



Putting Patients First 2024-25

Further action to tackle ramping
and healthcare pressures



In 2024-25, we are investing **\$1.14 billion** to further enhance the *Putting Patients First* plan.

This builds on the **\$764 million** investment made in 2023-24 to improve the flow of patients through our hospitals and create additional bed capacity.

We are continuing to deliver on this commitment to Queensland patients in 2024-25 by investing:



\$102.6M

for keeping Queenslanders out of hospital



\$172.9M

for building a modern workforce



\$266.4M

for new ways of delivering care



\$190.8M

for more beds for a growing population



\$407.3M

for providing care closer to home

This represents the total investment for *Putting Patients First* in 2024-25. It includes funding for new initiatives, funding previously announced for 2024-25 such as investment in hospital expansion projects and funding that has been directed to where it is needed most.

Queensland Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waters and seas across Queensland. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, while recognising the role of current and future leaders in shaping a better health system.

We value the culture, traditions and contributions that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made to our communities and recognise that our collective responsibility as government, communities and individuals are to ensure equity and equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland in every aspect of our society.

Queensland Health acknowledges the First Nations peoples in Queensland are both Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and supports the cultural knowledge, determination and commitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in caring for their health and wellbeing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this publication may contain images of deceased peoples.

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Message from the Minister



Every time I step inside a Queensland Health facility, I'm reminded of the impact they have on our lives. These places aren't buildings; they are lifelines. From busy emergency departments where lives are saved, to outpatient clinics providing ongoing support, to satellite hospitals delivering care closer to home – each one plays a crucial role.

But the beating heart of these places is not beds, or operating theatres or the technology we sometimes take for granted. Rather, it's the dedicated healthcare workers who bring them to life. Our doctors, nurses, and support staff are the heroes whose skill and dedication turn investment in health care into reality.

The record health investment in the 2024-25 Miles Budget is a recognition of the patients our dedicated staff serve – you, the people of Queensland. Our operating budget of \$26.7 billion includes **\$1.14 billion** for our updated and expanded *Putting Patients First* strategy.

At its heart, this strategy is about helping those working in the public health system to manage increasing demand. The key pillars of *Putting Patients First 2024-25*, include:

- keeping Queenslanders out of hospital – **\$102.6 million**
- building a modern workforce – **\$172.9 million**
- new ways of delivering care – **\$266.4 million**
- more beds for a growing population – **\$190.8 million**
- more care closer to home – **\$407.3 million.**

Like every state in Australia, our emergency departments are seeing patient numbers grow faster than the population. I consistently hear that it's a huge challenge for Queenslanders to see a GP. Our population is ageing and chronic illness is growing. Too many hospital beds are occupied by people who don't need acute health care but can't find a bed in an aged care facility or suitable disability accommodation.

Despite those challenges, staff in our emergency departments have treated more people within clinically recommended times than ever before. Our ambulance service remains the best and fastest in the country, despite being the busiest and the only mainland service that is free. But only strong investment and a focus on key initiatives will keep it that way.

The *Putting Patients First 2024-25* plan directs investment through new and expanded initiatives to keep people out of hospital, treat them at or closer to home when they need care, continue strengthening our workforce, increase beds and get people the right treatment as soon as possible. Key initiatives include:

- **\$129.5 million** for Queensland Ambulance Service for 188 frontline staff and 80 other specialised positions
- a further **\$92.8 million** to operate our satellite hospitals, which are keeping Queenslanders out of emergency departments
- a further **\$15.1 million** boost to rural and remote birthing
- a further **\$156.1 million** to strengthen mental health, alcohol and other drugs capacity
- **\$186.5 million** to move long-stay patients out of hospitals and into more appropriate care settings
- **\$27.8 million** for a patient flow 5-point plan, to improve rapid access inside emergency departments.

Record budgets, record patients – it's easy to get lost in the numbers involved in health sometimes.

Early in my time as Health Minister, I visited the spinal unit at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. There I met a patient, Michael, who told me: "Buildings don't make you better – people do". I've never forgotten that.

This investment is a reminder that we will always invest in our staff and what they do for Queensland: put patients first.



Shannon Fentiman

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

Pressures impacting our healthcare system

Queensland's health system continues to show significant resilience in the face of increasing demand from multiple pressure points. We have more patients with complex disease profiles, rapid population growth, a global workforce shortage and not enough aged care and disability beds and supports in the community.

Every part of the public health system is under considerable strain, from calls to Triple Zero and emergency department presentations, to demand for elective surgery. But thanks to our hardworking staff and support from the communities we serve, we have been able to meet many of our performance targets.

More patients are being seen sooner and closer to home than in previous periods. Satellite hospitals are keeping Queenslanders out of emergency departments and providing other services like oral health and outpatient appointments outside our bigger hospitals.

In the March quarter of this year, we experienced a record number of emergency department presentations with more than 600,000 patients requiring assistance, a significant increase of almost 33,000 more patients compared to the same period last year. This included more critically unwell patients (category 1 and 2); however, every category 1 patient was still seen within the recommended timeframe.

Long waits for elective surgery decreased by 38% in the March quarter, with almost 80% of patients receiving their surgery within the recommended timeframe.

The Queensland Ambulance Service — the only free ambulance service in mainland Australia — saw a 7.9% increase in Triple Zero calls and more than 16,500 critical Code 1

incidents, and still managed to offload more patients to emergency departments than previous periods.

We lead the nation in elective surgery performance, treating the most patients within clinically recommended timeframes than any other state or territory. Our patients also have the lowest average length of stay in hospital compared to other jurisdictions.

The data shows we invested in the right areas under *Putting Patients First 2023-24* including hospital alternatives, new infrastructure and building our workforce.

Putting Patients First 2024-25 is a **\$1.14 billion** plan to build on investments made in 2023-24. The plan provides investment for keeping Queenslanders out of hospital, building a modern workforce, new ways of delivering care, more beds for our growing population, care that is closer to home and mental health.

While much has been done to reduce pressure on the healthcare system, we know there is more work ahead. *Putting Patients First 2024-25* provides the additional funding and time we need to continue our efforts and create a sustainable system for the future.



Keeping Queenslanders out of hospital

The Queensland Government is investing **\$102.6 million** in 2024-25 to keep Queenslanders healthy and out of hospital through free vaccinations, addressing health-related cost of living pressures and increasing access to specialist services.

Free vaccinations to keep Queenslanders healthy and out of hospital

An investment of **\$72.9 million** in 2024-25 will enable Queenslanders to access a range of free vaccinations.

This includes:

- Free influenza vaccinations for all Queensland residents aged more than 6 months, at a cost of **\$40 million**
- **\$26 million** allocated to the Queensland Meningococcal B Vaccination Program. The vaccine will continue to remain free for eligible infants, children and adolescents, making it the largest State Government-funded vaccination program in Queensland's history
- Our smallest Queenslanders will also benefit from the Queensland Paediatric Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Prevention Program worth **\$6.9 million**.

Expanded pharmacy trial to ease pressure on emergency departments

To provide Queenslanders with more access to cost-effective primary health care closer to home, funding of **\$8 million** will see the Queensland Community Pharmacy Scope of Practice trial expanded across the state. Community pharmacists will work to their full scope, including managing common acute conditions and supporting chronic disease management.

Better Care Together to advance mental health, alcohol and other drugs issues

The 2024-25 State Budget allocates a further **\$18 million** for responses to mental health crisis and suicidality.

Initiatives include:

- new Crisis Support Spaces as an adjunct to the emergency department, providing peer and clinical support to people experiencing mental health crisis in a therapeutic setting
- a new Crisis Stabilisation Unit at The Prince Charles Hospital providing short-term assessment and stabilisation.

An amount of **\$3.7 million** has been allocated for the promotion of mental health and wellbeing, social initiatives to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and alcohol and other drugs responses beyond the health system.

Other initiatives underway to support better mental health in Queensland include a whole-of-government Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy being led by Health and Wellbeing Queensland and the Queensland Mental Health Commission, and a further whole-of-government Trauma Strategy being developed by the Queensland Mental Health Commission.



**FREE
VACCINATIONS**
for Queenslanders

Expanding the
**Queensland
Community
Pharmacy Scope
of Practice trial**



\$18M
for responses to
**MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS
AND SUICIDALITY**

Building a modern workforce

Under *Putting Patients First 2024-25*, the Queensland Government will invest **\$172.9 million** in workforce initiatives including strengthening our Queensland Ambulance Service.

In Queensland, we are fortunate to have a large, diverse, skilled and dedicated workforce to deliver an extensive range of services for the community. We recognise the strengths and commitment of our health workforce, but we also know our staff are under increasing pressure.

Across the world the health industry is facing a skills shortage, and in Queensland the population continues to grow and get older, meaning that the workforce needs to grow to meet the demand on health services. The next decade will see significant growth and innovation in health care as rapidly evolving technological advancements impact the way care is delivered.

For our workforce, this means there will be more opportunities in the form of stimulating new roles, access to cutting-edge technologies, and the chance to work at the forefront of life-changing health care. Our plan to meet this challenge is outlined in the *Health Workforce Strategy for Queensland to 2032*.

Better Care Together to advance outcomes and care in mental health, alcohol and other drugs

The 2024-25 State Budget allocates a further **\$2.4 million** to improve the capability and sustainability of the workforce in services for mental health, alcohol and other drugs. This includes an additional **\$800,000** for allied mental health graduate and traineeship positions.

Boosting the workforce of the only free ambulance service in mainland Australia

In 2024-25 there is an investment of **\$129.5 million** to enable the recruitment of 188 new paramedics and an additional 80 specialised positions to improve patient outcomes and better manage demand. This is in response to the growing and changing demand for ambulance services.

Continuing investment in people

This year's continuing investment of **\$41 million** will build on the impact of staff employed in vital roles and funded under initiatives in the 2023-24 budget including:

- **\$12 million** to employ more specialised emergency department clinicians. These roles have resulted in an increase of more than 4,200 patients off-stretcher within 30 minutes and an increase in emergency department seen in time performance of 2 percentage points, with 6.8% more patients seen in time when compared to the same time last year.
 - ▶ Specialised emergency department nursing positions including transfer initiative nurses – 13 nurses are in place
 - ▶ Emergency department flow commanders – 65 flow commanders are working in 17 emergency departments
- **\$16 million** to support 77 allied health practitioners employed across 11 Hospital and Health Services to increase discharge efficiency and free up beds at sites experiencing emergency department pressures. This is through extended hours and increased allied health services on weekends. These roles have resulted in a 9% increase in discharges occurring on weekends when compared to the same time last year.
- **\$13 million** for mental health clinicians – 42 professionals are working in 14 emergency departments. Further, the additional mental health clinicians in emergency departments have resulted in a 3.7 percentage point improvement in seen in time for mental health patients, with the median waiting time for this cohort of patients improving by 2 minutes when compared to the same time last year.

New ways of delivering care

In 2024-25, we are investing **\$266.4 million** to support improvement in patient flow, planned care, emergency department access and addressing long-stay patients.

Five-point plan for patient flow and enhancement

Initiatives listed under our current **\$27.8 million** 5-point plan for patient flow will continue to be supported in 2024-25 with:

- **\$3.8 million** for nursing care in emergency departments
- **\$5.3 million** for senior doctors in emergency departments
- **\$1.2 million** for patient care facilitators
- **\$2.4 million** for rapid access services
- **\$4 million** for a surgical rapid assessment unit
- **\$8.9 million** to extend hours of medical imaging.
- **\$2.2 million** will be allocated in 2024-25 to support appropriate transfer of care initiatives and optimise capacity. This includes early clinical reviews, supporting timely patient transitions to reduce emergency department crowding and hospital stays with a goal of supporting patients to return home safely and quickly.

Queensland Virtual Hospital

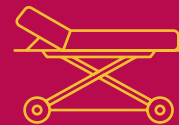
We continue to embed learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing investment in virtual care and telehealth with **\$27 million** to be invested in 2024-25. Over the past year we have been developing a digital platform for the Queensland Virtual Hospital's Virtual Emergency Care Service (VECS).

This service will be available statewide and provide access to virtual unplanned and emergency care, offering an alternative to visiting an emergency department.

The Queensland Telestroke Service (QTS) will be incorporated into the services offered by the Queensland Virtual Hospital in 2024-25. Drawing from the experiences of telestroke services implemented across Australia, significant planning has been conducted over the past year to develop digital solutions aimed at delivering a networked, highly specialised, virtually enabled acute stroke care. The QTS is designed to offer 24/7 specialist assessment and support, benefitting thousands of Queenslanders who present to regional, rural and remote hospitals with symptoms of an acute stroke.



\$27M
VIRTUAL CARE
INVESTMENT



PATIENT
FLOW
ENHANCEMENT
for Queenslanders

Action to connect long-stay patients with the right care

In 2024-25, **\$186.5 million** will be invested to assist long-stay patients to reach their next stage of care or to return home sooner. This includes expanding the Long-Stay Rapid Response program to provide more patients with access to interim accommodation and care, temporary residential aged care bed co-contributions and additional nursing support. In addition, 289 beds will be available to transition long-stay patients to a more appropriate setting.

The funding will also go towards supporting our healthcare partners, including partnerships with National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services, working more closely with the private sector to increase access to nursing home beds in local communities, and supporting nursing homes to care for clients with complex needs. To further support aged care, we'll expand our aged care assessment teams to reduce the waiting time for an assessment.

Hospital in the Home will provide more patients with post-discharge care, getting them out of hospital sooner.

Transit lounge expansions

In 2024-25 we are investing **\$17.5 million** in our transit and discharge lounges, which are established in 19 hospitals.

There has been a 22% increase in the number of patients discharged via a transit lounge compared to the same time last year.

Better Care Together to advance care in mental health, alcohol and other drugs

The 2024-25 State Budget allocates additional funding to build on gains from previous investments in mental health, alcohol and other drugs with new investments such as:

- **\$3.1 million** to deliver improved mental health, alcohol and other drugs services with First Nations peoples
- **\$1.8 million** to strengthen the quality of mental health, alcohol and other drugs services to reduce harm and improve outcomes
- **\$2.8 million** to improve our capability in digital mental health, alcohol and other drugs services and digitally enabled treatment, care and support.



\$186.5M TO ASSIST LONG-STAY PATIENTS
with access to interim accommodation and care or to return home sooner



More beds for a growing population

Queensland Health's ambitious hospital expansion program will continue to build better hospital facilities and open more beds with a **\$190.8 million** investment in 2024-25.

Investment includes:

- **\$11.8 million** for a 24-bed modular unit for the acute medical ward at Hervey Bay Hospital
- **\$6.9 million** for 37 new beds including 6 intensive care unit (ICU) beds for the stage 1 redevelopment of the Redland Hospital
- **\$3.5 million** to support the refurbishment and expansion of high-dependency renal services at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, bringing the total investment to \$5.4 million
- a further **\$18 million** for 20 additional spaces in the Robina Hospital Emergency Department, bringing total investment to \$33.7 million
- **\$7.4 million** for an additional 43 staff at the Queensland Spinal Injury Service to improve the patient experience and rehabilitation outcomes for patients
- a further **\$66.7 million** for 206 new beds for the Logan Hospital bringing the total investment to \$157.2 million
- a further **\$38.2 million** for 130 new beds for the Caboolture Hospital bringing the total investment to \$153.2 million
- **\$9.5 million** in 2024-25 to open an initial 20 beds and provide a more contemporary environment for mental health consumers, carers and staff at the Gold Coast Secure Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit, bringing the total investment to \$10.25 million
- **\$3.7 million** to open an additional 4 beds at the newly redeveloped Sarina Hospital.

More beds and services for alcohol and other drugs under *Better Care Together*

In 2024-25 a **\$25.1 million** investment will establish new and expand existing bed-based mental health, alcohol and other drugs services for adults.

This includes new residential alcohol and other drugs treatment services for adults in Ipswich and Bundaberg. Ipswich will receive 10 withdrawal management beds and 36 rehabilitation treatment beds. Bundaberg will receive 8 withdrawal management beds and 20 rehabilitation treatment beds.

A new specialist alcohol and other drugs service in Cairns will also be established for young people, with a particular focus on delivering culturally safe services for the region's young First Nations peoples. The funding will deliver a 10-bed residential rehabilitation program in a new purpose-built centre and a suite of non-residential programs.

Other initiatives funded under this investment include:

- new perinatal mental health beds to provide specialist inpatient mental health care for new mothers during the perinatal period, initially commencing with an additional 2 beds at Catherine's House
- additional frontline workers to support improved patient flow at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Psychiatric Emergency Centre
- additional frontline workers to support the redevelopment of the adult acute mental health inpatient service in the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service
- an increase in acute mental health bed capacity for Ipswich and for the Gold Coast's Hospital in the Home program.



\$190.8 MILLION

to open more beds at expanded and upgraded hospitals



More care closer to home

More services such as maternity, chronic disease care and planned or ongoing care will be available closer to home thanks to a **\$407.3 million** investment in 2024-25.

Satellite hospitals for urgency without the emergency

Six satellite hospitals are now open in Queensland with the seventh, Bribie Island, set to open in mid-2024. The satellite hospitals program will receive a further **\$92.8 million** in 2024-25, bringing the total investment to **\$182 million**.

Since the opening of the satellite hospitals to March 2024, approximately 55,000 people have presented to a Minor Injury and Illness Clinic within a satellite hospital, reducing the impact of category 4 and 5 patients presenting to nearby emergency departments by around 12%.

In addition to providing urgent care, satellite hospitals also provide Queenslanders with more medical services closer to home including renal dialysis, chemotherapy, outpatient clinics and oral health.

Boosting urgent care

Queensland will provide a further **\$10 million** in 2024-25 for the Logan Urgent and Specialist Care Centre, bringing the total investment to **\$12 million**. The centre is expected to open in 2024 and will include a Minor Injury and Illness Clinic and a dedicated women's health service, addressing high demand for these services on Brisbane's southside.

Urgent Care Clinics (UCCs) are also improving access to care and easing pressure on our emergency departments. Delivered in partnership with the Commonwealth Government and Primary Health Networks, 12 UCCs are now open in Queensland.

Over the next 2 years, Commonwealth Government funding for Primary Health Networks will:

- establish 4 new Medicare UCCs in Redbank, Southport, Inala and Hervey Bay
- extend funding for existing UCCs in Townsville and Toowoomba to 30 June 2026
- support Rockhampton UCC with workforce funding
- transition Morayfield Minor Accident and Illness Centre to an UCC.

Sustainable and safe birthing services

We want to keep as many mothers and their babies close to family and community as possible and provide appropriate and accessible care for women and girls, which is why we are investing in a range of initiatives.

- An investment of **\$9.5 million** to expand the Cairns Hospital's existing birth suite and maternity assessment area to provide additional space and capacity for round-the-clock assessment and management of birthing women.
- The state's first publicly funded homebirth service on the Sunshine Coast will receive funding of **\$800,000**.
- A further **\$15.1 million** in 2024-25 for rural and remote birthing services, bringing the total investment to \$25.6 million.
- Funding of **\$10.6 million** for 4 nurse led walk-in clinics for women to support improved access to care including after hours.
- **\$5 million** to design and open integrated women's health hubs in two community-based locations, including a First Nations designed and led service in North Queensland.



\$182M

total investment in
Satellite hospitals

Support for managing chronic disease

We also want to help Queenslanders living with or at risk of chronic disease or complex conditions to access treatment and support when and where they need it.

- **\$800,000** initially to open an additional 8 renal dialysis chairs for Queenslanders with kidney disease living on the Capricorn Coast, which equates to an additional 4,000 dialysis treatment sessions.
- **\$900,000** to support the expansion of the Rockhampton Cardiac Service so it is ready to provide care in 2025-26. The 4-year expansion of the service will see an initial 480 procedures in 2025-26, increasing to 1,700 once the service is at full capacity.
- **\$4.7 million** to open transplant assessment clinics in Townsville in mid-2025, laying the foundation for the expansion of the North Queensland Kidney Transplant Service.

More planned care to impact patient wait lists

A further investment in planned care in 2024-25 will assist in addressing waiting lists across the state for elective surgery, gastrointestinal endoscopy and specialist outpatients.

This includes **\$98.6 million** to increase public hospital capacity to further reduce long waits for outpatients, elective surgery and gastroenterology services. This is on top of an investment of **\$50 million** in the Surgery Connect program, which helps Hospital and Health Services provide timely treatment for their patients by engaging with the private sector and other providers.

Significant improvements were achieved in planned care in 2023-24 with record numbers of patients treated.

Increasing capacity in regional facilities

For those in regional, rural and remote areas, surgery and recovery can mean being away from home for long periods of time. That's why increasing capacity in our regional facilities is key to ensuring every Queenslanders can access the right care, at the right time, closer to home.

An investment of **\$4.3 million** will see one new hybrid operating theatre open in Townsville in late 2024. The new theatre will be able to service an additional 40 cases each month and can support vascular, cardiothoracic and trauma surgeries, while also offering medical imaging capability.

The Toowoomba Day Surgery Unit will receive a further **\$5 million** in funding for 2 operating theatres for same-day procedures.



Better Care Together to strengthen mental health, alcohol and other drug services

The 2024-25 State Budget will invest an additional **\$99.2 million** to expand treatment, care and support for people experiencing mental illness, problematic alcohol and other drugs use and mental health crisis including specialist support for:

- children, adolescents and young people
- new parents (perinatal and infant mental health services)
- consumers requiring treatment for eating disorders.

Funding will also bolster statewide specialised services and enhance and expand treatment and care for people with mental illness interacting with the justice system.

Other new or expanded mental health initiatives include:

- a progressive rollout of dedicated intellectual and developmental disability mental health teams across Hospital and Health Services to improve the mental health response for people living with intellectual or developmental disability
- expansion of Together in Mind, a free 6-week program to support the mental health of mums in Queensland
- boosting funding for non-government organisations to provide additional psychosocial support
- mental health disaster funding following tropical cyclones, rain and bushfire events in Queensland to support recovery.

In addition, the mental health and wellbeing-related initiatives listed in the *Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2032* will also receive funding such as:

- targeted support for LGBTIQ+ people with physical and mental ill health and associated reduced psychosocial functioning
- therapeutic counselling and support for women's mental health and wellbeing through virtual and telephone services in partnership with community-based providers
- social workers providing mental health support for vulnerable women, including women experiencing gender-based violence (delivered in conjunction with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General).



\$99.2M

to expand treatment, care and support for people experiencing mental illness, problematic alcohol and other drugs use and mental health crisis





Queensland
Government

Queensland Health: Putting Patients First