

# Putting Patients First

Further action to tackle ramping and healthcare pressures

# Acknowledgment of Country

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional and Cultural Custodians of the lands on which we live and work to deliver health care to all Queenslanders. We recognise the continuation of First Nations peoples' cultures and connection to the lands, waters and communities across Queensland.



*Outback Queensland, Australia*

# Message from the Minister



Since becoming Queensland's Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services, I have made it my mission to travel across this state, visiting our hospitals and meeting our world-class health workers.

No matter where they are from, all of our health workers have the same thing in common: an absolute dedication to improving the health of their fellow Queenslanders.

The stories they share are frank, often eye opening and a reminder to us all of what their average day at work can look like. It's these meetings that inspire me to act not only for the important patients they treat, but for our health workers themselves, their families and loved ones.

Our health workers share a unified energy. They have a welcoming warmth coupled with a dedication to helping people clinically, and sometimes, personally.

The Palaszczuk Government is giving our health workers the resources they need to put patients first.

The 2023–24 Budget delivers record funding of \$24.153 billion for our health and hospital system, a 9.6% boost. This record Budget includes \$764 million in funding to specifically address ambulance ramping and healthcare pressures that contribute to emergency department wait times.

Our public health system, including emergency departments, is facing increased demand.

Health workers have told me they are seeing a significant increase in the number of people with complex chronic disease and mental health issues requiring specialist hospital-based care.

With an ageing population and increasingly complex and multiple chronic diseases, they are also the most likely to need admission to hospital for specialised treatment.

At a Commonwealth level, there has been a Medicare rebate freeze impacting the affordability of accessing local GPs.

And without care in the community, a person's condition may worsen until they are critical and arrive at the emergency department.

These cases are rightly prioritised, however this results in longer wait times for those with less urgent conditions.

This Budget funds a range of key initiatives under our *Putting Patients First* plan to take further action to tackle ramping and healthcare pressures to improve emergency department access and reduce wait times. The *Putting Patients First* plan delivers \$764 million worth of investment focused on:

1. Keeping Queenslanders out of hospital and providing alternatives to emergency departments
2. Supercharging virtual care
3. Strengthening our Queensland Ambulance Service
4. Investing in more frontline health workers
5. More beds for our growing population

The investments in this plan will improve the flow of patients through our hospitals and create additional bed capacity to deal with the rise in acute hospital presentations.

Our dedicated frontline clinicians are working hard to ease the pressures on our hospitals. This includes through the development of seven Satellite Hospitals that will open in 2023–24 and provide urgent care closer to home.

We are also partnering with Primary Health Networks and the Commonwealth Government to deliver Medicare Urgent Care Clinics across Queensland.

The Commonwealth Government's recent announcement of new incentives for GPs to bulk bill are also promising, but more action is needed now.

That's why we are investing in new and expanded initiatives and taking further action to tackle ramping and healthcare pressures that contribute to wait times in our emergency departments.

The Palaszczuk Government is backing our world-class health workers with record investment to ensure we can keep *Putting Patients First*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Fentiman".

**Shannon Fentiman**

Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services  
Minister for Women

# Why are we seeing ambulance ramping in Queensland?

The causes of ambulance ramping are complex and are being experienced right across Australia.

It is widely acknowledged that ambulance ramping is not solely an emergency department capacity issue, rather it is reflective of whole-of-hospital pressures that contribute to emergency department overcrowding and delays in offloading patients.

The current issues being experienced in the primary care sector, particularly the shortage of bulk-billing GPs, are also a major contributing factor placing extra pressures on our hospitals. As the number of patients with more serious conditions rises, so too does the need for admission to hospital beds for specialised treatment.

These pressures are exacerbated by a rise in the number of patients being admitted to hospital with influenza and COVID-19, as well as long-stay patients who reside in hospital beds for extended periods, awaiting appropriate aged care or disability support services in the community.

This means that there is no single ‘silver bullet’ solution. Instead, the response to ambulance ramping needs to be targeted across the entire health system, as well as focused on providing a greater level of care in the community.

## How does the *Putting Patients First* plan assist in addressing ambulance ramping?

The *Putting Patients First* plan makes significant targeted investments that will improve the flow of patients through our hospitals.

It focuses on the entire patient journey – from the moment that someone calls Triple Zero (000) until the day they can safely return home.

The *Putting Patients First* plan delivers more frontline staff and more hospital beds, as well as investments in innovative models of care to provide more timely and efficient care to Queenslanders.

These initiatives have been guided by expert advice with the aim of reducing patient wait times and curbing the rate of ambulance ramping.



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# Keeping Queenslanders out of hospital

and providing alternatives to emergency departments

The Queensland Government is investing **\$140.5 million** to expand healthcare delivery pathways to address demand pressures on emergency departments and enable more Queenslanders to access care closer to home.

## Expanding the Queensland Ambulance Service Clinical Hub

The QAS Clinical Hub diverts people who call Triple Zero (000) away from our emergency department by providing specialised multi-disciplinary support to patients.

The 2023–24 Queensland Budget will invest **\$14.5 million** to continue this vital, 24-hour service including an additional six mental health clinicians.

## Expanding the Mental Health Co-Responder model

The QAS Mental Health Co-Responder model is a proven pre-hospital partnership between QAS and our health services. This intervention pairs a paramedic with a specialist mental health clinician to support people experiencing mental health crises. After a community assessment and intervention, 80% of patients accessing this service avoided a visit to an emergency department.

The 2023–24 Budget will deliver **\$13.3 million** to expand the Mental Health Co-Responder model to 10 additional sites across nine Hospital and Health Services:

- Gold Coast
- Wide Bay
- Metro South
- Central Queensland
- Metro North
- Mackay.
- West Moreton
- Darling Downs
- Sunshine Coast



## Alternative pathways for older and vulnerable Queenslanders including those experiencing mental health crises

In 2023–24 there will be an investment of **\$9.9 million** for our busiest health services to partner paramedics with on-scene allied health professionals to undertake comprehensive response and intervention assessment in patients' homes. This investment includes:

- \$1.2 million for allied health clinicians working with dedicated paramedics responding to frail people who fall at home, avoiding the need to be transported to hospital.
- \$4.2 million to expand clinical assessment and treatment models for elderly patients in their homes or residential facilities, avoiding unnecessary ambulance transfers and hospital emergency department visits.
- \$4.5 million to identify and implement avoidance strategies for the 0.1% of vulnerable Queenslanders who contribute to 5% of all emergency department visits.

## Chronic Disease Rapid Access Clinics

The 2023–24 Budget will invest **\$11.6 million** to embed and scale up the capacity of the Rapid Access Clinics model that provides streamlined care for people living with chronic conditions.

## Operationalising our Satellite Hospitals

The 2023–24 Budget will deliver an **\$89.2 million** investment to open and operate our seven nation-leading Satellite Hospitals.

Every Satellite Hospital will have a Minor Injury and Illness Clinic, allowing people to access urgent care closer to home.

## Urgent Care Clinics

The 2023–24 Budget includes **\$2 million** to operate the new Logan Urgent and Specialist Care Centre. The construction of the centre is Commonwealth funded.

In addition, we are partnering with the Commonwealth Government and the Primary Health Networks to deliver Medicare Urgent Care Clinics that will launch in areas of need across the state. They will offer treatment for non-life-threatening conditions, improving access to treatment for people in their communities and easing pressure on busy emergency departments.

There will be 11 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics in Queensland:

- Bundaberg
- Redcliffe
- Ipswich
- Logan
- Rockhampton
- Townsville
- Cairns
- Toowoomba.
- Southern Brisbane
- Northern Brisbane
- Gold Coast

**6**

additional mental health clinicians at the QAS Clinical Hub

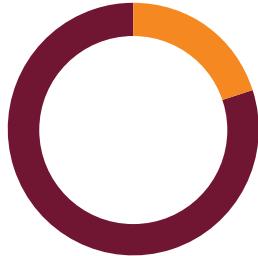
**10**

additional sites to adopt the Mental Health Co-Responder Model



# Supercharging virtual care

The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed a revolution in the use of technology to deliver healthcare at home. There will be an investment of **\$54.2 million** to further revolutionise healthcare across the state, transforming how Queenslanders connect with healthcare services.



Of those Queenslanders who accessed virtual care

**20%** need face-to-face hospital care

**80%** can be managed virtually

The 2023–24 Budget will deliver the new **Queensland Virtual Hospital** for increased convenience, personalised care, and improved health outcomes across the state. This will be supported by additional investments to help modernise health services for all Queenslanders. This includes:

- \$27 million to develop the statewide Queensland Virtual Hospital, including \$17 million for staffing and hours of operation for the new virtual hospital, as modelled on the successful **Virtual Emergency Department** piloted in Metro North. The expanded model will provide statewide virtual acute care. A \$10 million investment will create a single Digital Front Door and integrated electronic record for virtual healthcare.
- \$7.2 million commitment to support rural and remote health centres with specialist in-reach through the Retrieval Services Queensland Telehealth service.
- \$20 million incentive funding for Hospital and Health Services to expand and embed telehealth and virtual care outpatient clinics.

By investing in expanded virtual care, Queenslanders will have a better connected health system with the **right care, delivered at the right place, at the right time.**

# 3

## Strengthening our Queensland Ambulance Service

Queensland Ambulance Service is the busiest ambulance service in Australia receiving almost 1.2 million calls annually.

The Queensland Government is investing **\$148.9 million** to increase the capacity of the Queensland Ambulance Service to meet future demand across the state. The service remains free for all Queenslanders.

Our ambulance service will be expanded with investment across ambulance stations, new ambulance vehicles and more paramedics. This includes:

- \$48.3 million to deliver six new ambulance stations at Ripley, Caloundra South, Burdell, Lawnton, Morayfield and North Rockhampton
- \$28.3 million to deliver 144 new and replacement ambulance vehicles
- \$72.3 million to employ 200 more paramedics.

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6

new ambulance stations

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144

new and replacement ambulance vehicles

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200

more paramedics



# Investing in more frontline health workers

# 4

Our dedicated health workers are **Queensland's greatest asset**, however global competition for health workers is at an all-time high.

That's why the 2023–24 Budget is investing **\$40.6 million** to attract and employ more specialised staff to support our frontline clinical services. This includes the following initiatives:

## **Incentive funding to attract clinicians from interstate and overseas**

The 2023–24 Budget will deliver a **\$10.6 million** investment in Queensland's Workforce Attraction Incentive Transfer Scheme.

The Incentive Transfer Scheme will provide interstate and international medical practitioners with a payment of up to \$70,000 to move to rural and remote Queensland. It will also provide a \$20,000 payment to healthcare workers choosing Queensland as their new workplace.



## **Employing more specialised emergency department clinicians – getting people into emergency departments sooner and ambulances back on the road faster**

A total of **\$12 million** will be invested to employ more Transfer Initiative Nurses and Patient Flow Commanders across the emergency departments most at need.

This will enable and support ambulance crews to be released back out into the community faster through:

- faster access to emergency department-led care for patients who arrive by ambulance
- improved support and care for all patients waiting for treatment
- better coordination of patient flow through our busy hospitals.



## Deploying more specialist mental health clinicians in emergency departments

A **\$13 million** investment will deliver specialist mental health clinicians into under-pressure emergency departments, improving patient access and care through:

- faster assessment from their point of arrival into the **emergency department, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**
- improved access to **expert mental health clinical care** in emergency department settings.

**\$3 mil** workforce engagement incentives

**\$2 mil** specialised physician support

## New workforce models

The 2023–24 Budget will invest **\$5 million** to deliver new models of care including:

- **Workforce Engagement Incentives:** \$3 million to incentivise the engagement of health professional student workforce cohorts. This initiative aims to supplement and maximise the utilisation of clinical workforces in Hospital and Health Services. Examples include medical student scribes and undergraduate students in nursing.
- **Specialised Physician Support:** \$2 million to support a trial of specialist physicians to proactively commence inpatient treatment in parallel with emergency department teams. This proactive approach aims to speed up care for complex admitted patients, ensuring they receive the necessary attention without delay.

In addition to delivering new staff, this year's budget embeds services that provide Queenslanders with alternative care pathways, rather than having to attend our busy emergency departments.

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## More beds for our growing population



### Improved access to beds

The 2023–24 Budget will provide **\$90.2 million** to improve access to beds in our hospitals.

A total of \$32.3 million will be invested to help improve access and efficiency through enhanced transit and discharge lounges. Opening hours will be extended and short-stay inpatient units will be established at multiple locations. This investment includes:

- \$2.5 million to continue new transit and discharge lounges at Hervey Bay, Bundaberg and Logan Hospitals
- \$15 million to extend the operating hours of existing transit and discharge lounges including on weekends
- \$9 million for expanded short-stay admission units at Maryborough and Prince Charles Hospitals
- \$2 million for a Medical Admission and Procedure Unit at Ipswich Hospital
- \$3.8 million for a 16-bed Interim Assessment Unit at Princess Alexandra Hospital.

The 2023–24 Budget invests \$16 million into **Allied Health Service Enhancement** to allow timely patient discharge at 11 sites experiencing emergency department pressures. This will include extended hours and increased allied health services on weekends. The targeted regions are:

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| • West Moreton | • Wide Bay     |
| • Metro North  | • Metro South. |
| • Gold Coast   |                |

Our increased discharge efficiency will increase bed capacity.

A total of \$41.9 million will be invested to support the staffing of 60 additional emergency department treatment spaces at:

- |          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| • Robina | • Toowoomba  |
| • Cairns | • Redcliffe. |



## More beds

The 2023–24 Budget will invest **\$289.7 million** in delivering services at upgraded and expanded hospitals.

Major upgrades and expansions to hospitals across the state will deliver more beds where we need them in rapidly growing communities. Deploying new innovations with standard designs and modular off-site construction will reduce the time to build these upgrades and expansions.

Accelerated infrastructure development plan hospital expansions include:

- **70 additional beds** at the **Gold Coast University Hospital**
- **28 additional beds** at the **Queen Elizabeth II Hospital**
- **28 additional beds** at the **Redland Hospital**
- **45 additional beds** at the **Cairns Hospital**.

The Caboolture Hospital redevelopment includes **110 additional beds** in 2023 including a new emergency department, new intensive care unit, an additional operating theatre and a further 20 additional beds in 2024.

The Logan Hospital expansion includes **206 additional beds** to manage birthing services with the building of new birthing suites.

The expanded hospital will provide more capacity for internal medical patients who need care for illnesses in respiratory, neurological and other medical conditions and includes an intensive care unit.







Queensland  
Government

**Queensland Health:** Putting Patients First