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Disclaimer: Please note that throughout this document the term Aboriginal should be taken to include Torres Strait Islander people.
Foreword

I am pleased to present the Northern Territory (NT) Health Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022.

Our new Plan outlines our vision to lead the world in delivering healthcare in a remote setting.

In the NT we are unique, and our vision reflects the NT’s vast geographic footprint across Australia, with only half of our population living in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs, and the other half living in remote, very remote and regional areas. Territorians living remotely are predominantly Aboriginal people who reside in one of 600 communities or remote outstations.

Poverty remains a consistent public health challenge. The NT’s population has the lowest health outcomes in Australia, high levels of social disadvantage and many live with the burden of chronic disease. Most Territorians with these challenges are Aboriginal people. These circumstances combined present challenges in delivering services to communities who experience difficult living conditions and complex healthcare needs.

We recognise that the health needs of our population are multiple, complex and varied, and it is important that we tackle the social determinants of health as part of Closing the Gap. However, we cannot do this alone and we need the power of partnerships to affect change.

Over the next five years, we will work with many partners to deliver health care to all Territorians no matter where they may live.
We need to ensure our resources are used to deliver safe patient-centred care and sustainable health services. In this framework, we aim to:

- Prioritise the prevention of illness and promote wellbeing the whole life span.
- Provide culturally appropriate person-centred care that is safe and effective.
- Provide health services closer to home, harnessing the use of technology and partnerships.
- Build our capacity to deliver innovative services, and a reputation for a workplace and environment where people want to work and learn.
- Embed research and education into health service delivery to improve the quality of care we provide.
- Ensure our systems are effective, efficient and drive improvement for a sustainable future.

Our plan is the result of significant consultation, and my thanks go to all who participated in the process. Your contribution has focused our efforts into priority areas that will accelerate our journey towards realising our new vision.
The NT’s young Aboriginal population is growing, and its non-Aboriginal population is ageing and is largely transient.

The Northern Territory covers an area of some 1,349,129 square kilometres.

Nearly 50% of the NT population resides in remote/very remote areas, compared to 22% nationally.

The population has a higher birth rate and lower life expectancy, resulting in a considerably younger population age profile.

The NT’s population is less than 1% of Australia’s population.

27% of the population are Aboriginal people.

Nearly 50% of the NT population resides in remote/very remote areas, compared to 22% nationally.

228,822 people live in the Northern Territory.
Profile of the public health service

- Public health services are provided through six public hospitals, including two in Darwin, one in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Gove.
- The two largest hospitals are the Royal Darwin Hospital (367 beds) and Alice Springs Hospital (183 beds).
- Primary health care is provided in 74 Primary Health Centres including clinics run by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.
- Public health care accounts for 27 per cent of the NT Government’s budget.
Our challenges and drivers

The Northern Territory faces significant challenges in delivering health care. Many of our challenges are shared across the world, and many are unique to the Territory. Like other countries we have an ageing population, an over reliance on acute care, and rising health care costs, driven by growing demand and rapid advancements of technology. Like other parts of Australia, we have a growing prevalence of chronic conditions, ageing infrastructure that does not align well to population health needs, and systems that do not always meet demand and therefore support safety and quality. We face increasing competition to attract and retain a skilled workforce across multiple disciplines, especially in diverse and remote locations like the Territory. The Territory has the highest premature death rates in Australia, and significant geographical and cultural barriers. It is a constant challenge to provide equity of access to health services to Territorians with many living regionally and remotely. Providing health care to those who live in remote locations is often costly, and challenging to resource.
We also know that our population has high rates of social disadvantage such as poverty, which leads to higher rates of poor health.

Over the next five years our strategic directions have been founded on several key drivers:

- Keeping our population well to reduce demand on health care services and focus on primary prevention.
- Adopting new models of care that provide efficient, consistent and safe services to reflect best practice and evidence based care.
- Harnessing technology to help overcome the physical and financial barrier of distance, and to improve decision making.
- Establishing value for care workforce solutions including the retention of skilled staff and introducing new ways of working.
- Maximising the power of partnerships within communities, government and non-government organisations, particularly with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to address inequalities in remote areas.
- Ensuring value for care.

We aim to achieve the best possible patient outcomes and reduce health inequality efficiently.
Our vision:
To be a world leader in the delivery of remote health, through collaboration, excellence and innovation.

Our purpose:
Working together to deliver better health for all Territorians, with healthy Territorians engaged and living in healthy communities.
Our values:

Our values underpin all of our activities, headlined by a vision that drives our ambition to deliver a world class service in a remote location. We will strive towards this vision by working together as one system, to deliver better health for all Territorians. We will work together to create an open, fair and just culture where we value:

- **Diversity:** Ensure the person with a health care need is at the centre of culturally safe practice, free from racism and discrimination.
- **Ethical practice:** Demonstrate ethical practice, a commitment to social justice and equality, working with integrity and being accountable for our decisions and actions.
- **Respect:** Be respectful and compassionate when working together and with others.
- **Courage:** Be courageous and brave in our leadership.
Our commitments:

We will work with you, your family and your community to:

• Promote and improve your health.
• Improve your health outcomes and quality of your experience while in our care, by using evidence-based practice and delivering care in a culturally safe environment.
• Live up to our values while delivering safe, appropriate care.
• Involve you in the design, delivery and evaluation of our healthcare services.
• Address the social determinants of health as part of Closing the Gap.
Working together

The Department of Health, the Central Australia Health Service and the Top End Health Service work together to deliver healthcare services to all Territorians. Together we aim to create an open, and fair culture where our workforce:

- Is valued, respected and developed to be their best.
- Is informed, involved, listened to, treated fairly and consistently.
- Is safe and supported to improve our health and wellbeing.
- Collectively strives to lead the delivery of healthcare in remote settings.

Our partners in delivering healthcare include Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), other government agencies and non-government organisations. We work together to ensure that the delivery of healthcare improves the health outcomes of all Territorians. Together we aim to:

- Improve health, prevent disease and reduce inequalities.
- Continue to close the health gap for Aboriginal people.
- Ensure that our service delivery serves to improve outcomes.
- Make best use of our research and reduce duplication of services, internally and externally.
- Continue to transition primary health care services in Aboriginal communities to ACCHOs.
Our strategic directions
NT Health has six strategic directions these are:

1. Prevent illness
2. Focus on each person
3. Redesign to improve access
4. Lift performance towards excellence
5. Embed research
6. Systemise effectiveness and efficiency
Strategic direction 1

Prevent illness
We believe in primary prevention across a person’s lifetime. We want to invest in and deliver health promotion across the lifespan, targeting a reduction in at risk behaviours.

Objectives

1.1 Close the Gap by working with Aboriginal communities and ACCHOs to prioritise maternal and child health programs, reduce the prevalence of smoking and alcohol related harm, illicit drug use, volatile substance misuse, improve nutrition and food security, and reduce obesity.

1.2 To give children a healthy start in life through inter-agency partnerships, including the provision of sustained home visiting for the first three years of life to vulnerable families. In many instances these services may be provided by ACCHOs.

1.3 Reduce the burden of chronic disease by developing strategies to address smoking, obesity, food security, healthy eating, reducing the consumption of drinks with high sugar content, and by encouraging more physical activity.

1.4 Work with our partners to tackle the social determinants of health and ill health including poverty, housing, employment, community safety, social interaction and cohesion.

1.5 Increase our focus on aged care and ageing well in the Territory.

1.6 Enable our communities to live a healthy and productive life across their whole lifetime.

1.7 Promote social, emotional health and wellbeing by building community resilience, supporting local capacity building, reducing mental health issues and ensuring our work is aligned with the work of ACCHOs.
Strategic direction 2

Focus on each person
We will provide consistent culturally appropriate person-centred care that is safe and effective, in the knowledge that our clients in the main are Aboriginal people. We want to create innovative and evidence-based models of care that deliver excellent patient experiences and improve outcomes.

Objectives

2.1 Improve the patient experience.
2.2 Improve communication with patients, family members and other service providers.
2.3 Build innovative models of care for the delivery of integrated and coordinated health services working with ACCHOs and other external health service providers.
2.4 Enhance attention to patient-centred, culturally safe care meeting national patient safety, quality and performance indicators.
2.5 Strengthen internal service networks and external networks with tertiary providers to enhance safe, seamless and effective care.
2.6 Transfer remote Aboriginal community clinics to Aboriginal community control.
2.7 Progress the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme across the NT.
2.8 Enable informed patient choice for ‘end of life’ care.
2.9 Increase consistency in the provision of healthcare to ensure quality and reduce costs.
Strategic direction 3

Redesign to improve access
We will redesign services and models of care to be closer to home. We want to reduce duplication, maximise the use of technology, and harness the power of partnerships.

Objectives

3.1 Strengthen partnerships to leverage capacity to deliver streamlined services with ACCHOs and other Aboriginal organisations, government and non-government organisations.

3.2 Review the range of services, models of care and service delivery mechanisms of NT Health Primary and Community health services.

3.3 Develop services in communities that assist in hospital avoidance.

3.4 Enable care in the community through changing models of care, supported by local workers linked to specialist advice, via technology.

3.5 Expand appropriately supported teleconferencing, telehealth, web-based technologies and social media to improve connectivity of all the healthcare team, as well as patients and carers.

3.6 Progress the implementation of the new integrated clinical information system to support care delivery, enabling information sharing in a timely manner.

3.7 Progress and continue to develop system support to enable service delivery.
Strategic direction 4
Lift performance towards excellence
We will build our capacity to deliver innovative sustainable services. We want a reputation for a workplace and environment where people want to work, live and learn.

Objectives

4.1 Deliver integrated clinical service and infrastructure plans, focussing on assets required to deliver services, including non-asset strategies and alternative service models, hospital avoidance strategies and involvement of other agencies and sectors in responding to demand growth.

4.2 Develop an NT workforce plan to attract and retain a quality workforce with a mix of generalist and specialist skills who support contemporary models of care.

4.3 Develop an Aboriginal employment plan with the ACCHOs to improve opportunities and career pathways.

4.4 Develop comprehensive education services with education providers for all employees, that incorporate the use of flexible technology and assisted learning.

4.5 Be innovative in our service delivery through collaboration and technology.

4.6 Support research and education through collaboration and e-learning in partnership with Universities and other education providers.
Strategic direction 5
Embed research
We will provide best practice health care that is effective, and evidence based because of our research.

Objectives

5.1 Develop a priority research agenda aimed at improving health and health care for all Territorians.
5.2 Grow research capacity and capability, including the establishment of NT wide governance and support structures.
5.3 Strategic sourcing of funding for research that optimises health outcomes for Territorians.
5.4 Ensure curriculum and workforce development provides quality teaching and learning.
5.5 Implement, test and embed research-based solutions to Territorian health care challenges in our health system.
Strategic direction 6
Systemise effectiveness and efficiency
We will pursue organisational excellence through robust systems that improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Objectives

6.1 Develop a robust financial framework with reporting mechanisms and clear delegations that provide accountability.
6.2 Enhance capability, understanding and responsiveness to activity based funding and key performance measures.
6.3 Develop an NT Health efficiency and revenue plan.
6.4 Create systems to plan, implement and evaluate new models of care, support services and emerging technology to guide service re-engineering and disinvestment.
6.5 Ensure the availability of evidence and information to support the review, implementation and dissemination of service capability and outcomes.
6.6 Develop a positive and safe workplace culture.
6.7 Improve business services that increase productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and performance.