
Sustainability

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Environmental sustainability at NSW Health

We are transitioning towards a low-carbon and climate resilient health system alongside our ongoing focus of delivering outstanding patient care.

Extreme climate events, including heatwaves and floods, can impact health both directly and indirectly. These events are becoming increasingly frequent and severe due to climate change, which will put pressure on our health system and disproportionately affect our rural communities and vulnerable populations.

Our health system also contributes to climate change, producing waste, fossil fuel air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. The NSW health sector is responsible for a considerable proportion of the NSW economy's waste (8 per cent¹) and greenhouse gas emissions (6.6 per cent¹).

The NSW Government has set a target of reaching net zero by 2050. The Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023 legislates the NSW Government's approach to addressing climate change. NSW Health and its controlled entities are committed to significantly reducing our emissions, aiming to achieve a 50 per cent reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050 in line with the *Net Zero Future Act*.

Our Future Health Strategy has made our sustainable goals clear and will be supported by our *Net Zero Roadmap 2024–2030*.

Our first Net Zero Roadmap

The Climate Risk and Net Zero unit is coordinating the development of NSW Health's first *Net Zero Roadmap 2024–2030*. The Roadmap will provide a blueprint for how our system is working towards NSW Government's net zero targets. Its development follows 2,200 contributions on the draft Roadmap from public and staff consultation. The launch is expected during the next reporting period.

Involving our people in climate solutions

Our 2023 People Matter Employee Survey results show that the overwhelming majority of our staff support improved environmental sustainability at NSW Health. We also recognise that NSW Health staff have innovative and impactful ideas that can improve the sustainability of our health system.

The Sustainable Futures Innovation Fund provides up to \$25,000 to support staff-led innovation projects that improve patient care and reduce the environmental footprint of NSW Health.

In 2023–24, staff from across the NSW Health System completed 17 projects following the first round of funding. In March 2024, staff were invited to apply to the second round of the Sustainable Futures Innovation Fund and 11 local sustainability initiatives were chosen for funding in June 2024.

This financial year, we also introduced the Environmental Sustainability Award category to the annual NSW Health Awards. This award recognises the achievements of our health system and workforce to reduce our environmental footprint, whilst continuing to deliver high-quality healthcare and patient experience.

Reducing the use of desflurane

Anaesthetic gases account for approximately five per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, with desflurane and nitrous oxide having a significant global warming potential. Desflurane is also an expensive anaesthetic agent. In March 2024, the NSW Medicines Formulary Committee has removed desflurane from the NSW Medicines Formulary, noting the availability of alternatives, and concerns about desflurane's financial and environmental impacts. NSW Health has already observed a marked reduction in desflurane utilisation since 2019 and will continue to monitor its use.

Energy management and environmental sustainability

Rising electricity prices continue to impact NSW Health spend at large sites. Consumption was approximately 4.7 per cent higher than the previous year due to activity and high summer temperatures. Demand, higher prices for electricity, and environmental objectives are key drivers of energy management.

Energy contract use

Year	LPG (Non-automotive) Volume tonnes	Natural Gas Use (TJ)*	Electricity Use (GWh)	Total Electricity bill \$ million**
2023–24	7,747	1,576	810	\$152.8
2022–23	8,881	1,266	773	\$129.9
2021–22	6,595	1,278	786	\$120.5

¹Malik, Padgett, Carter et al. Environmental impacts of Australia's largest health system. Resources, Conservation & Recycling. 2021; 169: 105556. *Natural gas includes large and small site usage and cost ** Includes GST

Modern Slavery Act 2018 reporting

There were steps taken to ensure that goods and services procured by and for the agency during the financial year, then ended, were not the product of modern slavery.

NSW Health reported against its requirements under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Commonwealth) on behalf of local health districts. In the Commonwealth report, NSW Health outlined several activities that were relevant to its requirements under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW). These activities are ongoing and aimed to address modern slavery risks in the operational and supply chain contexts. Activities included risk assessments, stakeholder engagement, education and training, and operational process changes.

NSW Health is a member of the Shared Implementation Plan Working Group which was established by the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner for NSW government agencies to work with the Commissioner's office to develop an implementation plan for the reporting requirements under the reasonable steps outlined by the Commissioner.

Actions taken by NSW Health in relation to issues raised by the Anti-slavery Commissioner

The NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner raised issues around modern slavery training and the policies and guidelines to prohibit the viewing of inappropriate material on information and communication technologies (ICT) platforms. NSW Health has policy measures in place to govern the appropriate use of its ICT platforms. NSW Health has also implemented a priority action plan that involved due diligence and training for internal staff and suppliers.

Work health and safety

In 2023–24, NSW Health continued to enhance its policy framework to ensure a best practice approach to health and safety.

The NSW Health Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework

In August 2023, the NSW Ministry of Health released the *NSW Health Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework*. The Framework was developed to ensure our people are supported to deliver safe, reliable, person-centred care driving the best outcomes and experiences for patients and staff. This is achieved by ensuring organisational psychosocial risks are identified, assessed, managed, and minimised as far as reasonably practicable.

The Framework is an evidence-informed, integrated approach for creating a mentally healthy and safe workplace. It is underpinned by collaboration, communication, and consultation, and assists NSW Health organisations to comply with their legislative requirements to protect the physical and psychological health, safety, and welfare of all workers at work.

The Framework reflects three integrated and overlapping elements:

- **Protect/Prevent:** ensure our workplaces are free from harm and hazards that impact health, safety and wellbeing.
- **Promote:** enhance the positive aspects of work and leverage the strength of individuals, teams and the organisation.
- **Respond:** identify and respond early to distress or ill health regardless of the cause.

Rehabilitation, recovery and return to work

The *Rehabilitation, Recovery and Return to Work* policy and supporting template, sets out the legislative and NSW Health requirements for the creation and implementation of best practice return to work programs.

Controlling exposure to surgical plume

The *Work Health and Safety – Controlling Exposure to Surgical Plume* guideline provides information for NSW Health organisations to manage the risks associated with surgical plume. It provides information for a risk management approach to minimise exposure of workers and patients to surgical plume, and to meet their duties and responsibilities under the Work Health and Safety legislation.

Management of patients with bariatric needs

The *Management of Patients with Bariatric Needs* guideline provides best practice information to assist facilities and services in identifying and implementing risk controls to ensure the appropriate management of patients with bariatric needs, and the safety of staff who provide care to them.

Blood and body substances occupational exposure prevention

The *Blood and Body Substances Occupational Exposure Prevention* guideline focuses on the prevention of risk to workers of occupational exposure to contaminated blood, body substances, and needle stick and sharps injuries. It supports NSW Health agencies in their primary duty of care obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017*.

Workers compensation

NSW Health supported its workplaces with a range of practice guides to continue to improve rehabilitation, injury management, and recovery. The NSW Ministry of Health continues to progress strategies to:

- facilitate opportunities to enhance recovery at work through the identification and sharing of suitable duties
- identify and mitigate psychosocial issues for workers following a workplace injury
- reduce risk associated with Work Injury Damages claims.

Overall reportable workers compensation claims decreased from the previous financial year, both including and excluding COVID-19 related claims. Claims against most mechanisms of injury were reduced for 2023–24.

NSW Ministry of Health – Categories of reportable workers compensation claims

Injury or illness	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Body stressing	1	25.0	4	33.4	4	50.0
Psychological	2	50.0	4	33.4	2	25.0
Fall, trips and slips of a person	0	0.0	1	8.3	2	25.0
Motor vehicle	1	25.0	1	8.3	0	0
Biological factors	0	0.0	1	8.3	0	0
Other	0	0.0	1	8.3	0	0
Hitting objects	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0
Total	4	100	12	100	8	100

NSW Health – Categories of reportable workers compensation claims

Mechanism of injury	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Body stressing	1,943	35.0	1,913	31.1	1,861	32.5
Biological factors	1,016	18.3	1,494	24.2	1,068	18.6
Mental stress	701	12.6	768	12.5	757	13.2
Fall, trips and slips of a person	787	14.1	813	13.2	753	13.1
Being hit by moving objects	551	9.9	629	10.2	711	12.4
Vehicle incidents and other	126	2.3	163	2.6	262	4.6
Hitting objects with a part of the body	216	3.9	215	3.5	180	3.1
Heat, electricity and other environmental factors	51	0.9	48	0.8	57	1.0
Chemicals and other substances	111	2.0	75	1.2	46	0.8
Sound and pressure	54	1.0	42	0.7	41	0.7
Total	5,556	100	6,160	100	5,736	100

Source: icare TMF Dashboard – reportable claims by date reported and entered into the Claims Managers system as at June 2024.

Note: Reportable claims for the NSW Ministry of Health, local health districts, specialty networks, pillars and support services. Reportable claim data is accurate as at the time of extraction. The total claim numbers can increase from year to year when a previously non-reportable claim becomes a reportable claim after the data is extracted. The tables can not be compared to previous annual reports.

Prosecutions under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011

This reporting information sets out notifiable incidents and prosecutions that reached a conclusion in 2023–24. Details of notifiable incidents and prosecutions under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* for NSW Health entities that have been reported through the NSW Ministry of Health in 2023–24 are as follows:

- the NSW Ministry of Health is not aware of any prosecutions, under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, that were concluded in 2023–24
- the NSW Ministry of Health has been advised of 225 notifiable incidents to Safework NSW for NSW Health in 2023–24.

Workforce diversity

Trends in the representation of workforce diversity groups

Workforce Diversity Group	Benchmark	2022	2023	2024
Women	50%	74.50%	74.50%	74.50%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People	3.30%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%
People whose first language spoken as a child was not English	23.20%	24.00%	25.40%	26.40%
People with disability	5.60%	1.70%	1.80%	1.80%
People with disability requiring work-related adjustment	N/A	0.40%	0.40%	0.40%

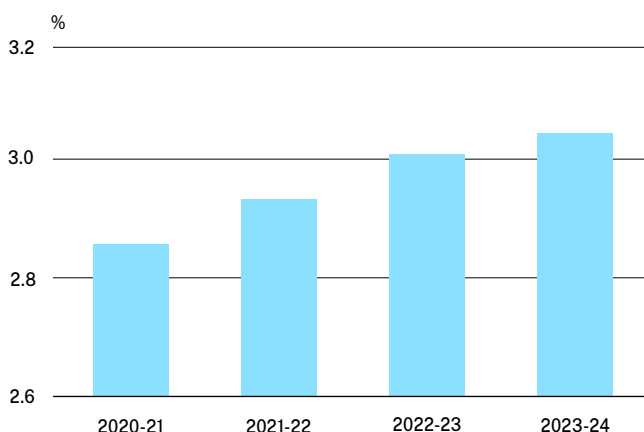
Note: 1. The benchmark of 50 per cent for representation of women across the sector is intended to reflect the gender composition of the NSW community. **2.** The *NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019–2025* takes a career pathway approach in that it sets an ambitious target of 3 per cent Aboriginal employment at each non-executive grade of the public sector by 2025. **3.** A benchmark from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing has been included for People whose First Language Spoken as a Child was not English. The ABS Census does not provide information about first language, but does provide information about country of birth. The benchmark of 23.2 per cent is the percentage of the NSW general population born in a country where English is not the predominant language. **4.** In December 2017 the NSW Government announced the target of doubling the representation of people with disability in the NSW public sector from an estimated 2.7 per cent to 5.6 per cent by 2027. More information can be found at online at [Jobs for People with Disability: A plan for the NSW public sector](#). The benchmark for 'People with Disability Requiring Work-Related Adjustment' was not updated.

Trends in the distribution index for workforce diversity groups

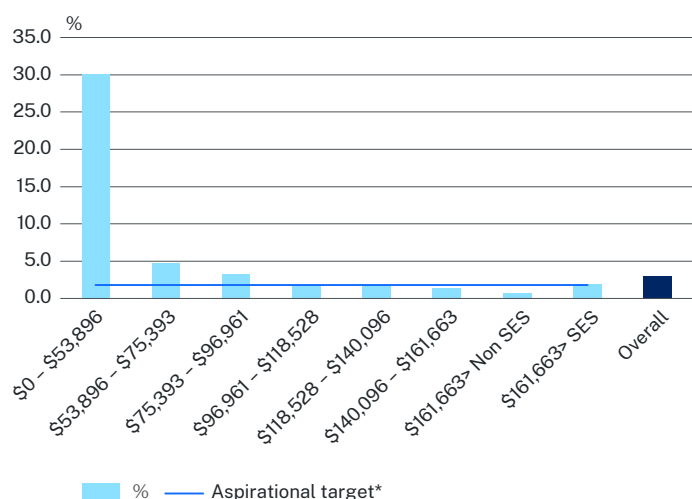
Workforce Diversity Group	Benchmark	2022	2023	2024
Women	100	92	93	93
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People	100	77	77	78
People whose first language spoken as a child was not English	100	96	95	95
People with disability	100	88	86	86
People with disability requiring work-related adjustment	100	88	88	87

Note: 1. A Distribution Index score of 100 indicates that the distribution of members of the workforce diversity group across salary bands is equivalent to that of the rest of the workforce. A score less than 100 means that members of the workforce diversity group tend to be more concentrated at lower salary bands than is the case for other staff. The more pronounced this tendency is, the lower the score will be. In some cases, the index may be more than 100, indicating that members of the workforce diversity group tend to be more concentrated at higher salary bands than is the case for other staff. **2.** The distribution index is not calculated when the number of employees in the workforce diversity group is less than 20 or when the number of other employees is less than 20.

Aboriginal staff as a proportion of workforce



Aboriginal staff by salary band



Source: Public Service Commission data collection 2023–24.
Note: 1. NSW Public Health System. **2.** Excludes third schedule facilities. **3.** Workforce total excludes staff that do not disclose Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal status. **4.** Salary bands are NSW Health specific bands and cannot be compared to Public Service Commission salary bands.

*Note from the Public Service Commission Diversity Report 2020 – *The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014–17* introduced an aspirational target of achieving 1.8 per cent Aboriginal staff for each of the sector’s salary bands by 2021. If the aspirational target of 1.8 per cent is achieved in salary bands not currently at or above 1.8 per cent, the cumulative representation of Aboriginal employees in the sector is expected to reach 3.3 per cent. (Original overall target is 2.6 per cent).

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

The NSW Health Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016–2019 (DIAP) continued to support improved access to quality healthcare and employment for people with disability during 2023–24. The DIAP supports delivery of the *NSW Disability Inclusion Plan* which identifies key focus areas for NSW agencies and local government to promote and enable full participation and inclusion of people with disability in the community.

The period of our DIAP has been extended pending completion of key national and state reviews including Australia’s Disability Strategy and the *NSW Disability Inclusion Plan*. The current NSW Health DIAP meets requirements under the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014*. NSW Health plans to publish our next DIAP in 2025, to align with the updated *NSW Disability Inclusion Plan*.

Key achievements in 2023–24 included:

- further integration of specialist health care for people with an intellectual disability. The NSW Health Intellectual Disability Health Service saw 1,180 clients in 2023 – a 25 per cent increase from the previous year
- delivery of the Disability Inclusive Practices in Health project in Ryde, St George, Auburn and Bankstown hospitals, supporting improved healthcare for people with disability
- implementation of the Hospital Discharge Exemplar Project in three local health districts to improve the hospital journey of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants and improve the confidence of NSW Health staff working with people with disability. The project introduced models such as early and active involvement of hospital liaison officers and support coordinators in the multidisciplinary team to facilitate timely discharge from hospital.

NSW Health LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022–2027

The *NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy 2022–2027* provides direction to all NSW Health organisations and staff, so that collectively the system can deliver the best care to LGBTIQ+ people and work with them to achieve optimal health and wellbeing.

Delivery of the strategy is supported by an implementation plan and guided by a committee comprising representatives from: NSW Health, primary health networks, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, the University of Sydney, the University of NSW, and community organisations including BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, ACON, The Gender Centre, Twenty10, Trans Pride Australia, and Intersex Human Rights Australia.

In the first two years of implementation, achievements include:

- Supported development and passage of the *Conversion Practices Ban Act 2024* in collaboration with the Department and Communities of Justice.
- Revised the LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Health Care module for healthcare staff and commenced development of a *LGBTIQ+ Workforce Education and Training Strategy*.
- Implemented the NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Flexible Funding Pool to kickstart 21 local projects across the health system in 2023–24 and 2024–25 to support implementation of the strategy.
- Funded non-government organisations to deliver mental health and suicide prevention initiatives including a statewide Trans Mental Health Wellbeing Service that provides counselling, peer support, and peer navigation services to trans adults in NSW.
- Provided specialist multidisciplinary health services for trans and gender diverse young people and their families through a statewide service, including releasing the *Framework for the Specialist Trans and Gender Diverse Health Service for People Under 25 Years*.
- Completed a project to investigate how NSW Health collects data on gender, sexuality, intersex variations, and other variables. The project resulted in recommendations to enhance systems, policy, governance, and other areas to inform future data collection to support better health outcomes and clinical decision making.
- Provided LGBTIQ+ inclusion training to more than 550 staff at NSW Health.
- Updated the LGBTIQ+ pages on the NSW Health website to provide information and resources for the community and health professionals.

The partnerships built with communities and non-government organisations have been key to the strategy's implementation. These relationships acknowledge the depth of lived experience, trauma, resilience, passion, pride, and possibilities.

NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010

NSW Health is committed to improving the experience of carers who come into contact with, or work for, NSW Health. To guide specific initiatives a survey was undertaken with local health districts and specialty health networks to understand how carers are supported across the health system. Support for carers was consistent across the state, and opportunity for improvement in consistency of data collection, monitoring and reporting was identified. Initiatives to address this are in development.

The *NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers: Key Directions 2024–2028* has been reviewed and is due to be published in mid-2024. The updated document has been informed by system-wide consultation, with input from NSW Health entities, members of the community and non-government organisations. This document will provide a framework for addressing carers' needs across the NSW health system.

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