

Monday, 30 August 2021

NON-URGENT ELECTIVE SURGERY REDUCED AT SHELLHARBOUR HOSPITAL

Non-urgent elective surgery will be temporarily postponed at Shellharbour Hospital from Wednesday, 1 September 2021 in response to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

This measure was previously implemented in March 2020 following a decision by National Cabinet, and will ensure the resources and capacity required for the COVID-19 response are maintained during the current outbreak.

All emergency surgery and urgent elective surgery will continue unaffected. There is currently sufficient ICU capacity for all patients who require intensive care, with more than 500 beds available throughout the NSW system.

As part of its comprehensive planning for its pandemic response, NSW Health has the capacity to quadruple its current ICU capacity if required. There would also be ventilators available for each of these ICU beds.

From 1 September, Category C and non-urgent Category B elective surgery at Shellharbour Hospital will be postponed. All urgent elective surgery (Cat A and B) will continue to be performed during this challenging period.

The change to elective surgery at Shellharbour Hospital is in addition to the decision to temporarily postpone some non-urgent elective surgery at Wollongong Hospital from Monday, 23 August 2021, as follows:

- Category C elective surgery and endoscopy procedures have been suspended at Wollongong (Public) Hospital.
- Category A and urgent Category B will continue at Wollongong Hospital. Surgeons continue to review their patients and they will determine prioritisation of surgery as appropriate.

At this stage, surgery at Shoalhaven (Public) Hospital will continue as normal.

Those waiting for non-urgent elective surgery who are impacted by the changes will be contacted and encouraged to contact their referring doctor should their condition deteriorate, so they can be re-prioritised to a more urgent category if required.

Postponing non-urgent surgery will support the state's healthcare workers as they manage the demands of the COVID-19 response, providing increased capacity to support health services for the people of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven region.

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Chief Executive, Margot Mains said postponing non-urgent surgery is a necessary step in our COVID-19 response to ensure we can prioritise our staff and resources to areas in the Local Health District where they are most needed.

“Ensuring we have adequate system capacity; that we keep our staff, patients and members of the public safe; and that there is hospital bed availability should the need arise, are all key factors in the delivery of healthcare services during this time,” she said.

NSW Health has a very integrated health system and local health districts and hospitals work together on a daily basis to ensure the optimal delivery of healthcare services. All local health districts have workforce surge plans ready to respond to the pandemic, in the event that cases of community transmission are identified locally.

The NSW Government has committed more than \$4 billion to the NSW health system to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.