Section 10
Stakeholder Engagement
Engagement with stakeholders is a key activity for public health organisations, as required both in Local Health District functions under the Health Services Act and through Standard 6 in the corporate governance framework, which emphasises the importance of stakeholder engagement in decisions that affect them (see section 2.2.6).

Engagement with stakeholders develops an open and inclusive environment where information, comment, opinion and criticism is valued and utilised.

Government organisations must be open and transparent, act with integrity and be accountable to the public they serve. Government oversight agencies, such as the Audit Office of NSW have stated that government organisations, should engage key stakeholders, to ‘shine a light’ on who they are, how they operate, what they are doing and how well they are doing it.

With these objectives in place, well managed stakeholder participation is fundamental to the effective planning, and delivery of health service delivery formulated to improve patient safety and better health outcomes for the consumer and the community.

The recent structural reforms to the NSW public health sector has demonstrated a strong commitment to devolve decision making to the local level and to actively involve clinicians, Medicare Locals, aged care and other care providers, patients and the community in public health services.
Effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement is fundamental to achieving the public health organisations objectives in the planning, development and delivery of improved outcomes to our stakeholders.

Public health organisations should have stakeholder management plans and ongoing consultative programs in place as part of their strategic planning processes and performance requirements.

It is also important that public health organisations comply with the principles of publicly available information concerning health services and management. There are key legislative requirements concerning the recording, access and availability, storage and retention of public information which must be complied with as well as NSW Health policy directives.

Areas where a public health organisation may engage stakeholders and the community include:

- the development and implementation of a Community Participation Framework;
- development of a Communications Plan with key internal and external stakeholders;
- active engagement with community organisations and groups to promote positive health, quality integrated and co-ordinated care and the open exchange of information;
- community participation in the development, implementation and review of health service plans, operations and health programs;
- the development of strategic priorities and plans for the organisation;
- activity based funding programs and services;
- the integration of diversity and innovation into health services to reduce social disadvantages and to meet community health needs;
- consulting with the Aboriginal community regarding the development and delivery of health and related programs and services to meet their needs;
- the availability and provision of public health information including emerging health issues and public health trends;
- the outcomes of research and technological innovations and developments;
- participation in specialist technical, clinical and consumer forums;

The stakeholder engagement program should consider the participation of clinician, consumer, carer and the community in a wide range of activities such as:

- strategic planning and priority setting;
- health services planning and service delivery;
- finance/budget planning and the allocation of funds;
- local policy making and related procedures;
- specific service reviews and setting service standards;
- project working groups;
- quality and accreditation processes;
- advisory processes and other district committees.
Some of the types of stakeholder engagement involving clinicians, consumers and the community by local health districts and specialty networks are:

- Health services forums
- Consumer advisory committees;
- Consumer and community groups;
- Aboriginal health councils and advisory committees;
- Community health participation forums;
- Community reference groups;
- Quality councils;
- Nursing, allied and clinical councils;
- Medical staff councils;
- GP liaison committees/Medicare Locals.
Stakeholder Engagement – Resources & References

Local Documentation

Documentation which demonstrates community consultation e.g. Community Engagement Plan; Communication Plans etc

Documentation which demonstrates consultation with and involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities