South Australia Health IT Project

Following reports of delays in pathology testing times and lost test results since the introduction of its EPLIS pathology IT system, SA Health has employed 30 extra staff and announced a new taskforce to help fix the problems.

SA Health deputy chief executive Don Frater said the roll out of the new statewide pathology laboratory information system had led to an increase in test turnaround times due to complex initial data-entry requirements.

"Since the introduction of EPLIS we have seen the wait times for some laboratory test results increase for hospitals and GPs," Frater said. Blood, urine, tumour and genetic tests have been effected.

"We know timely test results are essential in providing prompt and appropriate care for patients, and these delays have the potential to impact the level of care being provided," he said.

The $37 million system was initially rolled out at the Women's and Children's Hospital in March 2017 and has now been implemented at all South Australian metropolitan hospitals and regional laboratories.

The taskforce, which will be headed by independent ehealth advisor Dr Tom Stubbs, will determine any impacts on patient outcomes and make recommendations on how to speed up turnaround times.

"In the interim, all urgent tests are being prioritised and an action plan has been developed by SA Pathology to improve the timeliness of pathology test results for doctors," Frater said.

Doctors have been alerted to the risk of delay.
"Our clinicians have been instructed [in] how to request and receive results for critical and urgent tests during this time as we resolve this issue."

Thirty new staff have been employed at SA Pathology to compensate for "the additional data entry complexities" associated with the new system. Professionals Australia SA director Sarah Andrews said she had been raising concerns for months on behalf of members.

"What we hear from members is that EPLIS is not for purpose and in response members report significant increases to turnaround times. There are lost specimens in the system, and there's a

lack of specimen tracking and problems with interfacing with the existing and the new equipment," Andrews said.

This is the latest IT crisis in South Australia's health services, with the new Liberal Government halting the troubled roll out of the EPAS patient record system soon after the March election. It is estimated EPAS will cost taxpayers $471 million over the 10 years to 2021.

Frater said he expects pathology testing times to return to normal levels in the coming weeks.

Q1: Investigate the risks, their categories and potential impact on the project.