



**Health**  
Nepean Blue Mountains  
Local Health District

TOGETHER  
**ACHIEVING**  
BETTER **HEALTH**

# **NBMLHD**

# **Research Strategy**

# **& Implementation Plan**

## **2022-2025**

Version 0.4



## Version Control

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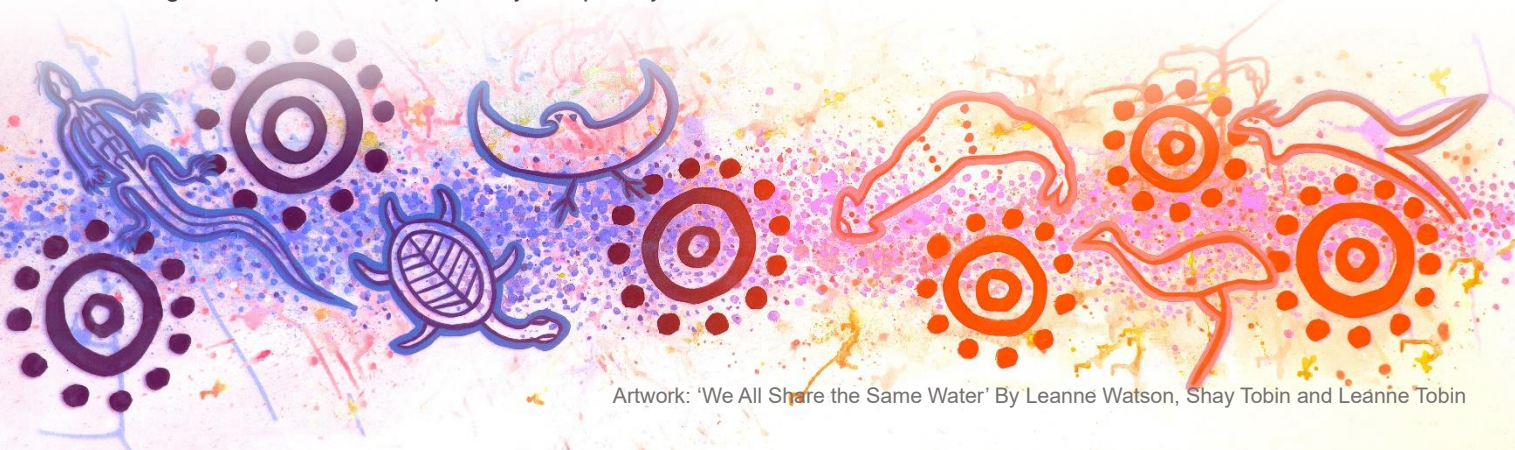
## Approval and Endorsement

Version/Date	Committees	Date	HPRM

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District would like to acknowledge the Darug, Gundungurra and Wiradjuri people as the traditional custodians of the land that the Local Health District services. We would also like to pay our respects to all Elders both past and present from the many nations we journey through, and communicate with, on a daily basis as employees of the Local Health District.

Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District is committed to providing culturally appropriate, accessible services that will improve the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our communities. We recognise that increasing our own cultural competency is a priority in order to achieve this commitment.



Artwork: 'We All Share the Same Water' By Leanne Watson, Shay Tobin and Leanne Tobin

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# Foreword placeholder

# Strategy at a glance

## Research Vision

Effective evidence-based best practice healthcare for all, delivered by a talented, happy and engaged workforce via a sustainable health system.

## NBMLHD's Strategic Directions



## Strategic Research Aims

**Strategic Aim 1:** Partner with the community to undertake research that is inclusive, engaging, accessible and addresses an expressed local need

**Strategic Aim 2:** Build research capacity to embed research into health services and improve patient satisfaction and outcomes

**Strategic Aim 3:** Invest in research infrastructure and build funding sources that are sustainable and equitable

**Strategic Aim 4:** Build collaborations and partnerships with Universities, education partners, research institutes, industry and the community that are productive, strategic and transparent

**Strategic Aim 5:** Effective, efficient and transparent research governance

# Introduction

The actions laid out in this strategy and plan aim to make research more accessible to more of our workforce and patients and to ensure that research conducted across NBMLHD better meets the needs of the communities in our region. The plan also supports an improved research culture across NBMLHD, increasing the profile and support of research and researchers within the District. The development of research priorities will also be supported; priorities that will be informed and developed in partnership with local services, local communities and, most importantly, local consumers and carers.

## Aim

The NBMLHD Research Strategy and Implementation Plan articulates the overarching strategic research aims for NBMLHD as well as the actions required to start to achieve these aims. This is a foundational document, intended to lay the groundwork for a more strategically focussed document in the next iteration.

## NBMLHD overview

The geographical spread of NBMLHD is broad, covering more than 9,000 square kilometres. NBMLHD extends approximately 120km from east to west and 140km from north to south. Service provision, while spread across the LHD, is concentrated in Penrith Local Government Area (LGA) with the highest concentration of research occurring at Nepean Hospital.

It's estimated that almost 400,000 people live in NBMLHD<sup>i</sup>. Of the people currently living in our region, 4.3% identify as Aboriginal<sup>ii</sup>. Almost one-fifth of our population were born overseas<sup>iii</sup> and more than 10% were born in non-English speaking countries<sup>iv</sup>. This makes our region representative of the broader Australian population and subsequently an excellent opportunity for population-level research that can then be generalised across the nation.

By 2036, the NBMLHD population is predicted to increase by 44% to 529,457 people. The greatest growth is predicted in Penrith (74%) and Hawkesbury (16%). The most rapid increases are projected for the population aged 65 years and over<sup>v</sup>. This growth and change in the NBMLHD population will require a shift in the way healthcare is delivered, moving from responding to illness to an increasing focus on prevention and sustaining wellbeing. To meet this challenge NBMLHD will need to respond with new and innovative ways of providing healthcare, driven by research, innovation and community priorities.

## Our research achievements

Over the past 2 years there has been a considerable increase in the quantity and quality of health and medical research undertaken across NBMLHD. This is underpinned by a longstanding commitment to cultivating high quality research and building a culture of enquiry in clinical practice. This commitment is underpinned by the District's strategic goal of being a Hub for Research and Innovation and demonstrated by the breadth of strategic alignment and partnerships with leading local Universities including The University of Sydney, Western Sydney University and Notre Dame University.

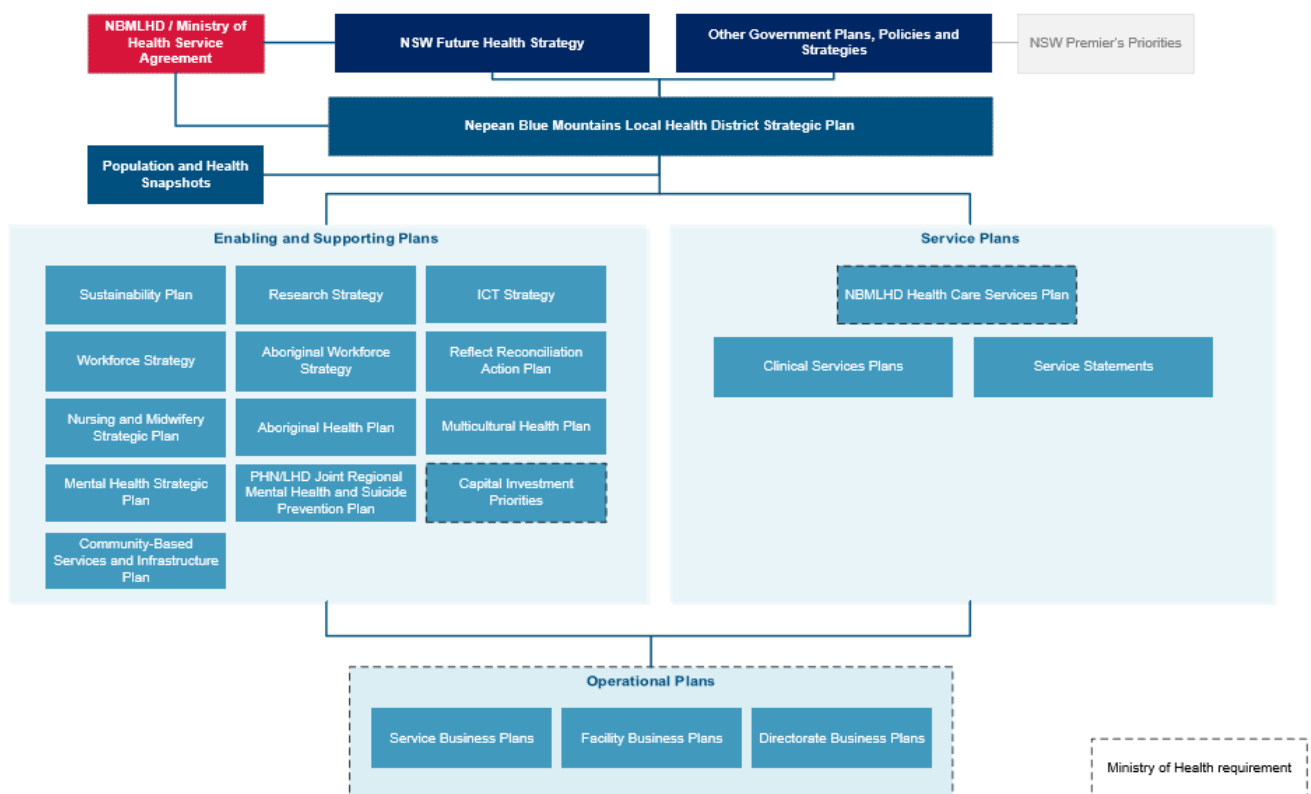
Research undertaken within NBMLHD covers a broad range of areas including public and population health, mental health, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, genomics, endocrine and metabolic disorders, oncology and haematology, adult and neonatal intensive care, cardiovascular, renal, respiratory medicine, hepatology and gastroenterology. Clinical and non-clinical research involves medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health colleagues as well as non-clinical staff. There is an increasing ambition among NBMLHD researchers to remove the barriers that often confine us to working in disciplinary silos and work collegially, across clinical areas and disciplines to improve health system performance and patient outcomes.

The next three years will also see a period of great change across NBMLHD. The commissioning of the two new sections of Nepean Hospital will not only further highlight the need for NBMLHD to perform in a highly competitive job market but also ensure our service provision matches or manages community expectations. A nurturing, supportive and strategic research culture, built through the implementation of this Research Strategy and Implementation Plan, will help NBMLHD meet these aims.

## Strategic Framework

The NBMLHD Research Strategy and Implementation Plan is an enabling and supportive plan within the NBMLHD Planning Framework (Figure 1). As such, the plan is informed by the NBMLHD Strategic Plan 2018-2023 and will help to achieve the LHD’s strategic direction of being a hub for research and innovation.

Figure 1: NBMLHD Planning Framework



In addition to the NBMLHD Strategic Plan, the NBMLHD Research Strategy and Implementation plan also aligns to, and has been informed by, a number of external plans and documents, including:

- National Health and Medical Research Council *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018*
- National Health and Medical Research Council *Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research*
- Australian Health Research Alliance National Indigenous Research(er) Capacity Building Project
- NSW State Health Plan: Towards 2021
- NSW Health *NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023*
- NSW Health *NSW Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities 2019-2023*



## Summary of plan development

Figure 2: Process for developing the NBMLHD Research Strategy 2022-2025

### Governance

*The project was governed by the NBMLHD Board Research Subcommittee with additional oversight provided by Ngara and the Strategy and Planning Board Subcommittee.*

### Consultations

#### Who

*Over 100 people were consulted, including NBMLHD Board members; senior clinicians, nurses and allied health professionals; PhD candidates; Aboriginal Health Unit; Population and Public Health professionals and research governance and ethics administrators.*

#### How

*Face-to-face group and one-on-one sessions; video conference and phone meetings; online survey; District 'Documents for comment' process.*

*A summary of consultations can be found at Appendix [X]*

### Significant Plans and Frameworks

*Significant plans and frameworks included the NBMLHD Strategic Plan 2018-2023 and State and National Plans, including the NHMRC Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in health and Medical Research; the Australian Health Research Alliance National Indigenous Research(er) Capacity Building Project; the NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023 and the NSW Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities 2019-2023.*

### Background Documentation Reviews

*Reviews of other relevant national, state and local documents included the National Clinical Trial Governance Framework: Guide for implementation ; NSW State Health Plan: Towards 2021; NBMLHD Research Strategic Plan 2019-2024 and the Draft CBRE Education and Research Strategy.*

## Governance and implementation of the plan

The implementation of the Research Strategy and Implementation Plan will require leadership across all levels of the District and across all multidisciplinary groups.

The NBMLHD Board will take overarching responsibility for primary governance and implementation leadership. The Director, Allied Health, Research and Strategic Partnerships will take overarching responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of the plan, closely supported by the Director of Research Operations who will take responsibility for implementing the actions within each of the defined strategic aims. Progress will be regularly reported quarterly at the NBMLHD Board Research Subcommittee meeting, with outcome reports completed annually. The next iteration of the Research Strategy and Implementation Plan will be developed in 2025.

# Strategic Aims and Implementation Plan

## Strategic Aim 1: Partner with the community to undertake research that is inclusive, engaging, accessible and addresses an expressed local need

Aligned to Strategic Direction 'Hub for research and innovation', 'Healthy people and communities' and 'Exceptional patient and consumer experiences and outcomes'.

Objectives	Actions	Starting timeframe	Enablers	Outcome	Responsible
Work with the community to identify priority research areas that address community needs	<p>Conduct community consultations, including with Aboriginal and other culturally and linguistically diverse groups, to understand research priorities across the LHD and any specific research priorities for vulnerable populations</p> <p>Establish a consumer reference group for research</p>	Year 1	<p>Engagement through existing community and consumer groups via Clinical Governance</p> <p>Engagement through the Aboriginal Health Unit and other key stakeholders</p> <p>Funding support for cultural competency training at NBMLHD</p>	<p>Documented community and consumer research priorities to inform the next iteration of the research strategy</p> <p>Improved cultural competency of researchers</p> <p>Increased networks with local Aboriginal group</p>	D-ARS D-RO D-AH REGM CGU
Embed consumer and community engagement into research conducted throughout the LHD	<p>Develop and implement a policy for consumer and community engagement in research</p> <p>Provide education and training to researchers on the policy and its implementation</p>	Year 2	Support from the Research Committee of the Board and Clinical Governance	Endorsement and implementation of policy	D-RO CGU
Promote NBMLHD research to consumers and the community	Establish a strong public web presence that shares information about research processes, programs and projects	Year 2	Work with Media and Communications at NBMLHD to develop a highly engaging, externally facing research web presence	Engaging externally-facing website and other web presence showcasing research across NBMLHD	D-RO REGM

Ensure that research conducted in Aboriginal communities uses a strengths-based approach	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research policy (in partnership with Aboriginal researchers)  Provide cultural competency in research training	Year 2	Support from Aboriginal Health research groups such as AHMRC and The George Institute for Global Health, to develop policy	Endorsement and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Policy  Cultural competency in research training provided to key staff	D-ARS D-AH D-RO
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## Strategic Aim 2: Build research capacity to embed research into health services and improve patient satisfaction and outcomes

Aligned to Strategic Directions 'Healthy people and communities' and 'Talented, happy and engaged workforce'.

Objectives	Actions	Starting Timeframe	Enablers	Outcomes	Responsible
Build academic research capacity and capability	Establish the Research Capacity Building Committee to identify and address capacity building issues identified by research staff  Develop and implement education program and training pathway for researchers, including wide scale education regarding the Research Career Pathway	Year 1	High level support from the Research Committee of the Board  Direct engagement from active researchers  Collaboration with clinical directors	Increased researcher capacity as defined by increase in research output and impact, i.e. publications, grants, students, influencing guidelines and clinical practice	D-RO P-AH ETS
Develop research-specific roles and position descriptions for staff aligned with their professional qualifications	Work with WPC to identify issues with recruitment to research positions and develop solutions  Work with the OHMR to standardise position	Year 2	Support from the Research Committee of the Board  Support from the Director, People and Culture  Support and budget from OHMR	Streamlined recruitment processes for research positions, including appointment of permanent positions and development of research specific roles and position	D-RO D-PC REGM

	description templates for key research positions			descriptions aligned with professional qualifications	
Provide formal opportunities for professional development and for staff to come together to share experiences and for capacity building opportunities	Establish a formal research mentoring program  Establish regular research events such as research grand rounds	Year 2	Funding support	Mentoring program available for early and mid-career researchers (up to 10-years postdoc)	D-RO ETS
Celebrate and promote research success including improving the transparency of what research is happening and by whom	Establish a regular research communication highlighting achievements and opportunities, including funding opportunities  Routinely report major research achievements in 'In the Know'  Establish an annual event to celebrate research achievements	Year 0  Year 0  Year 1	Access to digital platforms and promotional support across the LHD and more broadly  Good communication and collaboration with key research stakeholders  High level support from Research Committee and Board	Research is celebrated within NBMLHD and researchers feel supported and valued	D-ARS D-RO

### Strategic Aim 3: Invest in research infrastructure and build funding sources that are sustainable and equitable

Aligned to Strategic Direction 'Hub for research and innovation' and 'Responsible governance and financial management'.

Objectives	Actions	Starting Timeframe	Enablers	Outcomes	Responsible
Centralise management of research finance and clinical trials infrastructure across NBMLHD	Undertake financial analysis of current activity and derive an optimal model to ensure financial viability and efficiency	Year 1	Budget allocation and recruitment to new positions  Appointment of a Finance Manager within NBMLHD	Accreditation for the National Clinical Trials Governance Framework	D-ARS D-RO District Manager, Finance

	Establish a Clinical Trials Unit and implement NSW Health Clinical Trials Management System		dedicated to supporting Research  Appoint Clinical Trials Unit Manager positions across the NBMLHD	Increase clinical trial capacity	
Facilitate access to technologies, such as REDCap, that will enable more efficient and high quality approaches to conducting investigator-initiated research	Identify and address gaps in available research software (i.e. databases etc.) to engage more researchers in high quality investigator-initiated research	Year 2	Engagement and collaboration with OHMR and other academic partners to determine feasibility of sharing research platforms	Improved research culture, capabilities and knowledge sharing  Researchers will have access to a local platform to conduct research	D-ARS D-RO REGM
Develop a business case for the establishment of a dedicated NBMLHD research space/institute, noting that securing funding for the establishment of this space/institute will be one of the focus areas of the next iteration of this plan	Identify potential locations for a dedicated research space  Work with Finance Team to identify cost implications of options  Develop case for change  Identify preferred option  Draft Business Case	Year 3	Executive support for a dedicated research space  Researcher support for a dedicated research space  Establish a steering committee to drive development of the business case	Business case finalised  Business case supported by NBMLHD Executive, CE and Board  Business case supported by Ministry of Health	D-ARS D-RO

## Strategic Aim 4: Build collaborations and partnerships with Universities, education partners, research institutes, industry and the community that are productive, strategic and transparent

Aligned to Strategic Direction *Hub for research and innovation.*

Objectives	Actions	Starting Timeframe	Enablers	Outcomes	Responsible
Ensure current and future partnerships and collaborations are aligned to the District's strategic directions and priorities	<p>Conduct an audit of all partnerships and affiliations across the District and make this information readily available internally</p> <p>Develop a framework that guides decisions around partnerships and collaborations</p>	Year 2	Knowledge of, or ready access to information about, current partnerships	All partnerships and collaborations align to the District's strategic directions and priorities	D-RO REGM
Increase networking and collaboration opportunities externally	<p>Increase the number of collaborations with academic partners, including Western Sydney University, University of Sydney, University of Notre Dame, UNSW</p> <p>Increase the number of collaborations with industry partners, including The Quarter and Celestino</p> <p>Increase the number of collaborations with other LHDs, including SWSLHD and WSLHD through the Greater Western Sydney Health Partnership</p>	Year 1	<p>Leveraging existing networks</p> <p>Executive and clinician support of new collaborations</p>		D-ARS D-RO
Increase the strategic impact of collaborations and partnerships	<p>Identify partners with strategic research aims and priorities that align to NBLMHD's</p> <p>Explore new opportunities to strengthen the impact of research programs with current partners</p>	Year 1 and ongoing	Clear understanding and articulation of the NBMLHD research priorities and aims	<p>Increased number of higher degree by research students</p> <p>Increased number of research-focussed student placements</p> <p>Increased number of collaborative</p>	D-ARS D-RO

				clinical trials and other research  Improved awarding of research grant funding	
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## Strategic Aim 5: Effective, efficient and transparent research governance

Aligned to Strategic Direction *Responsible governance and financial management*.

Objectives	Actions	Starting Timeframe	Enablers	Outcomes	Responsible
Develop and implement a formal Research Governance Framework (RGF)	<p>Transform the Research Office into a Research Development and Governance Unit that will take overarching responsibility for the development and implementation of the RGF</p> <p>Establish a Research Policy and suite of related Standard Operating Procedures that comprise a Quality Management System (QMS)</p> <p>Establish a pathway for managing research misconduct</p> <p>Establish a virtual research resource centre to support all aspects of research operations and management</p>	Year 0	<p>High level support from the Board and the Research Committee of the Boar</p> <p>Direct support from OHMR to develop and implement RGF</p>	<p>Accreditation for the National Clinical Trials Governance Framework</p> <p>Improved consistency and efficiency in operational processes, i.e. meeting KPIs</p> <p>NBMLHD will have a good research reputation as leaders in NSW</p>	D-RO REGM
Establish research units with formally appointed clinical research leads and an understanding of existing and additional funding required to support core activities developed	<p>Establish and appoint members to a Research Advisory Council</p> <p>Develop research plans for each clinical area that are aligned to this strategy and the broader vision of the District</p>	Year 1	Executive and clinical support	Improved oversight of unit and department level research	D-RO Department heads



# References

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- <sup>i</sup> Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, HealthStats NSW. Population by LGA and age group [Dataset]. NSW Ministry of Health: North Sydney; date [cited 2021 Feb 9]. Available from <http://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au>
- <sup>ii</sup> Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU). Social Health Atlas of Australia, Data by Primary Health Network (incl. Local Government Areas) [Data Set: Indigenous status, ERP 2016]. Adelaide: Torrens University; 2021 [cited 2021 Oct 6]. Available from <https://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases>
- <sup>iii</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016 - Birthplace. Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions) [cited 2021 Oct 6]. Available from: <https://profile.id.com.au/nbmphn/birthplace?BMID=40>
- <sup>iv</sup> PHIDU. Social Health Atlas of Australia, Data by Primary Health Network (incl. Local Government Areas) [Data Set - People born in predominantly non-English speaking countries, URP 2016]. Adelaide: Torrens University; 2021 [cited 2021 Oct 6]. Available from <https://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases>
- <sup>v</sup> NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment NSW Projections Explorer [Accessed February 2020]. Available from <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/population/>

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Abbreviations

AHMRC	Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council
CGU	Clinical Governance Unit
CTUM	Clinical Trials Unit Manager
D-AH	Director, Allied Health
D-ARS	Director, Allied Health, Research and Strategic Partnerships
D-RO	Director, Research Operations
M&C	Media and Communications
REGM	Research Ethics and Governance Manager
LGA	Local Government Area
LHD	Local Health District
NBMLHD	Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District
OHMR	Office of Health and Medical Research
WPC	Workforce, People and Culture

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## Appendix 2: Consultation summary

A series of current state and strategy development consultations were conducted to inform the development of this Research Strategy in the first half of 2021. These consultations were a mixture of face-to-face and virtual and individual and group consultation sessions. An anonymous survey was also circulated for those who were unable to attend a consultation session.

In total, 71 people attended at least one consultation session and a further 30 people completed the online survey.

The main areas addressed through the consultations were:

- What does NBMLHD do well in research?
- How can we improve in the following areas:
  - Administration of research
  - Research infrastructure
  - Funding
  - Staffing
  - Research partnerships
- What are the barriers to research
- How can consumers be empowered to be involved in research?

At a high level, the consultations indicated that there is:

- Strong interest and enthusiasm for research in NBMLHD and many opportunities
- A need for both a research institute and a clinical trials unit
- An opportunity to improve the research culture in NBMLHD
- A need to improve the visibility of research and researchers in NBMLHD
- An opportunity to improve the support services around research
- An opportunity to facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration and capability building
- A need to improve the funding of research, or awareness of funding opportunities, in NBMLHD.

The full consultation report can be made available upon request.