



Endoscopy Action Plan

Advancing health:
Improving the patient journey





A message from the **Minister**

Australia has one of the highest incident rates of bowel cancer in the world, with around one in 23 people likely to be diagnosed during their lifetime. Timely access to a colonoscopy is vital to preventing or detecting bowel cancer, which is a leading cause of death in Queensland.

As the national bowel cancer screening program is expanded we are seeing an increase in demand for colonoscopies, which already make up approximately half of all gastrointestinal endoscopies performed publicly in Queensland.

The *Endoscopy Action Plan – Advancing Health: Improving the Patient Journey*, will ensure people receive timely and equitable access to gastrointestinal endoscopy services across Queensland.

This plan builds on recent efforts in the Queensland public health system to reduce waiting times for elective surgery and also specialist outpatient appointments, under *The Specialist Outpatient Strategy: Improving the Patient Journey by 2020*.

The next step in the patient journey is to improve access for people waiting for a diagnostic procedure or intervention, which is often required after being seen by a specialist in an outpatient clinic to determine if further treatment is required.

Targeted investment of \$160 million over four years will be made to reduce the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended and improve access across the state.

This investment will deliver 50,000 gastrointestinal endoscopies.

This plan will contribute to the fight against bowel cancer and can help save the lives of Queenslanders. On the delivery of the plan, progress will continue to be made to sustain access and improve services.

I am pleased to present this plan as part of reforms under *My health, Queensland's future: Advancing health 2026* which represents a partnership between clinicians, health services and the Department working together to deliver effective best practice care for the people of Queensland.

The Hon. Cameron Dick MP
Minister for Health and
Minister for Ambulance Services

Improving access and equity

The purpose of this plan is to improve the health of Queenslanders by delivering sustainable, equitable access to high quality gastrointestinal endoscopy services.

Demand for gastrointestinal endoscopy is increasing as a result of the expanding national bowel cancer screening program and a growing, ageing population. More services are required to meet the demand and ensure people are seen within clinically recommended time frames.

Waiting times and access to local services varies across the state, with those in regional and rural Queensland more likely to need to travel to access services.

Accordingly, this plan will invest \$160 million over four years to implement five key actions that will deliver more services and improve access across the Queensland health system.

As a result of implementing these initiatives the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended for an endoscopy will be significantly reduced and there will be improved access to services across the state.

The statewide Gastroenterology Network will take a lead role in implementing this plan, working closely with Hospital and Health Services and the Department of Health.



Action 1: Expand services

Front line services will be expanded to deliver 50,000 more procedures over four years. This will significantly reduce the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended.

The investment in additional services will require an expanded clinical workforce. This will include gastroenterologists, surgeons, anaesthetists, nurse endoscopists, rural generalists, perioperative support staff as well as administrative staff. Guidance will be provided by the clinical network regarding the training requirements and nature of the workforce expansion.



Action 2: Increase access

Training to equip rural generalists will be expanded to increase access to local services in regional and remote areas. This will help reduce the proportion of Queenslanders travelling significant distances to access gastrointestinal endoscopy services.

The training programs will be hosted by tertiary centres to support rural sites based on need.

Telehealth technology will also be used to increase the support provided by tertiary centres to rural and regional endoscopy services, allowing for further service expansion.



 **Action 3:**
Promote equity

We will invest in clinical leaders to coordinate the consistent application of clinical guidelines across the state. This will help ensure there is equitable access to services, regardless of where a person receives their treatment.

This means that when a person is referred from a General Practitioner there will be a consistent process to determine how soon a person needs to see a specialist or undergo an endoscopy. Where follow up procedures are required, there will also be a consistent approach to when and how these are scheduled.

 **Action 4:**
Focus on outcomes

Information systems will be enhanced to deliver better quality information to ensure good, high quality, healthcare is provided at the right time.

The enhanced systems will help ensure waiting lists are well managed across the state and better outcomes are being achieved for Queenslanders.

At the busiest clinics we will invest in endoscopy coordinators. These roles will focus on facilitating better service coordination, ensuring wait lists are efficiently managed and outcomes are captured to facilitate service improvements.

 **Action 5:**
Improve the system

Beyond improving the timeliness and equity of access to endoscopy services for patients, we will innovate in key areas of the patient journey to ensure the long term sustainability of services.

The Statewide Gastroenterology Network, in partnership with Primary Care and Hospital and Health Services, will embed system reforms to deliver significant benefits to patients requiring endoscopies and the hospital staff who manage, schedule or deliver endoscopy services.

“

This initiative will make a real difference to Queenslanders in the metropolitan as well as the rural regions. We are moving towards one of the world's best integrated models of care that has emphasis on strong value for patients.

”

Professor Gerald Holtmann
Director of Gastroenterology
Princess Alexandra Hospital

“

Our local endoscopy service has been a great benefit to patients. Previously many patients would require an 800km round trip to access endoscopic procedures, whereas now they can have these procedures locally.

”

Dr Tom Gleeson
Rural Generalist
St George Hospital

“

A welcome and innovative strategy that addresses increasing demand, equity of access, utilisation of staff and services for the benefit of the health of Queenslanders.

”

Dr Tony Rahman
Chair of the Statewide Gastroenterology Network
and Director of Gastroenterology
The Prince Charles Hospital