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Health Minister mistaken on private hospital performance

New South Wales patients are six times more likely to complain about their care in a public hospital than one treated in the private system, in contrast to claims made today by NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard.

The incorrect comments in today's Sydney Morning Herald are in relation to the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) annual report.

Australian Private Hospitals Association CEO Mr Michael Roff said it was unfortunate that the Minister has been poorly advised or has misunderstood the data, which clearly shows the vast majority of complaints relate to public hospitals.

When the Minister said the data showed "Eighty per cent of overall complaints were about the private system, which has a bit of work to do", he mistakenly included results from individual private practitioners. When private hospitals are separated out, the numbers tell a very different story.

"In 2015-16 there were 3,122,333 separations from NSW hospitals. 1,861,163 (59.6%) were from public hospitals. There were 1,261,170 (40.4%) separations from private hospitals.

"In the same year the Health Care Complaints Commission received 1,137 complaints about hospitals. Of those 1,016 (89.4%) were about public hospitals and 121 (10.6%) were about private hospitals.

"Perhaps the Minister is trying to deflect attention from his strategy of pursuing additional private patients in NSW public hospitals by allowing them to jump the queue ahead of genuine public patients. Data released earlier this year shows that public patients wait twice as long for admission to a public hospital compared to those with health insurance.

"If some public hospitals in NSW didn't have private patients taking upwards of 25 percent of hospital beds real public patients could use, perhaps their waiting times and their performance would improve," he said.

"The claim the private hospital system is failing its patients is completely false.

"Australians understand the vital role private hospitals play in taking the pressure off the stretched public hospital system, Mr Hazzard should too. In fact, he should stop encouraging the NSW public hospitals to chase private patients and let private hospitals get on with providing the high quality health care that Australians value," Mr Roff said.

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