National elective surgery and emergency department targets

On 2 August 2011 all states and territories agreed to a National Health Reform (NHR) package by signing the National Health Reform Agreement, the National Health Care Agreement and National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services.

The National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services includes Australian Government funding for states and territories to meet performance targets related to elective surgery and emergency department waiting times.

**Elective Surgery and Emergency Department Targets**

The National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services (NPA) includes a National Elective Surgery Target (NEST) and a National Emergency Access Target (NEAT). The NPA details reward funding available over the term of the agreement to states and territories for meeting these performance targets.

**How were the performance targets determined?**

COAG established a national Expert Panel to provide advice on the emergency department and elective surgery targets. The Expert Panel comprised six leading clinicians from across Australia and consulted with consumers, clinicians and other key stakeholders in all states and territories on the suitability of the targets.

The Expert Panel made 15 recommendations to COAG in June 2011 in relation to elective surgery and emergency departments. These recommendations were based on improving patient safety and quality of care, and improving access to care. Work is occurring nationally to address these.

**What is the National Emergency Access Target?**

The National Emergency Access Target is for 90% of patients to be seen, treated or admitted within four hours of arriving at an emergency department by 2015. The target recognises that some patients will appropriately stay longer than four hours in Emergency Departments to meet their clinical needs.

South Australia has aligned state Emergency Department targets to the national 90% target. However we will retain our incremental approach to achieving this target, which means we will aim to meet the 90% target by 2013 ahead of the national deadline of 2015.
What is the National Elective Surgery Target?

The National Elective Surgery Target is for 100% of patients to be treated within clinically recommended times across all urgency categories.

The Expert Panel viewed the 100 per cent target as critical to provide patients with a degree of certainty and safety. This is to be achieved through two strategies:

1. Improvement in the number of people seen within the clinically recommended waiting times

2. Reduction in the number of patients who are overdue for their surgery.