](http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp)). Users without access to the CD-ROM or the website can contact the Secretariat to obtain the attachment tables (see contact details on the inside front cover of the Report).

<b>Table 10A.1</b>	Recurrent expenditure, public hospitals (including psychiatric hospitals), current prices, (\$ million)
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<b>Table 10A.3</b>	Recurrent expenditure per person, public hospitals (including psychiatric) (2007-08 dollars)
<b>Table 10A.4</b>	Public hospitals (including psychiatric hospitals) by hospital size, 2007-08
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- Table 10A.33** SA elective surgery waiting times, public hospitals, by specialty, 2007-08
- Table 10A.34** Tasmanian elective surgery waiting times, by clinical urgency category, public hospitals
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