

# NATIONAL NEWS

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## As the surgeon said to a patient, this is your day job

Keyhole surgery and not a peep from the patient ... Dr Martin Sullivan, left.  
Photo by RICK STEVENS



By **JUDITH WHELAN**, Health Writer

About half the people admitted to hospital now stay less than a day.

More patients are treated in hospital but stay fewer days and use fewer beds, says the latest profile of the public and private hospital systems.

Day procedures accounted for 46.3 per cent of admissions in 1997-98, compared with about 37 per cent four years earlier. The average patient stay in hospital fell steadily from 4.6 days in 1993-94 to 4.1 days in 1997-98.

The findings by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) support predictions in last week's State Budget that this financial year about 53 per cent of procedures would involve patients in hospital less than a day.

A separate report into private hospitals, released yesterday by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, found that in 1997-98, 271,700 patients were treated in day surgery centres, 20 per cent more than the previous year. This compared with a rise of only 3 per cent in the overall admission rate to private hospitals.

Day procedures - where patients arrive a few hours before their operations, recover from anaesthetic and go home that night - had been made possible by improved anaesthetics and advanced technology,