



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

# REFERRALS TO PUBLIC OUTPATIENT SURGICAL CLINICS

December 2017



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# Overview

## **Referrals waiting to be seen for a first appointment**

As at the end of December 2017, there were 79,517 referrals waiting to be seen at surgical outpatient clinics for a first appointment.

As at the end of December 2017, the median waiting time for referrals waiting to be seen for a first appointment was 8.78 months. This is an increase of 1.28 months (or 17.1%) compared to the end of December 2016 (7.50 months).

## **Referrals that have had a first attended appointment**

For the month of December 2017, there were 7,778 referrals that have had a first surgical outpatient attended appointment at metropolitan tertiary hospitals. This is a decrease of 756 (or 8.9%) compared to the month of December 2016 (8,534).

For the month of December 2017, the median waiting time for patients who have had their first attended appointment was 0.69 months. This is an increase of 0.2 months (or 40.0%) compared to the month of December 2016 (0.49 months)<sup>1</sup>.

Since the beginning of 2012, the proportion of attended appointments recorded as being placed on an elective surgery waiting list was approximately 7.0%.

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<sup>1</sup> Median waiting times of referrals for patients waiting to be seen and those that are yet to be seen are not directly comparable. Referrals deemed to be urgent will be seen prior to those deemed semi-urgent or non-urgent. Therefore, the wait times reported for patients that have been seen during the month are expected to be lower compared to those yet to be seen for a first appointment.

# Abbreviations

FH	Fremantle Hospital
FSH	Fiona Stanley Hospital
GP	General Practitioner
KEMH	King Edward Memorial Hospital
MATES	Measurement of Access Time to Elective Surgery
NA	Not Available
NAPAAWL DC	Non-Admitted Patient Activity and Wait List Data Collection
PMH	Princess Margaret Hospital
RPH	Royal Perth Hospital
SCGH	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
TOPAS	The Open Patient Administration System
WA	Western Australia
webPAS	Web-based Patient Administration System
YTD	Year to Date

# Glossary

## **Attended Appointment**

An event where a patient is recorded as having attended an appointment for examination, consultation, treatment or other service each time that a service was provided. This may include appointments at outreach clinic services, services delivered in a multidisciplinary mode and services delivered in group sessions.

## **First Appointment**

An arrangement for a patient to meet a hospital clinician for the first time on a particular date and time.

## **Follow-up Appointment**

An arrangement for a patient to meet a hospital clinician subsequent to the first appointment.

## **Median Waiting Time**

This refers to 50% of the outpatient waiting times found at or below this value.

## **Non-Admitted Patient**

A patient who receives care from a health service but who do not undergo a formal admission process.

## **Outpatient Clinic**

A setting where a health service delivers specialist services to non-admitted patients.

## **Outpatient Referral**

A written request containing a minimum set of patient information that is submitted to a relevant Health Service Provider or Contracted Health Entity for specialist outpatient services.

## **Surgical Clinic**

A clinic in which services are provided by a surgeon or other medical specialist for non-admitted patients requiring specialist surgical assessment and care.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 What's in this report?

This report provides details of the waiting time for referrals to public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals.

The referrals within this report relate to patients seen or waiting to be seen in surgical outpatient clinics within public metropolitan tertiary hospitals. These include Royal Perth Hospital, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Fremantle Hospital (prior to June 2015), Princess Margaret Hospital and King Edward Memorial Hospital.

Patients with referrals for a surgical assessment usually attend an outpatient department at a hospital closest to where they reside. Following the outpatient surgical assessment, patients may be placed on the elective surgery waiting list (if appropriate).

**Please note that this report counts referrals rather than patients because one patient may have more than one referral.**

## 1.2 Referrals to public outpatient surgical clinics

WA Health aims to provide specialist outpatient services in an efficient, coordinated and standardised approach. Outpatient appointments are made for referrals received from:

- General Practitioners (GPs) and other external referrers;
- Medical Practitioners within the hospital (e.g. Emergency Department and inpatient units);
- Medical Practitioners within the hospital 'referring to self' for patients that require long term follow-up or continued management i.e. more than one year (Ongoing Management);
- Medical Practitioners in other public or private hospitals and
- Other health care professionals (e.g. optometrist to ophthalmologist).

To ensure patients receive the most appropriate care within a clinically appropriate timeframe, specialist practitioners triage referrals and assign a priority for care based on the urgency of the patient's condition, however urgency categories are not contained in this report.

## 2. Referrals waiting to be seen

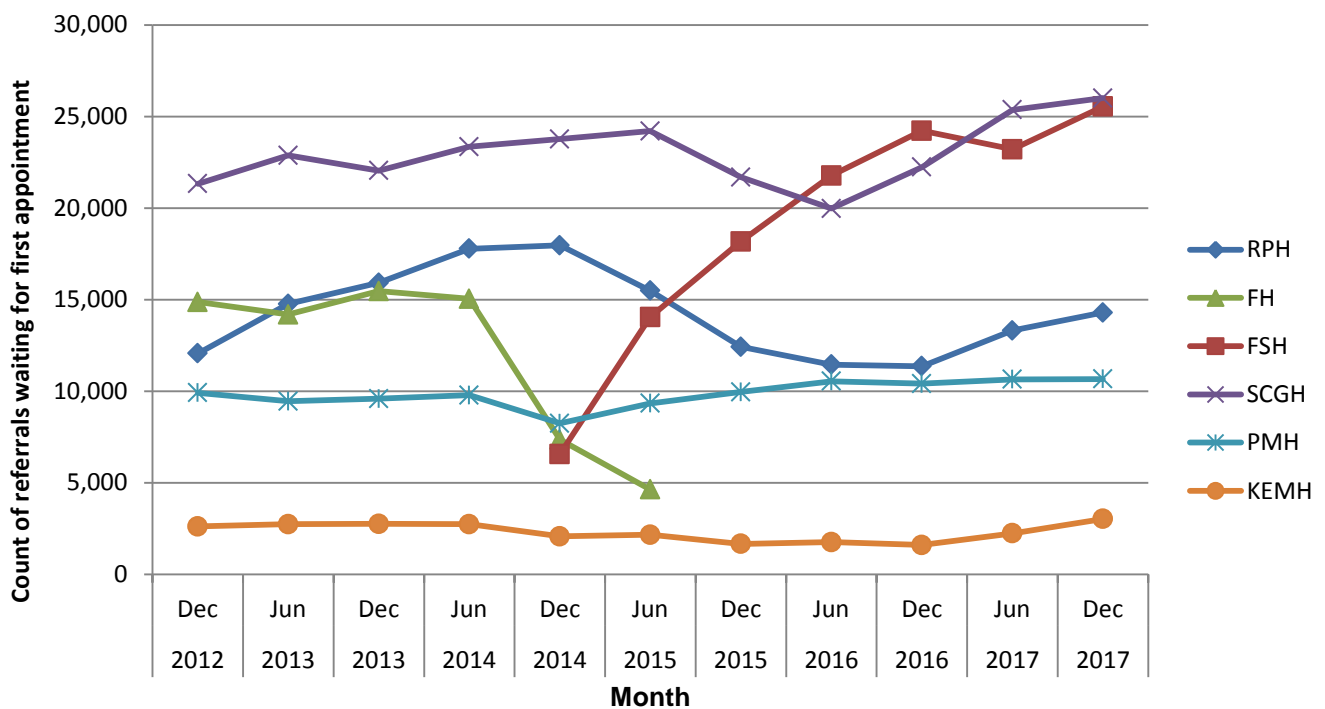
### 2.1 Number of referrals yet to have a first attended appointment

The total number of referrals waiting to be seen for a first surgical outpatient attended appointment at metropolitan tertiary hospitals has steadily grown over recent years.

In December 2017, the number of referrals yet to be seen for a first surgical outpatient appointment at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 79,517. This is an increase of 9,697 or 13.9% compared to December 2016 (69,820).

Figure 1 and Table 1 display the number of referrals to public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that are yet to have a first attended appointment. This is the number of referrals yet to be seen as at the end of the reporting month.

**Figure 1: Number of referrals waiting to be seen for a first attended appointment**





**Table 1: Number of referrals waiting to be seen for a first attended appointment**

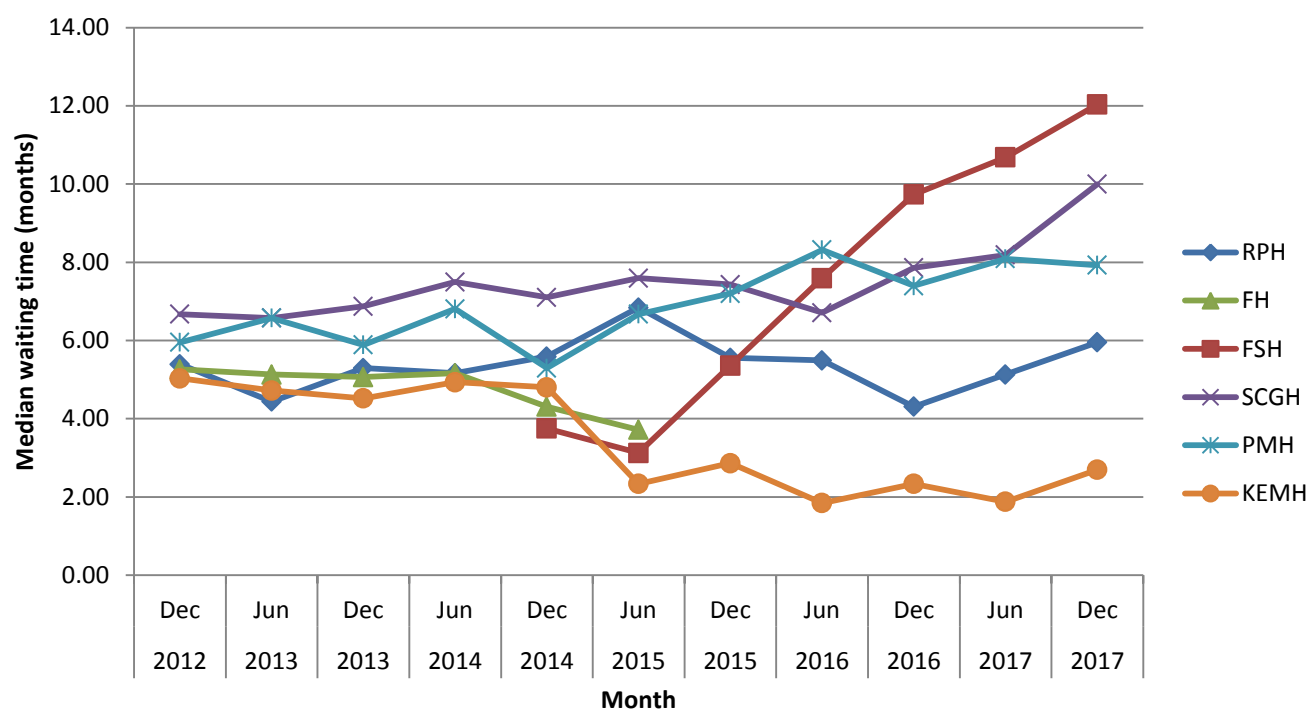
End of month	Adult Tertiary Hospitals					Princess Margaret Hospital	King Edward Memorial Hospital	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Transfers to Fiona Stanley Hospital from other Tertiary Hospitals	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
December 2012	12,058	14,868	-	158	21,329	9,910	2,616	60,939
June 2013	14,761	14,181	-	299	22,872	9,451	2,738	64,302
December 2013	15,919	15,462	-	802	22,046	9,587	2,750	66,566
June 2014	17,778	15,040	-	2,268	23,342	9,783	2,731	70,942
December 2014	17,958	7,354	6,563	-	23,768	8,240	2,073	65,956
June 2015	15,486	4,634	14,046	-	24,197	9,330	2,154	69,847
December 2015	12,420	-	18,169	-	21,684	9,957	1,664	63,894
June 2016	11,448	-	21,769	-	19,967	10,544	1,756	65,484
December 2016	11,361	-	24,215	-	22,237	10,409	1,598	69,820
June 2017	13,307	-	23,208	-	25,367	10,641	2,234	74,757
December 2017	14,287	-	25,541	-	26,006	10,659	3,024	79,517

## 2.2 Waiting time for referrals yet to have a first attended appointment

At the end of December 2017, the median waiting time for referrals yet to have a first attended appointment at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 8.78 months. This is an increase of 1.28 months or 17.1% compared to the end of December 2016 (7.50 months).

Figure 2 and Table 2 display the median waiting time (in months) for referrals that are yet to have a first attended appointment. This is the median waiting time from the point the referral was received by the hospital to the end of the reporting month.

**Figure 2: Referral waiting time (in months) for referrals yet to be seen for a first attended appointment**



**Table 2: Referral waiting time (in months) for referrals yet to be seen for a first attended appointment**

End of month	Adult Tertiary Hospitals					Princess Margaret Hospital	King Edward Memorial Hospital	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Transfers to Fiona Stanley Hospital from other Tertiary Hospitals	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
December 2012	5.39	5.26	-	8.45	6.67	5.95	5.03	5.92
June 2013	4.44	5.13	-	6.84	6.58	6.58	4.72	5.49
December 2013	5.29	5.06	-	3.91	6.87	5.88	4.52	5.75
June 2014	5.16	5.16	-	3.80	7.50	6.81	4.93	5.95
December 2014	5.59	4.31	3.75	-	7.10	5.29	4.80	5.54
June 2015	6.84	3.72	3.12	-	7.59	6.67	2.33	5.49
December 2015	5.56	-	5.36	-	7.43	7.20	2.86	6.21
June 2016	5.49	-	7.59	-	6.71	8.32	1.84	6.87
December 2016	4.31	-	9.73	-	7.86	7.40	2.33	7.50
June 2017	5.13	-	10.68	-	8.19	8.09	1.87	7.73
December 2017	5.95	-	12.03	-	9.99	7.92	2.70	8.78

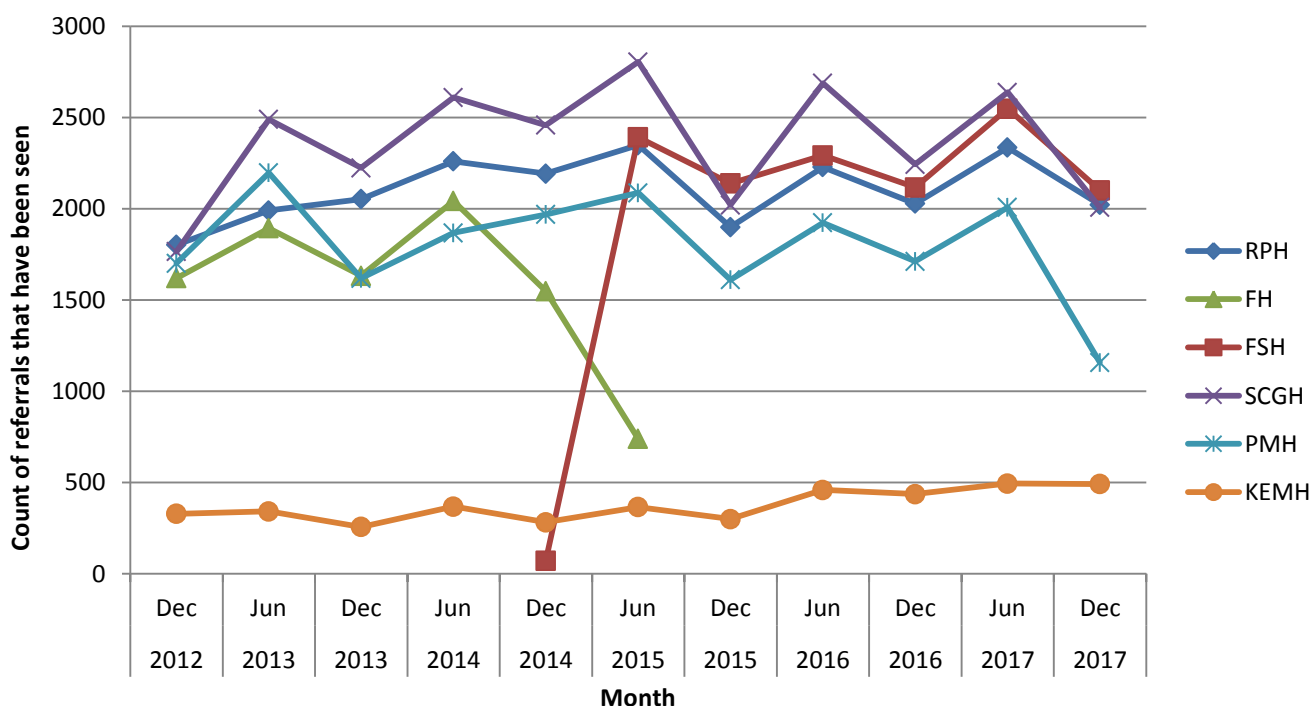
# 3. Referrals that have been seen

## 3.1 Number of referrals that have had a first attended appointment

For the month of December 2017, the number of referrals that had a first surgical outpatient attended appointment at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 7,778. This is a decrease of 756 referrals or 8.9% compared to December 2016 (8,534) and an increase of 563 referrals or 7.8% compared to December 2012 (7,215). This is a compound annual growth rate of 1.5% since December 2012.

Figure 3 and Table 3 display the number of referrals to public outpatient surgical clinics at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that had a first attended appointment. This is the number of referrals that were seen during the reporting month.

**Figure 3: Number of referrals that have had a first attended appointment**



**Table 3: Number of referrals that have had a first attended appointment**

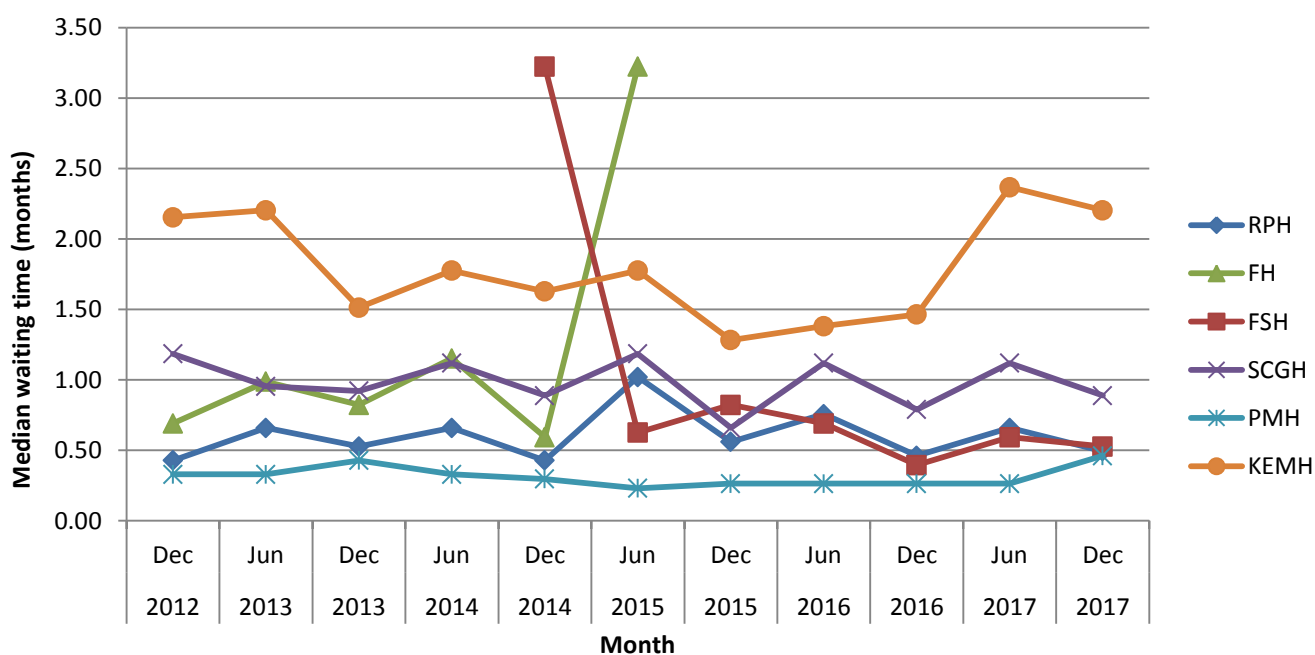
Month of appointment	Adult Tertiary Hospitals				Princess Margaret Hospital	King Edward Memorial Hospital	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
December 2012	1,802	1,619	-	1,765	1,701	328	7,215
June 2013	1,990	1,893	-	2,489	2,196	341	8,909
December 2013	2,052	1,632	-	2,223	1,618	256	7,781
June 2014	2,259	2,042	-	2,609	1,867	368	9,145
December 2014	2,192	1,548	71	2,458	1,968	282	8,519
June 2015	2,348	739	2,391	2,804	2,087	365	10,734
December 2015	1,899	-	2,138	2,020	1,610	299	7,966
June 2016	2,228	-	2,292	2,687	1,923	459	9,589
December 2016	2,028	-	2,116	2,243	1,711	436	8,534
June 2017	2,335	-	2,548	2,637	2,007	494	10,021
December 2017	2,022	-	2,101	2,007	1,157	491	7,778

### 3.2 Waiting time for referrals that have had a first attended appointment

For the month of December 2017, the median waiting time for referrals that have had a first surgical outpatient attended appointment at metropolitan tertiary hospitals was 0.69 months. This is an increase of 0.2 months or 40.0% compared to December 2016 (0.49 months).

Figure 4 and Table 4 display the median waiting time (in months) for outpatient surgical clinic referrals at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that have attended a first appointment during the reported month. This is the median waiting time from the point of referral (e.g. GP) to being seen at a first appointment at a public outpatient surgical clinic.

**Figure 4: Waiting time for referrals that have had a first attended appointment**



**Table 4: Waiting time for referrals that have had a first attended appointment**

Month of appointment	Adult Tertiary Hospitals				Princess Margaret Hospital	King Edward Memorial Hospital	Total
	Royal Perth Hospital	Fremantle Hospital	Fiona Stanley Hospital	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital			
December 2012	0.43	0.69	-	1.18	0.33	2.15	0.66
June 2013	0.66	0.99	-	0.95	0.33	2.20	0.79
December 2013	0.53	0.82	-	0.92	0.43	1.51	0.66
June 2014	0.66	1.15	-	1.12	0.33	1.78	0.89
December 2014	0.43	0.59	3.22	0.89	0.30	1.63	0.56
June 2015	1.02	3.22	0.62	1.18	0.23	1.78	0.89
December 2015	0.56	-	0.82	0.66	0.26	1.28	0.49
June 2016	0.76	-	0.69	1.12	0.26	1.38	0.72
December 2016	0.46	-	0.39	0.79	0.26	1.46	0.49
June 2017	0.66	-	0.59	1.12	0.26	2.37	0.69
December 2017	0.49	-	0.53	0.89	0.46	2.20	0.69

### 3.3 Outpatient appointment outcomes

Patients often require a number of appointments before a decision for surgical intervention is made and placement on the elective surgery waitlist occurs. This results in a low percentage of appointment outcomes with placement on the elective surgery waitlist.

A percentage of appointments with unknown outcomes still remain, although the figure is reducing over time, from 8.2% in 2012 to 2.5% in 2017.

Table 5 below outlines the outpatient appointment outcomes at metropolitan tertiary hospitals that either resulted in a recording of placement on the elective surgery waiting list and volumes with an unknown outcome.

**Table 5: Appointment Outcomes**

Referral Year (calendar year)	Total number of appointments (first time and follow-up)	Total number of appointments resulting in a placement on the elective surgery waiting list	% of appointments placed on the elective surgery waiting list	Total number of appointments with unknown outcome	% of appointments with unknown outcome
2012	312,127	19,446	6.2%	25,624	8.2%
2013	327,777	18,853	5.8%	26,485	8.1%
2014	342,132	20,993	6.1%	18,688	5.5%
2015	360,221	27,273	7.6%	13,504	3.7%
2016	366,401	29,195	8.0%	10,645	2.9%
2017	373,020	29,744	8.0%	9,161	2.5%

## 4. Data Quality Statement

Please consider the following information when reading this report:

- The Non Admitted Patient Activity and Waiting List (NAPAAWL) Data Collection is a collection that has a continuous program of data quality assurance and validation process improvement. Data reported continues to be validated by sites, thus caution is advised when using and interpreting the data.
- Variation in data published in previous reports is likely to occur as the outpatient databases are continuously updated. Variations may occur for a number of reasons, such as updates to procedure codes, lags in data processing or other types of errors detected after publication. There is an ongoing revision of the data; therefore the most recent edition of a report should always be consulted, as data is not revised in previously published editions.
- All urgency types (i.e. Urgent, Semi-Urgent, Non-Urgent) are reported in combined figures.
- All outpatients are notionally considered ready for care or assessment on the basis that a referral has been initiated.
- Non-admitted data is collected based on clinic information and not clinician, specialty or patient diagnosis.
- The data reported is limited to referrals that are considered surgical. The methodology for identifying patients awaiting appointments that precede their addition to surgical waiting lists continues to be reviewed and improved. It is important to note that not all patients that are referred to surgical outpatient clinics will be placed on the Elective Surgery Waitlist.
- Note there is no data for Fremantle Hospital from July 2015 onwards as this site has been designated as a metropolitan Specialist hospital after Fiona Stanley Hospital became fully operational. Therefore care needs to be taken when comparing data from pre-July 2015 and onwards.
- Referrals are determined based on the data received from sites. Varying work practices may affect the accuracy of reported figures. This may particularly apply to data for patients recorded as still waiting for their appointment when these patients have had an appointment but the record has not been updated in a timely manner, and as such days waiting have continued to accrue.
- Work is underway to develop a national measure of surgical access time from GP referral to surgical care (Australian Minister's Advisory Council and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare). As such, Health Service Providers are working with Health Support Services to address clinical application requirements for reporting.

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