

Understanding the charity and local community sector in regional NSW

Position paper – Recommendation 5, Rural Health Inquiry

April 2024

Regional Health Division



Summary



What is this position paper about?

Prepared by the Regional Health Division of NSW Health, this position paper shares key findings and opportunities for enhanced collaboration with charities and local community groups. This work is in response to Recommendation 5 of the Rural Health Inquiry which calls on NSW Health to better understand the charity and local community group landscape in NSW.

Why is it important?

It is important to share these findings and opportunities to recognise the integral role of charities and local community groups within the complex Australian health system and propose a way forward for ongoing advocacy and support.

Who is it for?

This position paper is for charities and local community groups, NSW Health entities, other government departments as well as the NSW Minister for Health, and Regional Health.

What is included in the position paper?

- Background
- Charities and local community groups in regional NSW
- What we found
- Opportunities for enhanced collaboration
- Next steps

Findings, opportunities and future considerations

The findings outlined in this report have led to the identification of opportunities for enhanced collaboration and the resulting next steps for the Regional Health Division. Future considerations have also been included to guide targeted action planning.

What action will the Regional Health Division take?

The Regional Health Division will support the development of targeted actions and ongoing collaboration.

Project methodology

Over 12 months, the Regional Health Division engaged in research and consultation to build an understanding of the charities and local community groups in regional NSW and their approaches to collaboration. Consultation occurred in three regional local health districts and the findings were validated through a review of state, national and international literature, case studies and broader stakeholder consultation.

Acknowledgements

The Regional Health Division acknowledges the valuable contributions of charities and local community groups, local councils, primary health organisations, and staff from regional local health districts and NSW Health entities in the development of this report.

Artwork by Lakkari Pit, proud Gamilaroi Ularoi yinarr.

Background

Recommendation 5

NSW Health and the Local Health Districts actively engage with local community groups and charities to understand the services and resources they provide, and to ensure that where possible and appropriate, service gaps are filled by government.

In 2022, NSW Health supported Recommendation 5 through the NSW Government response to the inquiry into *Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales* (Rural Health Inquiry).

In supporting the recommendation, NSW Health committed to comprehensive resource mapping with local community groups and charities to understand their capability and capacity to provide locally relevant services and resources. This includes services provided within the public and private health system, as well as federally funded initiatives and agencies.

Acting on this response, the Regional Health Division sought to build an understanding of the charity and community sector landscape in regional NSW through research and consultation with stakeholders. Mapping focused on three regional local health districts (Mid North Coast, Hunter New England and Southern NSW). This consultation led to a greater understanding of the capability and capacity of charities and local community groups in these regions.

The Regional Health Division engaged with a cross-section of charities, local community groups, primary health organisations, local councils and NSW Health staff to better understand their contribution to healthy communities and to explore opportunities for improved collaboration. This process also included a review of national and international literature about partnering approaches between health entities and charities and local community groups.

“Often, the solutions to complex problems can be found within the community.”

Cancer Council NSW submission to Rural Health Inquiry

Charities and local community groups in regional NSW



Rotary Lodge Chairman Phil Hafey during a consultation session with Lynn Lelean and Charlotte Westbrook from the Regional Health Division of NSW Health.

Charities and local community groups in NSW

Charities and local community groups have contributed to the health and wellbeing of regional NSW for generations. Their partnerships with government, at all levels, and other organisations helps them to better respond to the needs of their communities. The strength of these partnerships is vital to ensure the ultimate goal of a healthy community is achieved.

NSW Health encourages improved cohesion of the health and charity sector, facilitated through local partnerships and collaboration, to better understand and respond to the local needs of regional communities.

Key findings

Research and consultation, conducted to better understand the services and resources provided by charities and local community groups, identified six key findings:

1. Charities and local community groups support the wellbeing needs of regional communities
2. Addressing service gaps is a shared responsibility
3. Greater awareness of grants opportunities and administrative process will assist charities and local community groups
4. Partnering approaches should reflect local conditions
5. Charities and local community groups seek enhanced collaboration with NSW Health
6. Opportunities exist to raise awareness of services available in regional communities

Opportunities

From these findings NSW Health has identified a range of opportunities to enhance collaboration with charities and local community groups:

- Champion better understanding and stronger collaboration with the charity sector in regional local health districts
- Provide guidance for mature partnerships between regional local health districts and the local charity and community sector
- Identify innovative regional models of care that support integration, facilitate potential expansion and have led to improved health outcomes
- Review the NSW Health grants programs for charities and local community groups
- Encourage system integration through existing system partnerships
- Continue to advocate for improved access to regional services to ensure community needs are understood and met
- Recognise and acknowledge the contribution of charities and local community groups in supporting and improving the general health and wellbeing of regional communities

“Organisations that work tirelessly to support patients and their families, alleviate the financial burden of medical treatment and provide tangible resources for the benefit of their communities.”

Rural Health Inquiry Report

What we found

1. Charities and local community groups support the wellbeing needs of regional communities

Charities and local community groups play an important role in supporting the health and wellbeing of regional communities. These needs are met through the provision of a range of supports including health and health-related services as well as resources that support access to public healthcare. The types of support these organisations provide include:

- Delivering health services such as mental health, and primary care support including early childhood intervention and Aboriginal community-controlled primary care
- Providing health-related services such as disability support, transport, housing and accommodation, and related case management
- Supporting the recruitment, onboarding and integration of health workers into regional communities
- Raising funds to assist access to care and provide health-related equipment to health services
- Promoting the local health service and raising awareness of health services, health conditions and healthy living strategies

Charities and local community groups share a dedication and commitment to their communities however, it is important to recognise there are also differences that exist between the two. As service mapping indicated, the types of services provided by charities and, to some extent, local community groups, include, but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal health
- Aged care and dementia
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Bereavement and grieving
- Child and family
- Community health and wellbeing
- Community transport
- Crisis and emergency support
- Domestic and family violence
- Disability support
- Financial support
- Food relief
- Home care
- Housing and accommodation
- Mental health
- Palliative care and end of life
- Social and support groups

The support provided by charities and local community groups does not always focus specifically on health. While health plays an integral role in the overall wellbeing of a community, it is important to recognise the range of other factors that impact a person’s access to healthcare, as outlined below.

The evidence-based *NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework*, in **Figure 1**, articulates key areas for improving the wellbeing of communities across NSW.

Future considerations

- The *NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework* articulates the roles of the different government departments as well as supports outcome-focused engagement with charities and local community groups. The roles and outcomes of the framework could be adopted by NSW Health in their targeted actions with charities and local community groups.
- NSW Health may be able to utilise existing cross-governmental and cross-sectoral forums to explore the roles, responsibilities and opportunities for enhanced collaboration with charities and local community groups.

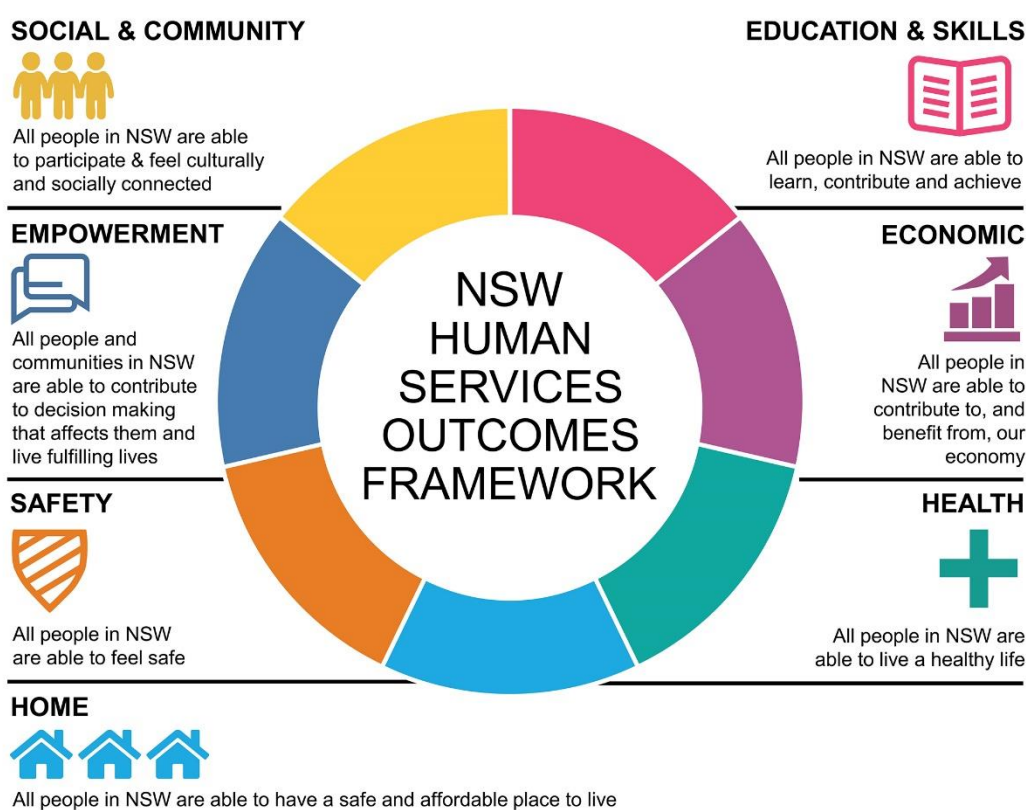


Figure 1. NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework, Department of Communities and Justice, 2017

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/human-services-outcomes-framework/what-is-the-nsw-human-services-outcomes-framework>

2. Addressing service gaps is a shared responsibility

People in regional, rural and remote NSW often have poorer health outcomes and face additional challenges in accessing health and hospital services compared to people living in metropolitan areas. Charities and local community groups play a complementary role in supporting the health of regional communities. Some of the services and resources they provide help to address these inequities, while other charities address the broader community needs that exist due to individual or community factors.

It is widely recognised that health is influenced by a range of social determinants including proximity to health services, housing, employment, education, other demographics, social isolation or living with disability. These factors can delay access to healthcare and impact a person's ability to engage with health services, negatively affecting health outcomes. The adverse impacts of these factors may be further compounded by geographic location.

Given the number of state and federal government departments holding responsibility for the many social determinants of health, a shared approach is required to respond to these broader community needs.

In Australia, the federal and state governments are jointly responsible for providing health services and ensuring people have good health outcomes. NSW Health is responsible for:

- Managing and administering public hospitals
- Delivering preventive services such as breast cancer screening and immunisation programs
- Funding and managing community health and mental health services
- Public dental clinics
- Ambulance and emergency services
- Patient transport and subsidy schemes
- Food safety and handling regulation
- Regulating, inspecting, licensing and monitoring health premises

Although the federal government oversees the aged and primary care sectors, NSW Health has been playing an expanded role in recent years to support the provision of these services in regional NSW.

Local health districts and specialty health networks in NSW are responsible for planning health services over the short and long term, and ensuring health service delivery is responsive to the future needs of the community. This includes detailed clinical service and workforce planning as the foundation for ongoing decision making.

Where services are not available locally, NSW Health draws on networked arrangements to ensure there are established pathways for patients to access the right health services as close to home as possible. This can include collaboration with local charities to understand, anticipate and respond to the needs of people living in regional, rural and remote communities.

Future considerations

- Consider the roles of the different government departments, articulated in *NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework*, and utilise existing cross-sector forums to raise awareness of and address systemic issues.
- Explore the role of charities and local community groups and opportunities for greater involvement in service planning activities.

Case Studies

Stronger Places, Stronger People - Department of Social Services

A community-led initiative, Stronger Places, Stronger People, is a collective impact program that seeks to create better futures for children and their families through locally tailored and evidence-driven solutions.

Under the stewardship of the Australian Government, in partnership with state and territory governments and communities across Australia, the program is a shared commitment with joint accountability for planning, decision making and results.

Stronger Places, Stronger People communities receive funding to support a local project team in each community. The team then facilitates local planning and action, inclusive engagement, measurement and evaluation, joint decision-making, and governance.

Communities also receive funding for capacity building support, which is provided to enable local project teams to develop the skills and expertise necessary to implement community action plans.

Stronger Places, Stronger People

The **data** tells us which communities we need to prioritise

The **evidence** tells us where to invest to ensure **children and their families have strong futures**

The **voices of the local leaders and families** tells us how to work effectively in the **local context**

The **learnings and evaluations** of our progress tell us what features of the model make the most difference so we can drive **system changes** at scale to maximise what works

North Coast Youth Vaping Taskforce - Mid North Coast and Northern NSW Local Health Districts



In mid-2022, Mid North Coast and Northern NSW Local Health Districts' Health Promotion teams partnered with the North Coast Population Public Health Unit to initiate action to protect young people from the harms of e-cigarettes, using a collaborative and community-informed approach.

The NSW Chief Health Officer has identified reducing the harms of e-cigarettes as a key priority for NSW Health. Outcomes from the Taskforce include an online resource hub, a *NSW Youth Vaping HealthPathway* to support clinical

cessation support and the development of a coordinated regional action plan, to be launched during Youth Week 2024. Taskforce membership includes representation from:

- MNCLHD & NNSWLHD Health Promotion
- NSW Health
- O2 Living Tackling Indigenous Smoking
- Cancer Institute NSW
- Catholic Diocese of Lismore
- Department of Education
- Department of Regional NSW
- Healthy North Coast (PHN)
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre / University of NSW
- North Coast Population & Public Health
- NSW Police



3. Greater awareness of grants opportunities and administrative process will assist charities and local community groups

Charities and local community groups are typically funded through a range of sources including government agencies, donations and bequests, provision of goods and services and return on investments.

Government departments contribute the largest proportion of funding across the identified charities, followed by donations and bequests. Funding is typically provided in response to a health, social or community need, as identified by the funder.

Each year, NSW Health allocates funding to non-government organisations to deliver community-based services supporting health and wellbeing, particularly for priority or hard-to-reach populations.

Aboriginal health, aged care, children, youth and families, chronic care and disability, community transport, drug and alcohol, mental health, palliative care, population health and women's health are among the services for which NSW Health provides funding. Further details can be found in the [NSW Health Annual Report 2022-23](#).

There is a range of NSW Health grants available to charities and local community groups including:

- Ministerially approved grants under the Non-Government Organisations (NGO) Grants Program
- Ad Hoc Grants
- Program Grants
- Local health district discretionary funding

Under these funding arrangements, NSW Health must ensure rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes are adhered to in line with the [NSW Grants Administration Guide](#). This requires assessment of the capability and capacity of the organisations to provide locally relevant services and resources. It also relies on the organisation's ability to manage the grant process including applications, management of funds and evaluation and monitoring.

Some charities and local community groups are not aware of available NSW Health grants or find it difficult to apply for funds. If successful, they also require significant resourcing and expertise to administer the grant appropriately.

Through greater awareness of funding possibilities, charities, local community groups and local health districts can work together to match opportunities to available grants. NSW Government has introduced the [NSW Grants and Funding Finder](#) as a way to make it easier for potential applicants to search for relevant grants across NSW. This is a step towards greater awareness of grants available.

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice is also leading work to deliver more job security and funding certainty for the community services sector which aims to alleviate some of the workforce pressures by looking at longer term funding commitments.

Future considerations

- Streamlining understanding of, and access to, grant funding.
- Providing greater transparency of grants through the NSW Grants and Funding Finder.
- Supporting improved literacy around grant management.

4. Partnering approaches should reflect local conditions

The way we partner with charities and local community groups changes in response to the type of organisation, the health need and the community environment.

We have identified five typical approaches to collaboration, the settings where they may be most appropriately used to respond to local need, examples of these approaches and the potential role of government. See **Figure 2**. These varied approaches are being applied across regional NSW in response to community, charity or government need.






 Asset-Based Community Development	 Community Coalition	 Strategic Policy	 Coordinated Care	 Active Partnerships
Leverages local strengths and assets to improve health outcomes without a prescriptive mandate.	Communities form cross-sector coalitions that focus on health needs. Relies on local networks and resources and is organisation driven.	Community partner(s) inform, design and deliver strategic policy solutions that target specific health needs.	Health providers, community and other organisations partner to improve health outcomes in a coordinated way.	Government and one or more community sector organisations partner to improve health outcomes in response to need.
General health outcomes for a specific cohort.	Broad sector investment in a capable, engaged community.	Health need as highlighted by the funding body.	Specific or general health need where health services are not well connected.	A need that is the responsibility of government to address.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective impact • Place-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted cohort • Strategic planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic framework with local execution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social prescribing • Co-location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design
<div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Initiate</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Fund</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set outcomes</div>	<div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Initiate</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Fund</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set outcomes</div>	<div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Initiate</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Fund</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set outcomes</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set strategy</div>	<div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Initiate</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Fund</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set outcomes</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set strategy</div>	<div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Initiate</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Fund</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set outcomes</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Set strategy</div> <div style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Execute</div>

Figure 2. Types of collaborative approaches

Future considerations

- Improving capability and capacity for place-based solutions that ensure the community is at the centre of building understanding of, and responding to, community needs.
- The *NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework* may be used to support the design, delivery and evaluation of services.
- Acknowledging the variation in service provision and community need across regional communities by embedding the practice of place-based health service needs assessments consistently across regional local health districts and in partnership with community.
- By better understanding the types of collaborative approaches, NSW Health can more effectively partner with charities and community groups to address local health needs.

Case Studies

Attract Connect Stay - Glen Innes, Hunter New England Local Health District



Attract Connect Stay – Glen Innes is an innovative, community-led solution aimed at addressing rural health workforce shortages.

The Attract Connect Stay Solution originates from Marathon, Ontario, Canada and the community’s response to its critical health workforce shortages. Dr Cath Cosgrave came across the Marathon Community’s approach in 2019 as part of a Churchill Fellowship trip to Canada.

On her return to Australia, she recommended trialling innovative community-based models aimed at strengthening and stabilising Australia’s health workforce in regional, rural and remote communities. Attract Connect Stay - Glen Innes began as a pilot program in 2021.

Through the efforts of a committed and energetic group of community minded people, the Attract Connect Stay - Glen Innes program is working hard to address chronic shortages of general practitioners and Allied Health professionals in the Glen Innes Severn Local Government Area.

The group has been recruiting and connecting health professionals to the town, ensuring they are not only welcomed, but also supported to stay and become part of the community.

Attract Connect Stay - Glen Innes organises social and networking events bringing together new to area health professionals and their families. It also hosts community fundraisers to assist with the continued operation of the program.

The Attract Connect Stay - Glen Innes program continues to support its community through the successful attraction and retention of general practitioner, nurse and allied health professionals.

St John Ambulance Australia (NSW) and My Emergency Doctor Pilot - Broken Hill Health Service, Far West Local Health District

St John Ambulance, My Emergency Doctor and Far West Local Health District are working together to provide care to patients presenting to Broken Hill Emergency Department with non-urgent medical needs.

These patients, categorised as triage 4 and 5, often present to the Emergency Department due to limited access to general practitioners and long appointment wait times.

My Emergency Doctor is a telemedicine service staffed by Australian specialist emergency doctors.

This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year.



St John Ambulance Australia (NSW)



NSW Health



5. Charities and local community groups seek enhanced collaboration with NSW Health

Charities and community groups seek greater connection with NSW Health and other health providers to improve their awareness and knowledge of services operating in the community. They also want enhanced collaboration to better understand areas of need and learn about effective initiatives operating in other regions that could be applied locally.

In addition to the five typical approaches for collaboration identified on page 9, there are also key elements of successful collaborative relationships. See **Figure 3** below. These elements support cohesion among collaborators and progress towards shared goals with long-term funding and workforce capability important for collaboration with charities and local community groups.

	Clear strategic direction	Long-term articulation of a shared vision, aspired outcomes, key activities and timeline.
	Long-term funding commitment	Appropriate length of funding to meet the objectives of the collaborative approach.
	Strong partnerships and networks	Stable and strategic approach to build trust in networks and relationships.
	Committed leadership and governance	Structured leadership and governance processes to support the relationship.
	Workforce capability	Increased capability and capacity for the delivery, management and administration of services.
	Data and information sharing	Aligned processes and compatible systems for data and information sharing.
	Measurement and evaluation framework	Achieving priorities through the monitoring, reporting and evaluation process.
	Continuous improvement	Reflecting and adapting in response to new information, feedback and changes in circumstance.

Figure 3. Key elements of successful collaborative relationships

Future considerations

- Building system-wide understanding of the types of collaborative approaches and the role NSW Health can play in these partnerships.
- Sharing examples of collaborative partnerships in practice across regional NSW.
- Further developing community engagement capability and fostering community development in regional local health districts.
- Developing guidelines for local place-based planning by local health districts.

Case Studies

Friendly Faces Helping Hands - Western NSW Local Health District



Established in 2011, the Friendly Faces Helping Hands Foundation supports regional families and individuals to navigate the health system when travelling to the city for care. This travel may be in response to traumatic or complex care needs.

The foundation was formed in response to Kelly Foran and her family's lived experience coping with life-threatening health issues that necessitated travel to and from their regional home. Their care needs required visits to seven hospitals in two states across three health systems.

The foundation coordinates a website that includes a range of information to patients about accommodation, parking, food and retail, parking and transport, chemists, support workers and parks and playgrounds located near each metropolitan hospital as well as government and charity initiatives that support access to care.

Friendly Faces Helping Hands' motto is: *Connecting country people to city health services.*

Healthy Communities Mid North Coast - Mid North Coast Local Health District

Healthy Communities Mid North Coast is a collective and cooperative action and advocacy group, working with communities through a regional leadership model to build capacity for preventive health in the region.

The Healthy Communities Innovation Fund initiative demonstrates a successful model of direct consumer engagement that values the expertise of consumers in line with co-design principles.

The Innovation Fund delivers health care differently, in a way that supports the belief that communities bring expertise and actively builds capacity for preventive health amongst communities.

Three rounds of the Innovation Fund have been released, focusing on healthy eating, physical activity, youth health, healthy ageing, and Aboriginal health.



The Innovation Fund started in 2018 with 39 projects funded in round one. The Mid North Coast Local Health District contributed to the initial start-up of the Innovation Fund.

6. Opportunities exist to raise awareness of services available in regional communities

Understanding the services and resources provided by local community groups is difficult because there is no central directory, whereas there is a national register of charities (the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission). Some charities are also listed on the HealthDirect website, however this typically only applies to charities and not-for-profit organisations providing health services such as Mental Health providers and Aboriginal Medical Services.

Community awareness of available services varies, with those more closely connected with health services tending to have a greater level of understanding. For example, individuals responsible for client referrals, or those employed as service navigators or intake team members, tend to have the strongest understanding of available services due to professional need.

Approaches to understanding the services are typically driven by individual or organisation need and therefore information about services is not widely available. While some local service directories do exist, there are challenges with maintaining an up-to-date and relevant directory.

Some challenges include resourcing requirements for maintaining the currency of information and constraints in accessing information - particularly when the organisation has a limited online presence. Changes in staff, structure and services in both health and community service organisations can also be challenging.

Local solutions usually rely on word-of-mouth and established relationships between organisations. This means information is not always available to people who do not reside in the local area.

Given these challenges, communities are looking to other solutions to improving their understanding of service availability across regional NSW.

Future considerations

- Opportunities should be explored to raise awareness of services available in regional communities.
- Regularly convene or participate in region or town-based interagency groups.
- Ensure the inclusion of charities that provide health-services on existing referral directories.



Regional Health Division Senior Project Officer Peta Andreone with local health committee members attending a forum at Gundagai.

Opportunities for enhanced collaboration

Enhanced collaboration is key to NSW Health's understanding and response to the needs of regional communities. NSW Health will support this enhancement through existing programs and targeted actions arising from the findings.

NSW Health has identified opportunities to enhance collaboration with charities and local community groups.

Champion better understanding and stronger collaboration with the charity sector in regional local health districts

- Embed community engagement capability across all regional local health districts.
- Encourage local health districts to share information about charity and community partnerships at a local level.
- Support regional local health districts to identify areas where stronger collaboration is needed.

Provide guidance for mature partnerships between regional local health districts and the local charity and community sector

- Communicate the types of collaborative approaches and key elements of mature partnerships.
- Share examples of existing partnerships at various stages of maturity.

Identify innovative regional models of care that support integration, facilitate potential expansion and have led to improved health outcomes

- Connect regularly with regional local health districts to learn about local innovations.
- Promote and encourage local innovation through recognition activities such as awards and innovation platforms.
- Work across the Ministry of Health and local health districts to explore expansion opportunities.

Review the NSW Health grants programs for charities and local community groups

- Streamline the grants process, considering how the strengths and challenges of charities and local community groups may impact equity of access to grants, including through the Secure Jobs and Certainty Taskforce led by Department of Communities and Justice.
- Provide greater visibility and information about grant opportunities so local health districts can encourage and support charities and local community groups to apply.
- Promote the [NSW Grants and Funding Finder](#) with regional local health districts and the charity sector.
- Apply the outcome-focused approach of the *NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework*.
- Improve capabilities for grant management.

Encourage system integration through existing system partnerships

- Raise awareness of the experience, opportunities and challenges of partnering with charities and local community groups.
- Consider the responsibilities of the different government departments in the *NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework* in supporting healthy regional communities.
- Support the strategic partnership between NSW Health and the NGO Sector through the NGO Advisory Committee.

Continue to advocate for improved access to regional services to ensure community needs are understood and met

- Utilise existing networks to share our experience and knowledge.
- When planning programs and initiatives, consider how charities and local community groups may be involved and the contribution they can make.

Recognise and acknowledge the contribution of charities and local community groups in supporting and improving the general health and wellbeing of regional communities

- Broadly promote the work of charities and local community groups.
- Seek and communicate opportunities to showcase and recognise the important work of charities and local community groups through awards, events and communications activity.

Related programs

Through consultation with charities and local community groups, six focus areas were identified as being provided by these groups. NSW Health is also working across the six focus areas through programs such as *Strengthening local health committees in regional NSW*, the *Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme* (IPTAAS) and the *Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme*.

There are other existing programs with a range of local initiatives also underway which are detailed in **Table 1** on page 16 and demonstrate the scale of programs aligning with the focus areas.

The programs support and align with priorities within the [NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022-2032](#) which is a roadmap for the future provision of health services that understands, and celebrates, the diverse and unique nature of regional communities.

Focus area	NSW Health programs
Providing health-related services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal NGO Grants Program • Expansion of Patient Transport Services in regional NSW
Integrating the local health system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Care Program • Collaborative Commissioning • Lumos • NSW Rural Generalist Single Employer Pathway • Regional Health Ministerial Advisory Panel • Single Digital Patient Record
Supporting the health workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme • Rural Mental Health Research Partnership • Scholarships and training programs
Providing financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing it differently Grants Initiative • Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) • NSW Government grants and funding opportunities
Accessing health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Model of Care Program grants • Building on Aboriginal Communities' Resilience • HealthDirect Digital Front Door • NSW Transport for Health policy (under review) • NSW Virtual Care Strategy • Urgent Care Services
Building healthy communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Services (AMIHS) • Disaster Recovery Clinicians • Farm Gate Counsellors and Rural Peer Support Workers Program • Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) and Community Living Supports (CLS) • Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) Plus program • Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees (MH-CLSR) • NSW Emergency Preparedness • NSW Get Healthy Service • NSW Health response to Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' • NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2022-2032 • Rural Adversity Mental Health Program • Strengthening local health committees in regional NSW

Table 1. Related NSW Health programs and policy

Next steps

NSW Health entities, other government agencies, charities and local community groups are encouraged to consider the findings and opportunities identified in this report.

The Regional Health Division will:

- Collaborate with government departments including Regional NSW, Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Treasury and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Primary Health Networks, Ministry of Health branches, local health districts, and charities and local community groups to develop targeted actions.
- Advocate for the early inclusion of charities and local community groups as key stakeholders in health service planning, design and implementation.
- Support the establishment of a Community of Practice to build capability and system-wide learning networks that enhance cross-sector collaboration and integration.
- Work with local health districts and NSW Health entities to promote the contribution of charities and local community groups.
- Share learnings with key system and external stakeholders to support targeted action planning.

Actions taken should consider the regional landscape and programs and projects already underway across NSW and Australia.

