

## **Review of quality of care for public patients and value for money in major non-metropolitan hospitals throughout New South Wales**

### **Preamble**

The major non-metropolitan hospitals provide the backbone of public health care services throughout rural New South Wales. The quality of care and the consistency of the quality of care in these hospitals are of major interest to the communities that they serve and influence the quality of care in district and community hospitals. The period under review has been characterised by increasing demands for services, increasing expenditure on health services and organisational change. During this period major developments have occurred in the development of clinical indicators, the implementation of quality improvement programs, operation of service agreements and performance agreements and it is now appropriate to review whether this increased expenditure has resulted in improved quality of care and value for money.

The scope of the review has been confined to the major non-metropolitan hospitals as these represent a significant portion of total public health care services and are an exemplar for district and community hospitals. Hospitals operated by Area Health Services through Performance Agreements and one hospital operated by the private sector providing services through a contractual Service Agreement would be covered by the review. Specifically, the hospitals under review would include:

Albury Base Hospital;  
Coffs Harbour District Hospital;  
Dubbo Base Hospital;  
Lismore Base Hospital;  
Manning Base Hospital;  
Orange Base Hospital;  
Port Macquarie Base Hospital;  
Tamworth Base Hospital; and  
Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.

Quality of care indicators would include:

- o timeliness of treatment eg waiting times for emergency and elective surgery;
- o clinical care outcome measures eg re-admission rates, hospital acquired infection rates;
- o measures of the appropriateness of clinical care eg Caesareans as % of total confinements;
- o the appropriateness of the mix and level of clinical staff eg Registered Nurses / Enrolled Nurses / Assistants in Nursing workhours per patient day; and
- o the appropriateness of the Committees and Management structures and qualifications to assure the quality of care.

Value for money indicators would include indicators such as:

- o weighted average cost per separation for acute episodes of care;
- o average cost per outpatient service;
- o average cost per sub and non-acute care program; and
- o average cost per community based care program.

While some of this information is available in the NSW Health Services Comparison Databook, there are gaps in the data and little analysis of the data over time has been made publicly available to enable the Parliament and public to assess whether the quality of care has improved.