

MEDIA RELEASE

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CANCER PATIENTS WELCOME HOSPITAL WAITING TIMES COMPARISON

Cancer Voices Australia, leading cancer consumer group, welcomes the NHPA's detailed report on waiting times for cancer surgery, released today. This information is extremely valuable for cancer patients, their medical advisers and service planners.

"Waiting for surgery after a cancer diagnosis can be a harrowing time. Every extra day of waiting for something to be done about a malignant tumour inside you is an extra day of worry for people with cancer. And we know that outcomes, both psychologically and medically, are better if surgery is done within the 30 day period," said Sally Crossing, Spokesperson for Cancer Voices.

"Most cancer patients who need surgery can rest easy that they will receive it within 30 days. However, about 9% do not, and this a real worry for our otherwise excellent record" she said.

The NHPA report looks at three major cancers – breast, bowel and lung cancers. It identifies which hospitals are not treating their patients with these cancers within the 30 day period, and a few which don't even treat within 45 days. See www.myhospitals.gov.au for full results.

This first hospital-by-hospital comparison of cancer surgery waiting times allows our public hospitals, which perform 49% of cancer surgeries, to see how they measure up and if they should improve their service.

"Cancer Voices asks the states to use this information to identify any non-performing hospitals and help them come back to acceptable waiting times. We suggest cancer patients check the website to see if the hospital they are considering is delivering surgeries in good time.

Australia, unlike western countries such as the UK and Canada, does not yet benchmark optimum waiting times for cancer surgery. Yet, timely cancer surgery adds to a better chance of survival, which is what interests us! Cancer Voices would like to see this addressed, and soon" she said.

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Cancer Voices Australia is the independent, volunteer voice of people affected by cancer, working to improve the cancer experience for Australians, their families and friends. We are active in the areas around diagnosis, information, treatment, research, support, care, survivorship and policy.

To achieve this we work with decision-makers, ensuring the patient perspective is heard.
Cancer Voices has led the cancer consumer movement in Australia since 2000.

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