Media Release

NSW GOVERNMENT | **Health** South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

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Prince of Wales Hospital emergency department filling up as cold weather sets in

Winter has just begun, and front line staff who work in the emergency department at Prince of Wales Hospital have been treating high numbers of patients with chronic conditions, including respiratory and infectious illnesses.

Prince of Wales Hospital's emergency department has treated 4,343 patients and admitted 1,376 patients in the five weeks, from 7 May to 10 June, 2012.

The Prince of Wales Hospital emergency department works in partnership with the local Division of GPs and other health services, such as *Healthdirect Australia,* which is a free 24 hour hotline (1800 022 222), and is manned by a registered nurse who can provide expert health advice for patients with non-urgent conditions.

Dr Michael Golding, emergency department director said there has been extensive planning to better manage the numbers of people requiring treatment within the emergency department's fixed footprint and resources.

 "Winter is our busiest time of year and our hospital experiences a surge in ambulance and walk in presentations as well as an increase in the admission of more acutely ill patients," Dr Golding said.

"During these busy periods, emergency department staff execute a specialist escalation plan to minimise waiting times for both patients and ambulances. A winter bed strategy is also in place and dedicated patient flow teams work around the clock to facilitate timely access," he said.

"Additionally, staff work in close consultation with ambulance officers to ensure that patients are seen and treated as soon as possible.

"When a large influx of patients attend the emergency department, inevitably there can be a delay in providing treatment to patients within the timeframe of service we want to provide. Of course, patients are triaged and those that are most seriously ill are always treated as a priority," Dr Golding said.

Patients who are experiencing heart and breathing problems or who need urgent medical attention should always attend their emergency department or contact Triple 0.

Dr Golding said Prince of Wales Hospital has experienced increased demand recently as the elderly and those with chronic health conditions become more vulnerable.

"The recent cold, wet weather has seen an increase in the number of patients with chronic conditions presenting to hospital and many of these cases require complex treatment plans," he said.

"Staff working in the emergency department at Prince of Wales Hospital regard their emergency department as one of the best in Australia and take great pride in providing quality medical care to all patients who present for treatment," Dr Golding said.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District
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