

Report on a page

This report summarises the audit results of Queensland Health entities, which include the Department of Health and 16 hospital and health services (HHSs). It also summarises the audit results for 13 hospital foundations, 4 other statutory bodies, and 2 entities controlled by other health entities.

Queensland Health accounts for approximately 30 per cent of the amount the state government spends annually on operating expenses for government departments. As such, increases in health expenditure have a direct impact on the state's financial position.

Financial statements are reliable, but controls over information systems need to be strengthened

We found the health sector entities' financial statements to be reliable, and their systems and processes (internal controls) strong, except for those relating to information systems. The weaknesses we found in these controls are of particular concern, as health entities are attractive targets for ransomware and similar cyber attacks.

The amount of payroll overpayments the department needs to recover from staff has increased since last year. Because of delays in starting repayment plans, recovery of these overpayments may be difficult.

Entities face challenges in managing the cost of services

This year, HHS expenditure was 9.8 per cent higher than budgeted (2022–23: 9.9 per cent higher than budgeted). This was because the HHSs provided more services (6.1 per cent more than last year), employed 6,259 more staff, and experienced higher costs for medical clinical supplies, drugs, pathology and information and communication services.

The state government provided significant funding (\$2.1 billion) to the department for building and upgrading health facilities, including satellite hospitals (which in some cases have taken pressure off emergency departments in major hospitals). The cost of maintenance that should have been performed on HHS assets grew by \$580 million this year and is now over \$2 billion. While inconsistencies in the HHSs' reporting creates uncertainty about the accuracy of this figure, the high level of deferred maintenance means it is likely the condition of health facilities is worsening.

Addressing demand for health services

This year, more people presented at Queensland emergency departments, and demand for ambulance services continued to grow. HHS performance has declined against key performance indicators for emergency departments. This also affected ambulance performance. The decline was consistent with that of other Australian states and territories.

Queensland Health has not met its seen-within time-related targets relating to outpatient appointments for specialists. Its results against the 2 most time-critical categories were the worst in 9 years. This is despite more outpatients being treated than ever before. On a positive note, the number of patients who experienced what is referred to as a 'long wait' fell in 2023–24.

This year, we also looked at how Queensland compares to other states and territories in relation to minimising potentially preventable hospitalisations. National data shows that Queensland has been ranked seventh out of the 8 states and territories. In August 2024, we recommended that the department define its strategic objectives for reducing potentially preventable hospitalisations and develop performance indicators and targets. The department accepted our recommendation and plans to implement it in a 2-phase approach by 30 June 2026.

