

Secretary's year in review



Every day, NSW Health delivers world-class care and achieves outstanding outcomes for people across the state. This is made possible by our remarkable staff who provide high-quality, safe, kind and compassionate care.

It is a privilege to lead and work with this diverse team of exceptional people. On behalf of the executive team at NSW Health, thank you for your dedication, passion, and making a positive difference - for patients, their families, your colleagues, and the communities we serve.

Our remarkable people

Great people working together creates great experiences and outcomes of care. We also know that the experiences of our patients, their families, and carers, are closely tied to the experiences of our staff.

We want our diverse workforce to thrive, in an environment where everyone is valued, respected, and empowered to deliver their best. A strong, vibrant culture, underpinned by our values of Collaboration, Openness, Respect and Empowerment takes time and effort to build and sustain.

While we have so much to be proud of, we are committed to evolving. Listening to our staff and acting on their feedback remains a big focus for us. My thanks to the many teams and leaders across NSW Health who have been working hard on initiatives that contribute to making NSW Health an even better place to work.

NSW Health System Advisory Council

Our NSW Health vision is for a sustainable health system, that delivers outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally enabled.

To achieve our vision, NSW Health has been focused on progressing key objectives within the Future Health Strategic Framework – an ambitious ten-year roadmap launched in 2022 and informed by inputs from thousands of stakeholders to determine and address both current, and anticipated whole of system priorities.

The recently established NSW Health System Advisory Council will play a key role in bringing our vision and strategy to life. The advisory council is a diverse, multidisciplinary group. Its members are a cross-section of NSW Health clinical and allied healthcare professions, along with representatives from the Aboriginal clinical community, and the NSW Health executive team.

Together, the advisory council will provide expert advice to inform frontline healthcare delivery and ensure the views and insights of healthcare professionals working across our system inform key statewide priorities.

Time for care

Our 'Time for Care' initiative aims to reduce and streamline non-clinical and administrative work for frontline staff to free up more time for what matters most – patient care. More than 3,000 people across our local health districts provided a wide array of feedback to help identify opportunities for healthcare staff to spend more time with patients.

These opportunities included practical suggestions to simplify policies and processes, to ideas for how we better use our technology. These will be converted into a series of short, medium and longer-term actions that enable healthcare workers to spend more time with patients, ultimately leading to better outcomes, and achieving tangible progress towards our Future Health strategic priorities.

Planning for the future

Several changes have been made to deliver a more streamlined, integrated and effective structure within the NSW Ministry of Health, as it works to support the whole health system. This included bringing together the Agency for Clinical Innovation and the Office for Health and Medical Research under the leadership of a newly appointed Deputy Secretary, Jean-Frédéric Levesque.

Wayne Jones, formerly Chief Executive of Northern NSW Local Health District, was appointed State Health Services Functional Area Co-ordinator and is working to strengthen our systemwide emergency planning. Matthew Daly was appointed Deputy Secretary, System Sustainability and Performance, and Deb Willcox was appointed Deputy Secretary, Health System Strategy and Patient Experience, with changes to their respective responsibilities to better meet future system needs.

NSW Health is aiming for a smaller, more environmentally sustainable footprint, and we want to achieve 'net zero' by 2050. This year we established a Climate Risk and Net Zero Unit to coordinate and scale up action across NSW Health and help achieve our vision of a sustainable, climate-resilient health system.

We also launched the NSW Health Sustainable Futures Innovation Fund to support staff-led projects that improve patient care and reduce our environmental footprint, and accelerate innovation across NSW Health.

Responsiveness and innovation

COVID-19 was still prevalent in NSW during the last year and continued to impact all aspects of the health service. Although COVID-19 remains with us, last year we reached an inflection point and took time to review and reflect on NSW Health's operational response to the pandemic and inform future responses to public health emergencies. My sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this work, helping to strengthen future emergency preparedness.

“NSW Health could not have done what it did without the unrelenting efforts, unprecedented collegiality, and flexibility of its staff.”

Source: As one system page v.

The pandemic not only demonstrated the unwavering commitment of NSW Health's staff to the communities it serves, but their ability to quickly respond to an ever-changing environment and implement innovations to advance patient care.

I am excited about continuing to focus on what we can achieve in this area and the growing opportunities presented by technology and its innovative applications, which continue to go from strength to strength.

We are providing virtual care to more people than ever, including in the comfort of their own homes, implementing exciting new models of care and seeing deeper collaboration between metropolitan and regional clinicians and allied health professionals.

In 2022-23, we launched the virtual intensive care service, which links clinicians caring for critically ill patients in the Far West Local Health District, with intensive care specialist nurses and doctors from Sydney Local Health District. There are many examples of this type of service across the state including the very impressive maturation of vCare in Dubbo which supports a huge geography across western NSW.

These services are a great example of how virtual care enhances collaboration, while also boosting access to health services, particularly specialist services, to communities throughout NSW.

Through this work we are building an even more robust, patient-centred health system for the people of NSW.

Regional, rural and remote healthcare

Following the establishment of the Regional Health Division within the NSW Ministry of Health, we delivered the Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022-2032 – a blueprint for the next decade of regional healthcare.

The plan was developed after extensive, statewide stakeholder consultation and identifies outcomes that matter most to regional, rural and remote patients and communities. Focus areas include: strengthening the regional health workforce; improving access to quality, timely healthcare; and building community engagement. It also addresses issues raised in the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote NSW.

The Single Employer Model is a great example of how we are investing in regional health, and attracting and retaining healthcare professionals. The program provides pathways for junior doctors to train as rural generalists, enabling them to provide care in both emergency departments and general practice. For regional, rural and remote areas of NSW, this program will help boost their access to specialist skills, while also providing an attractive career opportunity for doctors.

I also want to acknowledge the challenges faced by those regional areas, which in recent years have included multiple natural disasters that have greatly impacted our staff, their families, and communities. Nonetheless, our incredibly dedicated staff continue to deliver outstanding care for their communities. It is no wonder feedback from patients in our rural health facilities remains consistently and overwhelmingly positive.

Our commitment to Closing the Gap

NSW Health continues our commitment to Closing the Gap by supporting truth-telling and the ongoing process of healing for our Aboriginal communities. This is a unifying goal for all of us across the NSW Health System.

We are deeply committed to working in partnership with stolen generations' survivors and their descendants, ensuring that their lived experience guides our strategic planning and service delivery.

In May 2023, one year on from our formal apology to the survivors of the stolen generations, we held a special unveiling ceremony with special guests from the Stolen Generations Organisations, permanently embedding our apology into a sandstone monument and installing it in the Yarning Circle outside the NSW Ministry of Health's building in St Leonards.

Our health family

NSW Health and our outstanding workforce is incredibly rich in its diversity, but we are one big family.

No matter where you are based or what you do in NSW Health, what binds us together is our shared passion and commitment to caring for people.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for all you contribute to each other and the people of NSW.



Susan Pearce AM
Secretary, NSW Health