

IAAS Country Report on Day Surgery: Australia (April 2009)

Lindsay Roberts and Hugh Bartholomeusz

Corresponding author: H. Bartholomeusz E-mail hughb@bigpond.com.au

The Australian health care system is a balanced system, approximately 50% public and 50% private, however the trend over the past 10 years has been a slow but steady increase in the private sector (now 53%). Day surgery has continued to increase with the private sector now 65% of operations and the public sector 50% (Australian Medical Association data 2007). It is a matter of concern that the public hospital system has not expanded its day surgery to the same extent as the private hospitals, and only a small minority of public hospitals have dedicated day surgery units. The number of freestanding day surgery centres continues to increase and all of these are in the private sector.

In recent years emergency surgery (trauma and acute operations) together with the concepts of extended (overnight) recovery, medimotels and maternity motels have been introduced and are slowly increasing in number – this trend is expected to increase.

Undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, especially the teaching of clinical skills, is now a major concern and day surgery centres/units are an important but as yet untapped resource for their purpose.