

Snapshot

The NSW public health system is the largest public health system in Australia, providing world-class healthcare to the people of NSW.



8 million residents on 801,150 km²



15 local health districts and **2** specialty networks



1.4 million emergency incidents responded to by NSW Ambulance



226 public hospitals



2 million inpatient episodes[†]



3.2 million emergency department attendances



340,085 surgeries performed[†]



Approximately **183,000** people (142,761 full-time equivalent staff)

The NSW community

People aged **65 and over**

17.7%

People who identify as **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander**

3.4%

People **born overseas**

34.6%

People who live in **regional NSW**

34%

People aged **14 and under**

18.2%

Households where a **non-English language is used**

29.5%

In NSW public hospitals in 2023–24



67,677 babies were born in a public hospital



930,399 people were admitted



105,223 people had unplanned surgery



26 million meals were served to patients



234,862 people had planned surgery



14.3 million non-admitted patient services events



167,064 children cared for by the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network



16 million clean bed sheets supplied to public hospitals

223,000 patient transports (non-emergency) completed

860,102 dental service appointments provided

1.18 million Triple Zero (000) calls for an ambulance

Secretary's year in review



As the largest health organisation in Australia, the people of NSW Health enrich the health and wellbeing of their many communities in millions of ways every day.

In every part of the health system, our exceptional workforce provides world-class experiences and outcomes of care to patients, carers and their families.

I want to convey my deepest thanks to everyone working at NSW Health. Your commitment and kindness form the bedrock of our wonderful healthcare system. Though we come from different walks of life and contribute to NSW Health in so many different ways, we are united behind a deeply rewarding purpose. Together, we strive daily to deliver the health outcomes that matter most to the communities we serve. I am immensely proud to lead, and work alongside, such dedicated, talented and caring colleagues.

The team enriching health in millions of ways

From clinical excellence, to ensuring care is culturally informed, or cutting-edge research and innovation, our people make an extraordinary difference in so many ways every day.

A well-supported and engaged workforce remains a priority and is essential in enabling us to consistently provide outstanding care. It contributes to peoples' job satisfaction, supports psychological safety, and builds collaboration, great working relationships, and friendships.

Along with celebrating our peoples' many achievements, we continue to listen and work with staff to understand their needs and aspirations.

With regard to patient care, the leadership team is keenly focused on removing obstacles for our staff and finding innovative solutions to the challenges we face.

The Health System Advisory Council is now firmly established and continues to provide expert advice to the system and help shape the delivery of frontline healthcare. They provide strategic, clinical perspectives on a range of matters and issues. This includes the establishment of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Taskforce, the NSW Health Transformation Agenda, and the Single Digital Patient Record.

Another way that our health system is being supported is through dedicated taskforces. For example, the Surgical Taskforce and Emergency Department Taskforce brought together experts from different backgrounds and fields to address some of our system's more complex challenges, and ensure our response met the needs of our patients and staff.

NSW Health also acknowledges the importance of advocacy for improvements to the healthcare system and the working conditions of our staff. I am deeply grateful for your ongoing dedication to caring for the communities you serve while the necessary negotiations happen.

We remain committed to working with unions and the NSW Government towards achieving a positive outcome for all.

Caring takes many forms

Our vision is mapped out in Future Health – to deliver health outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness, and is digitally enabled. In the past year, several initiatives have gone from strength-to-strength in addressing the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

Services like the myVirtualCare platform have supported thousands of patients, and the virtualKIDS and virtualGP services were implemented statewide. Virtual care is firmly recognised as playing an important role in delivering high-quality, more equitable and accessible healthcare across NSW. It continues to build stronger connections between metropolitan and regional teams and create more opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing, as reflected by the successful partnership between Far West and Sydney local health districts.

Care is also being provided in more convenient and clinically appropriate ways. There were 80,000 visits to Urgent Care Services since the roll-out began in mid-2023. These services help to ensure people who do not need emergency care receive the right care in the right place.

We continue to provide comfort and support for people and their loved ones approaching end-of-life, and in the way that best suits their needs. Voluntary assisted dying became a lawful end-of-life option in November 2023 and is now embedded into care pathways in a way that is safe, accessible and compassionate.

In September 2023, NSW Health launched the *NSW Health Child Safe Action Plan*. It outlines what initiatives we are progressing now, and need to take in future, to empower, listen and act together, ensuring a positive and safe experience for children across our health system.

The pharmacy prescribing trial expanded in NSW following its successful pilot. It means more women have access to medications and treatments for uncomplicated urinary tract infections. It also highlights the opportunities stemming from innovative models of care.

Technology shapes future healthcare

AI is already supporting the delivery of high-quality care. This includes improving wound care; simplifying complex data analyses; making more time for patient care by automating repetitive processes; and reviewing volumes of cardiology literature to aid clinical decision-making.

In 2024, NSW Health established a dedicated AI Taskforce. Comprising a diverse group of highly skilled staff, they will help inform and guide the use of AI in our health system.

The Single Digital Patient Record project will create a world-class digital health platform that meets the diverse needs of clinicians, staff, patients, and carers.

Rolling out over six years, the program will streamline access to clinical information to help create a comprehensive, single view of a patient's care journey, no matter where in the public health system they receive their care. In August 2023, the project's steering committee was established with representatives from across NSW Health, who will oversee the project.

Research and innovation are critical to improving safe and quality outcomes and realising new opportunities for NSW Health to deliver the best care possible. The Clinical Innovation and Research Division has been working on the NSW Health Research and Innovation Strategy to help guide how our work remains centred around our people and patients.

We have also engaged in extensive consultation with reputable thought leaders via the creation of a think tank, to enhance collaboration and inform our strategy's development. The insights gained will enable the strategy to be an ambitious, forward-looking plan for research and innovation in NSW.

Aboriginal health and reconciliation

NSW Health remains steadfast in its commitment to Closing the Gap by continuing to make our health services trauma-informed, culturally safe, and accessible for all Aboriginal people. While we have more work to do, I am proud of the significant progress made on a refreshed Aboriginal Health Plan, which is on track to launch in late 2024.

Teams across the state are working hard to improve Aboriginal health outcomes. The realignment of the Centre for Aboriginal Health last year to report directly to the Office of the Secretary has already improved collaboration. Enhancing the visibility of opportunities for NSW Health to further empower our people and help address the unique health needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

Similar to the change in reporting lines in the Ministry, Aboriginal health executives in each local health district now report directly to their Chief Executive – a practical way we have reinforced our commitment to health equity for Aboriginal people at an organisational level.

Attending the first ever Gook-int-ji-Nhunngku Gathering (women's gathering) in Bourke at the invitation of Patricia Canty, a Barkindji woman and staff member of Western NSW Local Health District, was a privilege and a significant highlight of the year. Together with Geraldine Wilson-Matenga, Executive Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Health, we heard stories of courage and strength. In Patricia's own words: "Recognising that women are the leaders in our communities and most importantly in our families, it's important that we provide a platform to upskill, inform, provide leadership opportunities, empower and acknowledge our women."

NSW Health remains deeply committed to continuing its partnership and collaboration with our Aboriginal workforce and Stolen Generation Survivors Organisations. We will continue to work to transform Aboriginal health outcomes and support reconciliation at a system-wide level.



Towards Net Zero

NSW Health has a significant role to play in tackling climate change. Healthcare is a big carbon emitter, and a healthy environment supports public health.

We continue to make strides towards the NSW Government target of achieving net zero by 2050, and our workforce keenly support environmental stewardship. Staff-led initiatives across the state include reducing the use of environmentally harmful anaesthesia gases, unnecessary plastics and gloves, refurbishing home respiratory equipment, and introducing solar power to more sites.

Regional, rural and remote healthcare

We've seen the Regional Health Division make progress in supporting the unique needs of regional, remote and rural communities, and implementing the *NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022–2032*.

Some highlights include growing and strengthening our regional health workforce through the Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme; and the expansion of the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, which provides financial support to patients travelling to access specialist treatment.

Regional infrastructure projects also continue to progress. The Tweed Valley Hospital opened in May 2024, which provides a major boost to local health services; the Rural Ambulance Infrastructure Reconfiguration program opened four Ambulance stations across regional areas; and key worker accommodation projects are taking shape as the program is delivered to support health workers in rural NSW.

Supporting our regional workforce remains a priority. It's a coordinated effort from across the whole health system to help attract, retain and upskill our regional colleagues, and address some of the challenges that they face. I want to acknowledge the tremendous work that our regional workforce does to care for their communities.

The Regional Health Division continues to progress regional health initiatives with local stakeholders to meet the needs of both our regional workforce and their communities, and support a high-performing health system for people in all corners of NSW.

Maternity care

On behalf of NSW Health, I want to again recognise and acknowledge the courage and strength of the thousands of women who shared their deeply personal and difficult experiences with the Select Committee on Birth Trauma.

NSW Health apologises to women who did not receive the high standard of maternity care that they should have. We will continue to listen to and learn from women about their birth experiences in order to deliver the best possible maternity care for women, babies and families in NSW.

We remain committed to implementing the *Connecting, listening and responding: A Blueprint for Action – Maternity Care in NSW*, and have established the Maternity Expert Advisory Group and a Maternity Consumer Reference Group to guide and inform this important work.

Support in tough times

NSW communities experienced some extraordinarily tough times and dark days this past year. People have endured natural disasters, while the impacts of senseless, violent tragedies were also felt across communities.

From first responders on the frontline, to providing mental health or forensic support in the aftermath of tragedies, NSW Health teams across the state provided comfort and care to communities in the most difficult circumstances.

I want to acknowledge and thank people at NSW Health for rising to these challenges. From supporting impacted communities – which often included themselves, their own families and friends – to the way colleagues have supported each other.

The heart of NSW Health

The diversity and talent of NSW Health makes working here truly special. We are a team dedicated to delivering the best possible care. No matter individuals' role or location, we share a passion for health that unites us all. I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your contributions to our communities across NSW, and to one another. Thank you.



Susan Pearce AM
Secretary, NSW Health