

Exceptional rural healthcare

Healthier together. Care tailored to people's needs.



Health
Murrumbidgee
Local Health District

**Strategic Plan
2021-2026**



An aerial photograph of Griffith Base Hospital and the surrounding residential area. The hospital is a large, modern building with a flat roof and several wings, situated in the center-right of the frame. To its left and in the background, there is a dense residential area with many houses and trees. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise. A large, dark blue circular graphic is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing text.

Acknowledging our Aboriginal communities

MLHD acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across our footprint, traditional lands of the Wiradjuri, Wamba Wamba/Wemba Wemba, Perrepa Perrepa, Yorta Yorta, Nari Nari and Muthi Muthi nations. We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities and we pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We commit to respect, protect, preserve and maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's culture, and to conduct our business in accordance with cultural protocol and respect. We celebrate and share successes and are proud of the rich history of Aboriginal Culture, recognising the diverse and proud Aboriginal nations across our District.

We are grateful for our local community who contribute to the wellbeing of people and communities in the region; the contributions of our communities, and our community controlled Aboriginal health organisations. Together, we remain determined to closing gaps in health inequities for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our region.



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Acknowledgement of artwork

Artist Kheely Turner is a Wiradjuri/Ngiyampaa woman from West Wyalong. Kheely's artwork "Marrambidya" (Wiradjuri word for Murrumbidgee) exhibits the spiritual connection that Aboriginal people have to the cleansing and healing nature of the river. It's a river that connects us all and brings health and vigour to people, animals and plants. We take nourishment, both physically and mentally, from this source. It's a common element that brings us together with a sense of place and connection to country, culture and spirituality.





Our Why

Exceptional rural healthcare is about people. The people who provide care, the people who receive care and the people in our communities, working together to support wellness and healthy lifestyles.

We are healthier when we are connected; emotionally, socially, mentally and physically. Exceptional care is provided when we work as one team, towards a shared goal - lifting the health and wellbeing of our community.

When we work together; as a provider of healthcare, as a community, and with other agencies and organisations, we can more meaningfully contribute to a sustainable environment that supports improved outcomes for our people.

Extending healthcare to people beyond the hospital setting, with new ways of delivering care to people, is essential to improving access and equity. Digital tools and new technologies will bring specialised care to our rural communities, supporting sustainable affordable services.

We recognise our dedicated staff, carers and volunteers, who play vital roles in our communities and services across the region, focused on the needs of the population, and recognising that the health and social outcomes are interdependent.

We all have a role to play in improving the health of our communities and ensuring our services are a safe and respectful experience for all.

Stretching over a large rural and regional geographical footprint, we want to lead rural health research and innovations, and be known for exceptional care and superior service in our communities.

At Murrumbidgee, we set the bar high; attracting the best people, who innovate to drive better care. We are committed to working with our communities and holding an unwavering focus on safety and improvement.

Our workforce is encouraged to commit to excellence and continual learning. This is our workforce, at its best.

Gayle Murphy
MLHD Board Chair

Jill Ludford
MLHD Chief Executive

on behalf of the
MLHD Board Directors



Our District

Murrumbidgee Local Health District provides a range of public health services to the Riverina and Murray regions of New South Wales, stretching from the Snowy Mountains in the east, to the plains of Hillston in the northwest and along the Victorian border.

As one of 15 local health districts and specialty networks across the NSW Health system, we operate 33 public hospitals, 12 community health centres, employ over 3,800 staff and are supported by 33 Local Health Advisory Committees and hundreds of volunteers.

We are more than just hospitals, we provide care to our community where they need it most. Our staff and volunteers make an invaluable contribution to enriching the lives of people in our care, in a number of settings – in hospital wards, at clinics, in our communities and in people’s homes. It’s care tailored to what people need, to improve their health and wellbeing, and live at their best.

New South Wales

Victoria

ACT



The communities we support are diverse, with approximately

245,196
people in communities large and small across our region¹



125,243
square kilometres



47 MLHD has **Public health facilities**

Including: a rural referral hospital, a base hospital, district hospitals, multipurpose services, residential aged care facilities, community health services and posts, mental health inpatient and recovery service and a brain injury rehabilitation service

People with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background make up



5.8% of the MLHD population²

Approx. 145,000

people present to our emergency departments each year.



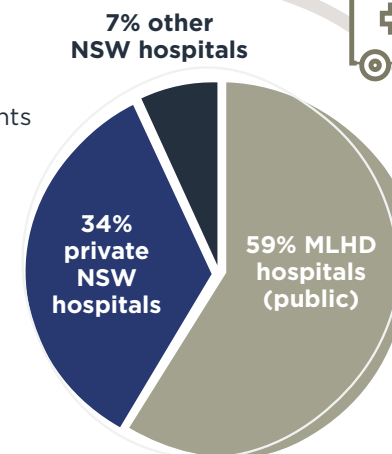
Over 64,000

people are admitted into our facilities.

354
aged care residents call our facilities home each day.



Where MLHD residents go for inpatient hospital care⁶



Our Plan

MLHD's strategic plan outlines how we will achieve our vision over the next five years. It provides a blueprint for the four strategic directions we will be focusing on:

- Holistic health and wellbeing
- Lifting health outcomes
- Locally led reform
- Workforce at its best

Our plan for the future aligns with the NSW State Health Plans, and builds on our previous plans; 2016-2021 Strategic Plan and the 2018 Our Communities, Our Future; Healthier Together.

By keeping people healthy and well, and by offering expanded care settings, we can meet the growing demand and needs of our communities. We have motivated teams who perform their jobs each and every day with compassion, often going above and beyond to give care and kindness.

Our vision for the next five years is to ensure our organisation remains fit-for-purpose and provides exceptional care, now and into the future.

Our Vision

Exceptional rural healthcare

Healthier together.
Care tailored to people's needs.



Our Purpose

Providing safe, consistent, person led healthcare for the people of Murrumbidgee.

Our Values

NSW Health CORE values aim to inspire positive interactions in the workplace, and underpin how we will grow a culture of excellence.

COLLABORATION • OPENNESS • RESPECT • EMPOWERMENT

Strategic Directions

HOLISTIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Work as a complete care team with people to improve their health and wellbeing and address the causes of poor health.

LIFTING HEALTH OUTCOMES

Focus efforts to improve health inequities and wellbeing for all; in particular for Aboriginal people, children, older persons and those with mental health needs.

LOCALLY LED REFORM

Making change that matters to our communities, that is safe and pushes the boundaries of innovation for better health outcomes.

WORKFORCE AT ITS BEST

Investing in leadership, culture and high performing teams, who are connected and compassionate, and striving for excellence.

Foundations for Success

A culture of excellence and compassion
Infrastructure, technology and systems
Sustainable and well managed resources
Real time data, analytics and locally led research





Holistic Health and Wellbeing

It means we work as a complete care team with people to improve their health and wellbeing, and address causes of poor health.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Care focused on the whole person that is flexible and tailored to what matters to them
- People are physically, culturally, socially and emotionally well and understand what maintains good health
- Teams delivering care that provide a seamless experience
- Partnering with others, including primary care and communities, to prevent and address causes of poor health

HOW WE WILL DO IT

1. Establish clinical networks with key partners and consumers, to drive consistent evidence based care
2. Develop consumer centred care pathways to describe the steps to improve health outcomes
3. Individualised care plans for consumers that are flexible and address their health and social needs
4. Deliver consumer centred coordinated care, where the human experience matters
5. Partner with external stakeholders to co-design and deliver value-based care

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- Improved health outcomes that matter to consumers
- Increased use of preventative healthcare
- Improved patient and consumer experience
- Connected health providers and community led initiatives
- Clear pathways and comprehensive care plans, developed in collaboration with consumers



Lifting Health Outcomes

Our efforts are focused on improving health inequities and wellbeing for all; in particular providing safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children, older persons and those with mental health needs.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Services are safe, targeted and tailored to priority populations with identified needs, including those experiencing interpersonal violence
- All children have the best start to life
- Strong gains in health outcomes that are important to Aboriginal people
- Support people as they age to maintain social and functional health and wellbeing

HOW WE WILL DO IT

1. Collaborate with consumers and communities to co-design and deliver culturally appropriate, safe and accessible services
2. Individual staff commitment to provide care that is equitable, timely and safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
3. Provide holistic care for people with mental illness and work towards zero suicides
4. Deliver the right level of healthcare for each child and their family's needs
5. Respond to the needs and preferences of older people to keep them visible and connected in their communities



WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- Reduced differences in outcomes for people who access care in our services
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people staying in hospital until the completion of their care
- More out of hospital services and care connected and provided in our communities
- Increased number of children and families accessing specialist care, when they need it
- Older people living in their place of choice



Locally led reform

Locally led reform is about making change that matters most to our communities that is safe and pushes the boundaries of innovation for better health outcomes.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Communities involved in design, delivery and evaluation of services fit for our setting
- Strong communities leading healthy lifestyles across all life stages
- Collaborative care teams, specialising in delivery of safe and innovative rural health care
- Services delivered in a socially responsible and sustainable way

HOW WE WILL DO IT

1. Encourage an environment where innovation and transformation thrives
2. Incentivise collaboration between all health providers to enhance best use of resources for consumers
3. Foster multiple providers communicating with each other to support consumers to achieve their health and wellbeing goals.
4. Work with communities in the preparedness and response to health and wellbeing threats and emergencies
5. Reduce our environmental impact, in our infrastructure, waste, procurement and service delivery

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- Established partnerships and enduring relationships with communities
- Increased number of innovations and ideas leading to better health
- Health partners working and collocating in appropriate health settings – ‘one stop shop’
- Community engagement in emergency response plans
- Reduced environmental impacts



Workforce at its best

We are investing in leadership, culture and high performing teams. Teams who are connected, compassionate, and striving for excellence.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Compassionate staff who are connected to their many communities and workplace
- A strong, skilled and well supported workforce, confident to lead in a rural health setting
- Together we are engaged, innovative, and respectful
- Recognised as leaders in rural health with rewarding careers, dedicated to continuous learning

HOW WE WILL DO IT

1. Embedding our shared values in everything we do
2. Providing leadership development for emerging leaders, high potential talent and people leaders
3. Ensuring the right conditions for an integrated workforce, that is compassionate, community focussed, person centred and fluent in multi-disciplinary team work
4. Ensuring that all staff have access to learning and development, that enables confidence and competence in a rural setting
5. Adapting the health workforce to align with the new ways of working and delivering services



WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- CORE values consistently demonstrated
- Continuous learning, improvement and adoption of change
- High levels of staff wellbeing and engagement
- Preferred employer, attracting and retaining a diverse and skilled workforce
- Diversity across our workplace and in leadership teams



Foundations for success

A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

Consistently displayed values and behaviours

- Safe, reliable care is at the heart of everything we do
- Courageously lead and embed change
- Build workforce capability in digital health, data and analytics
- Expand health literacy for consumers of care

SUSTAINABLE AND WELL MANAGED RESOURCES

Allocating spend to priorities

- A financially fluent workforce, focused on sustainability
- Individuals and teams meet accountabilities
- Deliver value based healthcare
- Environmental and socially responsible approaches

INFRASTRUCTURE, TECHNOLOGY AND SYSTEMS

Fit for purpose assets, facilities, IT, systems

- Consumers embracing new technology and applications
- Records and information integrated and accessible
- Our workforce have the right tools to do their job
- Highly functional facilities that are environmentally sustainable

REAL TIME DATA, ANALYTICS AND LOCALLY LED RESEARCH

Fast, meaningful data

- Sophisticated analytics accessible for decision making
- Staff confidently use data for decision making and change
- Involved in ethical and meaningful research that creates impact and translates to work practice and action
- Focus on safety, improvement and driving change





Our Stories

WILL'S EXPERIENCES

Will* is a free spirited traveller in his fifties, with no fixed address who rides around Australia on his touring push pike. COVID-19 stopped Will's travels and while in a small regional town in NSW, he needed medical attention.

Late in the evening Will wakes up all dizzy, soaked in sweat in the tent. He rings the hospital, and he is told they can only do bits and pieces and he is directed to ring an ambulance. He is worried about his possessions, so rides up the hill to the hospital next day.

He is warmly met by the nurse and then the doctor. They talk with him, undertake an assessment and send him to a larger base hospital via an Ambulance. Will is worried about his things and the nurse picks up his tent and belongings and the ambos store his bike and belongings. Will enjoys a relaxing drive to the hospital talking to the paramedics and feels well looked after at the larger hospital, they make sure he is comfortable while doing all the checks.

"I've always got anxiety, I've got social anxiety, but I felt comfortable there. I stayed the night and they did tests, they checked my heart and my brain. I was discharged the next day and transferred back to the small hospital by patient transport. Normally I fall through the cracks, they stopped me falling, they were worried about me"

"I stayed two nights back here in the hospital. I saw the social worker, they did it on the computer, it was amazing, talk about technology! I thought it was different by it was excellent. I could talk one on one and saved me worrying about getting to them".

Will is found motel accommodation and there are follow up calls with the doctor, along with other supports. Will now has knowledge of what caused the dizziness and is planning his next bike destination.

"I'm looking forward to getting out on the road again on my bike. I was thinking Sydney but I'm not sure. I live quite a spiritual life and I believe the biggest richness we have is health."

*Will's name has been changed to ensure patient confidentiality.

REWARDING CAREERS

Joe grew up on a property in the Murrumbidgee region, and completed his six-year undergraduate medicine degree with the University of NSW, with three of those years based out of the university's Rural Clinical School in Wagga Wagga.

Joe understands the desperate need rural communities have for health professionals that can provide both holistic primary care as well as procedural skills such as obstetrics, anaesthetics and emergency medicine. These doctors are not only working in general practices, they're doctors that are involved with the hospital, working in emergency departments, delivering babies, providing anaesthetic services and so much more for people living in rural areas.

Joe joined the Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway (MRGTP) as it invests in developing doctors that want to work in rural areas, and do the range of work from general practice to procedural. A pathway that makes it an attractive profession for Junior Medical Officers coming through the hospitals.

The MRGTP supports interns and residents to stay locally so they don't need to go to train somewhere else.

"If we can attract them to the bush and give them a structure where they can train and continue to develop their skills then we're less likely to lose them."



MARJORIE'S HOME

Marjorie is a 93 year woman living in residential aged care at her local Multipurpose Service (MPS). The facility is located in her small home town in regional NSW, where she lived, worked and raised three children.

Marjorie can't see properly, she is still capable of doing everything, but it got a little bit dangerous for her at home. She didn't want to move out of her home, she loves her garden and outdoors, her wood fire and own cooking. Her new "home" feels like home; everything is at her fingertips, the garden is wonderful. Marjorie takes pride in the rose bush and hydrangeas she brought with her from her own garden and replanted at the facility. She waters and tends to the garden, and said she would weed, if she could see the weeds.

She feels lucky to have a place in her local community, everyone knows one another, and knows the community. The big windows are great, she gets her exercise from walking around the facility, always walking and talking. Sometimes they go on car trips to nearby towns and have lunch in the local parks.

"I always had friends, neighbours, family, calling in all the time, the door was always open. People come up once or twice a week to visit me here, they come up for beer. I have a can (of beer) every afternoon before tea. It's one good thing about being here, I can just have a can of beer whenever I like! Everyone is so good to me; it's not home, but it feels like home".

Marjorie's daughter-in-law has volunteered at the facility, since the new facility was built. It started with her coming into visit her own mother, and help establish the new gardens. She now helps with bingo or word games, supports Anzac Day, Mother's Day activities and enjoys spending time with all the residents.

"I enjoy coming in and talking to the residents, they have some wonderful stories. They know all our families and the town's history."

She finds the staff very approachable and very compassionate. "You have to be a special person to do this job, and there is certainly a lot of them here."

HOW EXCEPTIONAL CARE SHOULD FEEL

Debra is a Barkindji woman, living, working on Wiradjuri Country and respected community member. She shares what exceptional care, experience and service would be like.

"When I have a family member unwell, we need both clinically competent and culturally responsive care elements to work together, like yin and yang, like salt and pepper, they go together, one completes the other."

When entering a health service, she wants to experience a smiling and welcoming face, clear and effective procedures, an artistic vibe in the space to help reduce stress. She wants clear communication channels between hospitals to prevent unavoidable problems. She wants healthcare professionals capable of meeting the needs of Aboriginal people.

"I want to know that everyone on that team knows what's happening medically and they respect our cultural ways of knowing, doing and being."

Mandaang Guwu (Thank You)



Murrumbidgee Population

245,196 people¹



5.8% from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background²

6.1% speak a language other than English at home³

13% of the population live in areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage³

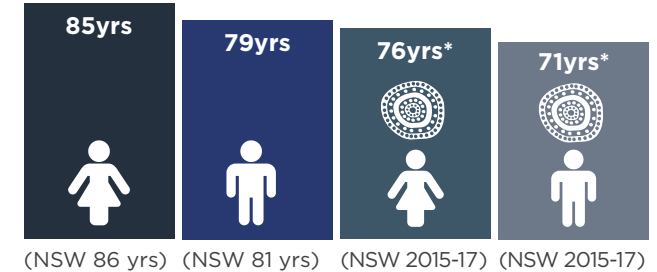
20% of the population are children aged <15 years⁴

20% of the population are 65yrs and over⁴

6% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is aged 65 and over³

→ **2026** In 2026, it is projected that 11% of the population will be over 75 years.

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH



*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people data. Life expectancy at birth estimates the average number of years that a newborn baby could expect to live, assuming current age-specific death rates are experienced through their lifetime.

LOCAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Mental Health
- Suicide
- Smoking
- Above healthy weight
- Alcohol consumption
- Injury from motor vehicle crashes and falls
- Chronic kidney disease
- Ageing population

HEALTH RELATED LIFESTYLE STATISTICS[^]

17% of adults smoke (16% in NSW)

15% of Non-Aboriginal women smoke during pregnancy (7% in NSW)

52% of Aboriginal women smoke during pregnancy (43% in NSW)

25% adults reporting psychological distress (17.7% in NSW)

42% of adults consuming alcohol at harmful levels (33% in NSW)

69% of adults are above healthy weight (53% in NSW)

35% of adults are obese (22% in NSW, significantly higher)

57% of adults don't get enough exercise (62% in NSW)

48% of children report inactive behaviours (47% in NSW)

DEFINITIONS

Collaborative care

The result of multiple providers communicating with each other, working together with the patient to diagnose, plan and implement treatment.

Complete care team

Multidisciplinary care team established based on the comprehensive needs of the patient, and may involve multiple clinicians with areas of expertise, family members and/or carers, as well as other health providers.

CORE values

NSW Health CORE values aim to inspire positive interactions in the workplace, and underpin how we will grow a culture of excellence:

- Collaboration – emphasises our commitment to working with each other to achieve the best possible outcomes for our patients/consumers/families and carer's who are at the centre of everything we do.
- Openness – effective communication that builds confidence and greater cooperation. Transparency is essential in our relationships with others and we encourage all people in the health system to provide feedback that will help us improve.
- Respect – recognises that we value our obligations to treat all people with dignity, to create interactions that are psychologically safe. We are committed to providing health services that acknowledge and respect the feelings, wishes and rights of our patients, consumers and their carers.
- Empowerment – aims to ensure our patients are able to make well informed and confident decisions about their care and treatment. We foster a workforce that can make decisions and take action that will effect positive change toward exceptional rural healthcare.

District (MLHD)

Refers to the Murrumbidgee Local Health District

Holistic health

The treatment of the whole person, taking into account physical, emotional, cultural and social factors, rather than just the symptoms of disease.

NSW Health

The NSW Ministry of Health operates more than 230 public hospitals, as well as providing community health and other public health services, for the NSW community through a network of local health districts, specialty networks and non-government affiliated health organisations, known collectively as NSW Health.

Multipurpose Service

Multipurpose Services provide flexible and sustainable services for small regional and remote communities, with integrated health and aged care services.

Murrumbidgee Rural Generalist Training Pathway (MRGTP)

MRGTP enables trainees in General Practice have certainty about location, income and working conditions for the duration of their training. It's a single employer model that allows seamless transition between hospital and community based training for General Practice placements, in a nurturing environment. Importantly, it provides tailored, coordinated opportunities for medical graduates interested in a rural generalist career. The pathway is being piloted in 2020-21.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MLHD Board Directors as of March 2021:

Gayle Murphy (Board Chair), Paul Braybrooks, Elke Cleverdon, Elizabeth Dixon, John Ireland, Andrea Jordan, Adrian Lindner, Associate Professor Faye McMillan, Geoff Twomey and Dr Alam Yousuff.

MLHD acknowledges the valuable contribution and support from our staff, carers and volunteers. We thank them for their care, time and efforts to selflessly support the healthcare needs of our communities.

Our People Our Future

Our People Our Future is MLHD's culture transformation that maps out how we will achieve a culture of excellence.

Out of hospital care

Care that takes place as a day attendance to a healthcare facility, at a person's home or at another setting away from the hospital.

Outcomes (health)

Health outcomes are changes in health that result from measures, or specific health care investments or interventions.

Wellbeing

The state of being comfortable, healthy, and/or happy.

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