

# Report on a page

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This report discusses the audit results of Queensland Health entities, which include the Department of Health (the department) and 16 hospital and health services (HHSs). It also summarises the audit results for 13 hospital foundations, four other statutory entities and three controlled entities.

## Financial statements are reliable and internal controls are stronger

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The financial reports prepared by Queensland Health entities, hospital foundations, and the other statutory bodies are reliable and comply with relevant laws and accounting standards. The systems and processes (internal controls) they use to prepare financial statements improved during the year, and they have resolved the weaknesses identified in 2019–20 relating to the implementation of the new finance system. None of the annual reports of the HHSs have been tabled by the statutory deadline of 30 September. We continue to find control deficiencies related to procurement and contract management processes within the department and HHSs.

## Short-term sustainability has improved

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The short-term financial position of the sector has improved in 2020–21, with the HHSs having a combined operating result (the difference between revenue and expenses) of \$33 million (2019–20: \$82 million loss). This was partly due to the Australian Government guaranteeing its funding in 2020–21, in recognition of the impact of COVID-19.

The total amount of unused staff leave is increasing. This indicates that HHSs face increasing demand, and their workforce is under significant pressure. The HHSs will face increasing employee and contractor costs in the coming year, and the majority of their revenue base is already fixed.

In 2020–21, the cost of anticipated maintenance needed to prevent an asset from deteriorating increased by \$65 million from 2019–20.

## The ambulance service is facing increasing demand

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The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) (which is part of the department) is also facing growing demand for all its services, including for the most urgent. The time it takes the ambulance crews to transfer patients into the care of emergency departments has increased significantly over the last five years. If this takes longer than 30 minutes, the extra time is considered to be 'lost' time for the QAS. In 2020–21, the QAS lost approximately 112,000 hours. However, the *Care4Qld* strategy (which was announced in May 2021 and which aims to improve access to emergency services and unplanned care) has delivered some early improvements, but it is still too early to measure the sustained impact of this strategy.

## Vaccine rates and quarantine debts need action

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After a slow start largely due to supply issues beyond its control, Queensland vaccine rates increased over the second half of the year. More recently, the state has focused on achieving higher vaccination rates in the regions and remote communities, including in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.

An associated challenge is the need to invoice and collect outstanding debts from the hotel quarantine program. Queensland Health is currently responsible for this, which detracts from its main focus of providing health care. It could work with other departments to meet this requirement.

