



SA HEALTH **WINTER DEMAND AND RESILIENCE PLAN 2023**



Government
of South Australia

SA Health

Our public hospitals experience surges in demand year-round, but demand is changing and the pressure on our hospitals continues to increase, particularly during winter.

Already this year we have seen a resurgence of influenza. As more people become unwell with respiratory illnesses, this increases pressure on our hospitals. Future surges in COVID-19 and Long COVID-19 add to the challenges of winter.

To provide additional support for the upcoming winter period, SA Health has developed the Winter Demand and Resilience Plan 2023.

Central to this plan is our commitment to provide the right care, in the right place, at the right time, whilst protecting our health system and healthcare workers as demand increases.

Every employee in our health system including ambulance officers, nurses, doctors, allied health staff, administration and ancillary staff works extremely hard, particularly at times of higher demand like winter. We thank all staff for their continued dedication to providing the best possible care for South Australians.

Key priorities

1. Enable evidence-based navigation and coordination of our health system with insights and clinical decision support.
2. Protect our community by promoting self-care and prevention measures for COVID-19 and influenza.
3. Ensure people receive access to the right care, in the right place, at the right time by maximising use of virtual care, alternative care pathways and primary care.
4. Improve ambulance response times and reduce emergency department (ED) overcrowding to minimise delays and optimise timely access to care.
5. Improve bed occupancy and facilitate safe and efficient discharge from hospital to the right place for the appropriate level of care, earlier in the patient's care journey.
6. Attract, retain, grow, and support our workforce to maintain and deliver high quality services to all South Australians.

Improving navigation and coordination

A focus on oversight and coordination will provide the practical assistance to navigate the many pathways within the public health system.

SA Health will deliver this priority by:

- > Launching the Health System Response Centre (HSRC), a pilot for the State Health Control Centre.
- > Ensuring local metropolitan operation centres are active 24 hours, seven days a week.
- > Continuing the roll out of Sunrise Electronic Medical Record (EMR) in Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network and progressing to other regions.
- > Establishing streamlined pathways for inter-facility transfers, supported by the HSRC.

Self-care and prevention

It is important to provide people with the opportunity to manage their own care, supported by trusted information and access to healthcare support.

SA Health will deliver this priority by:

- > Investing in a winter demand campaign to inform the community about where to access health care and to reduce demand on EDs and Triple Zero.
- > Delivering the Commonwealth-funded and State-funded Influenza Programs to provide free influenza vaccinations for people at greater risk.
- > Maximising lower acuity COVID-19 capacity and capability at our non-metropolitan hospitals.
- > Continuing to deliver timely medications and interventions for those with COVID-19 at the Sefton Park Hospital Avoidance and Supported Discharge Service (HASDS).



Virtual care and alternative care pathways and access to primary care

Alternate models to ED and hospital care such as virtual, primary or in home and community care models enable the best use of hospital resources for patients that need acute care.

SA Health will deliver this priority by:

- > Maximising SA Virtual Care Service, Child and Adolescent Virtual Care Service (CAVUCS) and My Home Hospital pathways.
- > Increasing use of alternative care pathways by expanding referral criteria and opening hours of Priority Care Centres.
- > Enabling paramedics to assess and treat lower acuity conditions in the community who do not require transport to hospital, with continued access to virtual and telehealth support as required.
- > Commencing a local pilot with healthdirect based on a New South Wales model that connects patients with a locum GP afterhours, with links back to the patient's own local GP.



Timely access to care

A focus on timely ambulance response and access to emergency care is critical, particularly as winter demand increases pressure on our public hospitals.

SA Health will deliver this priority by:

- > Implementing a fully staffed dedicated ambulance triage space in the Lyell McEwin Hospital ED.
- > Increasing assessment capacity in Flinders Medical Centre ED, with an additional four spaces for rapid assessment of walk-in and ambulance arrivals.
- > Increasing SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) staff at EDs to manage release of ambulances to the community.
- > Implementing a dedicated nurse role in ED waiting rooms to commence interventions early and improve communication between patients, families, and staff.
- > Reviewing the processing of patients through our EDs to increase efficiency, reduce delays and eliminate bottlenecks that frustrate clinicians.
- > Opening a new contemporary, purpose-built ED at Mount Barker District Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in June 2023.



Hospital bed capacity

A focused, collaborative effort to improve efficiency and reduce bed occupancy is important to ensure available bed capacity for surges in demand.

SA Health will deliver this priority by:

- > Partnering with the aged care sector to increase available capacity in the Transitional Care Program (TCP) and exploring alternative models of care in peri-urban areas.
- > Accessing additional bed capacity in private hospitals and working with our partners to establish direct admission pathways for suitable patients who call triple zero.
- > Increasing discharges earlier in the day, including use of transit wards, and weekly review of complex discharge barriers to enable escalation.
- > Investing in discharge supports for NDIS participants and continuing support through successful programs like Regency Green and Transition2Home.
- > Accelerating transfer of regional patients when specialist services are no longer required in metropolitan public hospitals.
- > Engaging closely with the Commonwealth and private providers who interface with public hospitals to improve patient flow, including discharge arrangements.



Our workforce

The health and wellbeing of our workforce is crucial and strategies for recruitment and retention are important in managing surges in demand.

Recognising the workforce as our most important asset, SA Health continues to explore opportunities to better protect healthcare workers, implement fatigue management processes, and support the mental health and wellbeing of staff.

Local strategies include staff wellbeing and peer support programs, and access to professional development opportunities.

We are also continuing our international recruitment campaign and developing a strategic workforce plan to ensure future SA Health workforce models are sustainable both now and into the future.

For more information

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