



**Strategic  
Plan**  
2013–17

Delivering  
Our Priorities



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# Message from the CEO and Chair

**Dr Brendan Murphy**  
Chief Executive Officer

**The Hon Judith Troeth AM**  
Board Chair



Austin Health is exceptionally well placed to continue to provide outstanding care for Victorians, despite challenging economic conditions.

We have made enormous advances in our clinical services, supported by our strong and growing tradition in teaching and research. Recent achievements include the opening of the world class Olivia Newton-John Cancer & Wellness Centre (ONJCWC), expansion of The Surgery Centre with fast track joint replacement surgery and Australia's first multi-visceral intestinal transplant.

We have a highly engaged workforce, seven years of strong financial performance, a number of new facilities and an enduring culture of redesign and innovation. We have played a lead role in the deployment of clinical information systems and new models of clinical workforce. With all of these advantages, however, we need to step up to the next level if we are to continue to lead and thrive.

The next five years are likely to be amongst the most challenging we have seen in the public health system in Australia. There are pressures on government revenue which will limit the ability of governments to support growth in demand and the cost of service provision. Ageing baby boomers will not just impact heavily on the health system, but they also comprise a number of our most experienced and long serving staff, who will soon retire.



More than ever before, we need to ensure that all of our beds are used optimally. Inpatient hospital beds should only be occupied by those needing active treatment. Patients and clients more appropriately managed in community settings need to stay in those settings or return to them as soon as acute or subacute treatment is concluded. This necessitates robust partnerships with other health and community service providers and a much more outward-looking focus from Austin Health.

Our resources must be directed towards the delivery of outcomes that the individual patient actually wants. A much stronger holistic focus, particularly for patients approaching the end of life, will be required to ensure our resources are focused on those areas where they can deliver maximum benefit, in a world where there is an increasingly wide range of possible therapeutic options.

A continual challenge for Austin Health is the competition for resources between our important obligations as the 'local hospital' to the community of North East Melbourne and our state-wide tertiary and quaternary services, such as transplant services. There is no easy answer to this issue, but we need to build on our strengths and look for aspects of service provision that others could better deliver.

Our staff are our most valuable resource. We are particularly proud of our established leadership role in clinical education and training. We recognise that the challenges of the next five years will need even stronger staff engagement and committed leadership. Leadership development will be a critical focus for this next five years.

Our health workforce must become even more productive if we are to meet growing demand with high quality care in a very tight budget environment. This is a challenging concept to the clinical workforce which rightly sees itself as very committed and already very hard working. There is great potential to further extend the scope of clinical practice of our highly trained clinicians. Many could readily take on more advanced clinical tasks, freeing up the simpler tasks for others. Workforce restructure with role flexibility and redesign will be the key distinguishing feature of a successful health service in five years time.

Austin Health is well placed to build on our recent achievements in this area and will be a leader in workforce redesign.

Our biomedical research, in partnership with universities and research institutes, is highly reputable and we have built, over the last five years, structures and facilities to further support its development. A strong research culture is a major determinant of the quality of health care. There are, however, big challenges in the research world as well. Competition for funding is becoming fierce. We now have an environment where isolated research groups need to come together to survive and where our university partners are facing immense funding challenges similar to those of health services.

A big but exciting change in the next five years will be the need to comply with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. We greatly welcome a much greater national focus on core patient care outcomes and can see many benefits to patient care in ensuring compliance with the new Standards.

This Plan has been the product of almost six months of consultation: with our community, patients, staff, partners and Government. We aim to strive hard to measure our success against the objectives in this plan. We look forward to working with our many partners, funders and supporters and, of course, our patients and community, over the next five years to deliver outstanding patient care, research and education.

# Overview of Austin Health

Austin Health is a long established major academic public health service providing healthcare, health professional education and health research.

Located in north-east Melbourne, we provide a comprehensive range of acute, sub-acute and mental health services, specialist clinics and outreach services to our local community.

Austin Health is also the state-wide provider of a range of specialist services, some of which include the:

- > Victorian Spinal Cord Service
- > Victorian Respiratory Support Service
- > Victorian Liver Transplant Service
- > Acquired Brain Injury Unit
- > Child Mental Health Inpatient Unit
- > Austin Toxicology Service
- > Victorian Poisons Information Centre

Austin Health is also renowned for its specialist work in cancer, neurology, endocrinology, mental health, infectious diseases, rehabilitation, sleep medicine, intensive care, emergency medicine and a range of other specialties.

Austin Health is one of Victoria's largest healthcare providers, employing over 8,000 people over several locations, including Austin Hospital, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital (HRH), the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre (RTRC).

Austin Health is an internationally recognised leader in clinical teaching and training, and is affiliated with eight universities. In addition, we are the largest Victorian provider of training for specialist physicians and surgeons.

Through the internationally renowned Austin LifeSciences, Austin Health brings together over 800 researchers and several leading research institutes:

- > The clinical departments of the University of Melbourne
- > The Florey Institute of Neurosciences and Mental Health
- > Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research
- > Institute for Breathing and Sleep
- > Parent-Infant Research Institute
- > Spinal Research Institute.



Over 8,000 staff

99,552 inpatient admissions

2,009 admissions to our Hospital in the Home program

24,200 operations

186,485 attendances to 360 specialist clinics

80,100 attendances to a range of allied health clinics

68,168 emergency department attendances

At Austin Health, we take pride in providing high quality patient care to a diverse multicultural population, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a significant veteran community, and to our local, rural and interstate communities. Our patient-focused approach to clinical service redesign and planning guarantees our patients the best experience and health outcomes, now and in the future.

Austin Health has an excellent reputation as an employer with highly engaged staff—a status confirmed by a 2012 staff engagement survey that benchmarked us top among our peers. Our employees cite reputation and education opportunities as being among the top reasons they choose to work with us.

As part of a broader healthcare system, Austin Health works closely with other healthcare providers to collectively deliver a comprehensive and accessible mix of services.

Austin Health was named the 2012 Metropolitan Health Service of the Year in recognition of our strong commitment to delivering excellent services, experience and outcomes to our communities.



# Our Strategy at a Glance

## Our purpose

Austin Health is a major provider of tertiary health services, health professional education and research in the northeast of Melbourne



# Our Community



Austin Health serves a local catchment population of approximately 1.28 million people, living in eight local government areas (LGAs): Banyule, Boroondara, Darebin, Hume, Manningham, Moreland, Nillumbik and Whittlesea.

Over the life of this Plan, the catchment is anticipated to grow by just over 7% to 1.37 million people in the five years to 2016, and 13% to 1.63 in the ten years to 2021. However, population growth across the catchment is highly variable. Whittlesea and Hume LGAs populations are expected to increase by 34% and 20% respectively over ten years. Populations of other LGAs in Austin Health’s catchment will grow by 7% or less over the same period.

The catchment is characterised by:

- > High levels of cultural diversity in six of our eight catchment LGAs
- > A high proportion of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in Darebin
- > Pockets of socio-economic disadvantage—particularly in the Darebin, Hume, Whittlesea and Moreland LGAs
- > Significant variation between our catchment LGAs regarding health behaviours, with high smoking rates in Darebin, Hume and Whittlesea. These LGAs also have high GP utilisation rates

Some of our local catchment—particularly Darebin and Whittlesea—overlaps with that of Northern Health and other neighbouring health services. We will work together to improve health services for our growing population in Melbourne’s north.

The catchment for our many state-wide services includes close to 6 million residents of Victoria and the Murray district of New South Wales, and in some cases, Tasmania.

# Recent Achievements

Our Strategic Plan for 2009 to 2012 laid the foundation for some outstanding achievements, culminating in Austin Health being named Metropolitan Health Service of the Year in 2012.

## Innovative clinical models

We developed a range of new clinical models of care, across emergency, elective, rehabilitation, mental health, specialist clinics and home-based care. The new models reflect extensive consultations with patients, carers and other healthcare providers. They enable us to increase our available services within existing resources, and create associated benefits. These benefits include reduced patient lengths of stay, new and better alternatives to inpatient admission, and new supports for patients to help them manage their own conditions. Austin continues to be at the forefront of new clinical procedures, research and technologies across a range of clinical specialties, including successfully undertaking Australia's first intestinal transplant in 2011. Expansion of our short stay unit by 12 beds in 2014 will further improve patient access to timely care.

## Patient and Staff Safety

We've committed to making our health service safer for both patients and staff, via ongoing quality improvement programs. In 2012 the World Health Organisation named Austin Health a Hand Hygiene Centre of Excellence, in recognition of our ground-breaking work in hand hygiene and the prevention of hospital acquired infections. Fall and Pressure injury reduction programs have significantly reduced the occurrence of these events. We're currently rolling out a new electronic medication management system which will reduce medication errors. Seclusion events in Mental Health have fallen dramatically as a result of improved patient safety systems across Mental Health services.



## Workforce Redesign

We are recognised as an innovator in workforce redesign across Australia. Significant projects have included the introduction of health assistants in nursing, nurse endoscopists, nurse cystoscopists, advanced allied health practitioners, and enrolled nurse patient medication administration.

## Development of information systems

We are a leader in the use of clinical information systems in Victoria, with automated electronic inpatient and specialist clinic prescribing, drug administration, radiology and pathology test ordering and review.

## Physical infrastructure

A wide range of construction projects have seen significant improvements to our infrastructure. Projects include: The Olivia Newton-John Cancer & Wellness Centre (2012), the Health and Rehabilitation Centre (2011), The Centre for Post Traumatic and Veteran Mental Health Services (2011), the Melbourne Brain Centre (2011), and the BioResource Centre (2009).

## Education and research

We are recognised as one of the leading centres of excellence in Australia for hospital based research and education. Austin LifeSciences brings together over 800 researchers in a dynamic and diverse research precinct. Major capital projects completed over the past four years have greatly improved physical infrastructure to support research. Austin researchers continue to be at the forefront of Australian health research, as measured by both publications and grants. Health education has been restructured into a clinical education unit that combines the many strengths of our medical, nursing and allied health programs and affiliated university partners. A new clinical skills centre supports these programs with state of the art facilities.



# Changes and Challenges

This Strategic Plan is a response to key issues and challenges over the coming five years.

## **An ageing population**

Demand for health services is increasing as the population grows, lives longer, and experiences more chronic and disabling conditions as a result of population ageing and lifestyle factors such as obesity. To meet the needs of this growing and increasingly complex patient population, new approaches will be required. The increase in people with chronic and disabling conditions will require strong partnerships with our community healthcare partners, to help patients avoid hospital wherever possible and receive quality care at home.

## **Rising consumer and community expectations**

Rising consumer expectations and supporting health literacy will mean an increasing focus on partnering with patients, to ensure they are adequately informed and equipped to make good decisions and manage their care. Access to advance care planning and end of life decision making will be a key focus.



### Even more focus on performance

A capped funding environment and national health funding reforms will require a strong focus on providing best value for money, and the best use of our resources.

National and state health reforms will drive shorter wait times for emergency care and elective surgery, introduce new clinical safety and quality improvements, and drive increased consumer engagement and performance transparency requirements. New service models and prudent introduction and appropriate use of new technologies may deliver better and more efficient healthcare.

### Technological change

The ability to diagnose and treat a much broader range of medical conditions will continue as a result of rapid growth and sophistication in health technologies. Information technology, business intelligence and clinical information systems—like the patient-held electronic medical record—are expected to substantially change the way services are accessed and delivered.

### Workforce

There will be a need to support and train greater numbers of new healthcare workers as the workforces ages and retires. New workforce roles must continue to be developed to respond to advances in health technology, emerging evidence-based healthcare practices and workforce shortages, and to ensure job satisfaction for all clinical staff. The workforce needs to have the skills and levels of expertise to provide patients with the most clinically effective care.

Our workforce underpins our ability to provide best care. New workforce models will be required to meet the changing healthcare needs of our community, to enable adoption of emerging best practice and team based approaches to care, and to improve productivity.

### Infrastructure and our environment

Austin Health has ageing infrastructure at each of its three main sites. We will pursue modernisation of our facilities to support best practice. The efficient use of our natural resources and reducing our carbon footprint are responsibilities of all organisations, including Austin Health.

### Financial sustainability

Austin Health will need to continually identify ways to improve productivity to meet the growing demand for health services.

We will work with our healthcare partners and community in north-east Melbourne, and as part of the broader Victorian Healthcare system to respond effectively to these issues and challenges.



# Policy Context

## National Health Reforms

In August 2011 a new health reform agreement was signed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The national health reforms seek to better unify a national system of healthcare, with an emphasis on reducing avoidable hospital admissions, largely through a bigger role for primary care. The most important aspects of the national health reforms that are relevant to Austin Health are:

- > A new framework for funding public hospitals—including a move to activity-based funding for public hospital specialist clinic, aged care, mental health and other ambulatory care services and changes to activity-based funding for inpatient and emergency department services
- > Reducing emergency department and elective surgery waiting times
- > A focus on early intervention and prevention to take pressure off other parts of the health system
- > Newly established National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards with more transparency and accountability across the health system
- > A stronger primary care system supported by joint planning with states and territories and the establishment of Medicare Locals
- > The expansion of the health workforce and providing health professionals with the skills and training opportunities they need to prepare Australia's health system for future generations
- > Building the capacity of Australia's mental health services
- > The development of a national e-Health record system
- > A shift in policy and funding responsibility for aged care services from states and territories to a national approach.

## Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012–2022

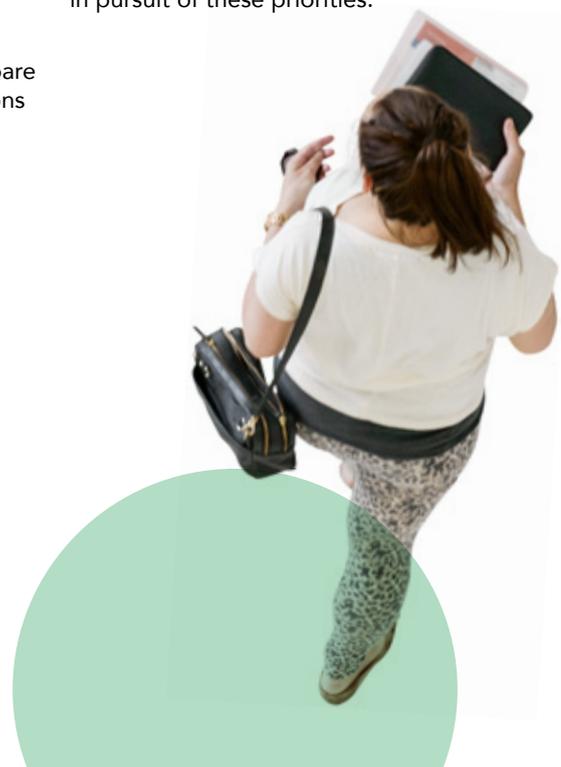
The Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012–2022 describes the state-wide outcomes, principles and priorities of the Victorian healthcare system. Seven reform priorities address the key issues for funding, designing and operating Victoria's health system over the coming ten years. The first four priorities target specific changes and improvements to the health system:

- > Responsiveness to people's needs
- > Improving every person's health status and experience of health
- > Expanding the capacity of the system, in terms of both services and workforce
- > Increasing productivity and financial sustainability of the healthcare system

The remaining three are essential underlying changes to allow the health system to work more effectively:

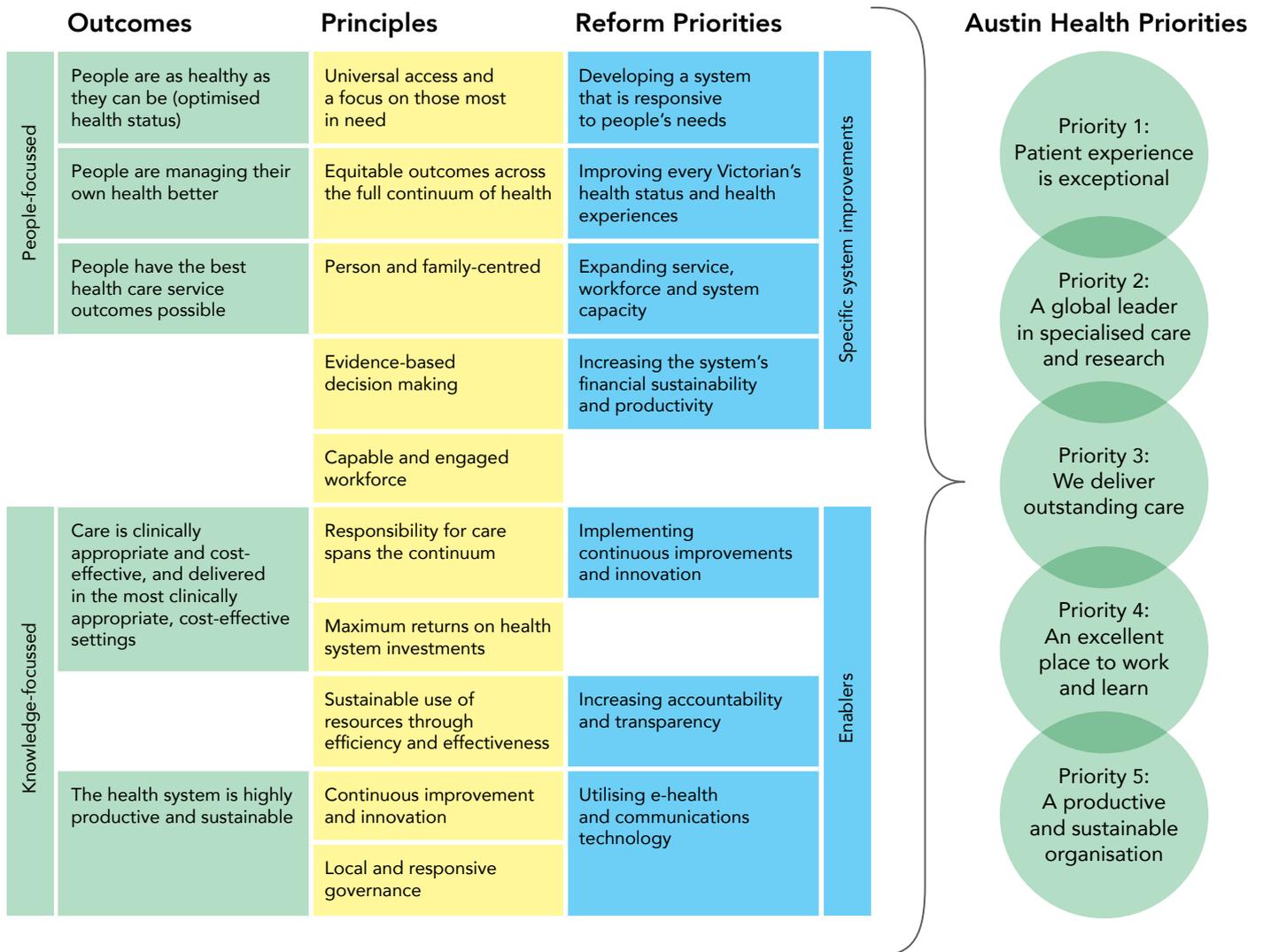
- > Improving and innovating
- > Greater accountability and transparency
- > Using e-health and communications technology

The Framework requires collective and coordinated action from all healthcare providers in pursuit of these priorities.



### Austin Health Strategic Plan 2013–2017

Austin Health’s strategy described on the following pages responds to the challenges and enthusiastically pursues the priorities of the National Health Reforms and the Victorian Health Priorities Framework, in partnership. It proposes strong action in partnership with our community and other healthcare, education and research partners to reap the benefits of these reforms for our patients and community.



Source: Figure 16—Outcomes, principles and priorities of the Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012–2022

# Austin Health Planning Framework

The Austin Health Strategic Plan 2013–2017 sets the strategic direction and agenda for our health service for the next five years.

The objectives of the Strategic Plan are translated into programs of work through the annual Austin Health Business Improvement Plan. The Business Improvement Plan informs the allocation of budgets across the organisation. The Business Plan is actioned at all levels of the organisation through the executive and through the development of annual departmental plans. Individual work goals articulated in staff performance and development plans support the implementation of department and organisational priorities.

Organisation-wide support plans such as the Strategic Services Plan, the Medical and Nursing Workforce Strategies and others influence the development and implementation of plans at all levels of the organisation.

Implementation of Austin Health plans and performance is monitored and reported regularly to the Austin Health Board.

## Support Plans

- Strategic (Clinical) Service Plan
- Consumer Engagement Plan
- Cultural Responsiveness Plan
- Disability Action Plan
- Human Resources Plan
- Nursing Workforce Strategy
- Medical Workforce Strategy

## Key Organisational Plans



# Our Strategic Priorities



- 1.**

Patients, primary carers and families are active partners in the care relationship

Service delivery is organised around the needs and preferences of patients
- 2.**

Our core clinical strengths are further developed

We advance basic, clinical and translational research

Our clinical leaders deliver exceptional health outcomes
- 3.**

We plan services in partnership and deliver the care our community needs

Our patients receive timely and appropriate health care wherever possible

Improvements and service innovations in clinical care result in outstanding service and outcomes
- 4.**

Our workforce is highly engaged and agile, and safety is paramount

We provide outstanding education, learning and advancement opportunities

Teams are well-led and achieve high performance
- 5.**

Our resources and facilities support best patient care

Our staff and patients have timely access to information

Our environmental impact is minimised

## Priority 1

### Patient experience is exceptional

Almost 300,000 people come to us each year as inpatients or to our specialist clinics. Each point in their journey is an opportunity for us to provide the highest quality care, information and support that, collectively, contribute to patient's optimal health outcome. We understand that our patients are also supported by networks of family, carers and community-based health providers and that, to enhance our patient experience, we must work collaboratively with them.

We will partner with our patients to design and provide holistic and integrated services that will deliver excellent patient outcomes. We aim to improve health literacy, self-management and, ultimately, increase satisfaction with our patients' overall experience of our care. Finally, we commit to embedding a culture of patient and family centred care, in which every aspect of our service delivery are designed around the needs and preferences of patients wherever possible.

Outcomes	Objectives	Victorian Health Reform Priorities
Patients, primary carers and families are active <b>partners in the care relationship</b>	Support patients, their families and carers, to make informed health and healthcare <b>decisions</b>	Developing a system that is responsive to people's needs
	Develop a culture, attitudes and practices that enable patients' (and their families and carers) <b>active involvement</b> in health and healthcare decisions	Improving every Victorian's health status and health experience
<b>Service delivery is organised</b> around the needs and preferences of patients	Strengthen links and communication mechanisms with our <b>diverse communities</b>	Developing a system that is responsive to people's needs
	Better <b>engage consumers</b> in service planning and design, evaluation, and monitoring of outcomes and satisfaction with care	
	Embed a <b>patient-centred culture</b> within our service provision and education, including data collection regarding patient care experience	Expanding service, workforce and system capacity

## Priority 2



We deliver an extensive range of specialty and super-specialty services. We will position Austin Health as an Australian leader in health research, linked internationally, with pre-eminent university partners.

This gives us the capacity to advance basic, clinical and translational research, which in turn will attract trainees, top class clinicians and other high calibre staff. We will clearly articulate and delineate our areas of intended specialisation and continue to attract the world’s best people, models and technology to deliver outstanding care.

Outcomes	Objectives	Victorian Health Reform Priorities
Our <b>core clinical strengths</b> are further developed	Clearly identify and resource areas of <b>clinical specialisation</b> which utilise our strengths and align with state-wide and regional priorities	Expanding service, workforce and system capacity
	Pursue strategic partnerships that dramatically <b>enhance our capabilities</b> and support effective <b>service networks</b> .	
We advance basic, clinical and translational <b>research</b>	Further invest in and promote <b>Austin LifeSciences</b> as a leader in translating research into better health.	Improving every Victorian’s health status and health experience
Our clinical <b>leaders</b> deliver exceptional health outcomes	Attract, retain and develop exceptional clinical leaders	Expanding service, workforce and system capacity

## Priority 3

We deliver  
outstanding  
care

The coming decade will create unprecedented demand for health services. As our population ages, we will be required to address more complex health conditions and manage heightened patient expectations.

At Austin Health, our local catchment covers eight local government areas and a total population of approximately 1.28 million people.

Our aim is to work with neighbouring health services and other healthcare and social service partners to get health services right in our region—increasing patients' ability to access clinical services and move between services seamlessly. We will enhance our commitment to service innovation, yielding outstanding care

Outcomes	Objectives	Victorian Health Reform Priorities
We <b>plan</b> services in partnership and deliver the care our community needs	Lead and participate in <b>integrated and coordinated, area-based approaches</b> to healthcare design and delivery	Expanding service, workforce and system capacity
	Enhance <b>affiliations with local providers</b> to avoid duplication, optimise service availability and continuity, and provide alternatives to hospital attendance	
Our patients receive <b>timely and appropriate health care</b> wherever possible	Maximise <b>efficiency and timely access</b> for those who need it most	Implementing continuous improvement and innovation
	Design patient <b>pathways with flexibility</b> to meet the local health needs of the population and to respect the treatment wishes of patients	Developing a system that is responsive to people's needs
Improvements and service innovations in clinical care result in outstanding service and <b>outcomes</b>	Provide <b>evidence-based care</b> across Austin Health through systemic use of peer review, clinical audit, the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, benchmarking and clinical outcomes monitoring	Improving every Victorian's health status and health experience
	<b>Measure and monitor clinical outcomes</b> and further develop patient safety systems to deliver outstanding service.	Increasing accountability and transparency
	Deploy leading edge <b>electronic clinical management and e-health systems</b> to transform care delivery models and deliver safer patient outcomes.	Utilising e-health and communication technology

## Priority 4

Our 8,000 staff members are not just the human face of Austin Health; they are by far our largest financial investment. We recognise that our strategic priorities can only be delivered by staff who are motivated, committed to innovation, and intend to stay with us. Our challenges include our ageing workforce and growing labour shortages in our industry, yet we enjoy extraordinarily high levels of positive employee engagement compared to others in the public healthcare sector.

We will implement new workforce models that increase the productivity and flexibility of our workforce, optimise the availability and adaptability of staff, and better support interdisciplinary practice, and improve the delegation of service activity. In addition, we will continue our focus on health and safety of all our people.

We will increase staff satisfaction by developing highly capable and adaptive leaders, building strong teams, and helping each person who works with us to understand and fulfil their potential. This will aid our efforts toward even better patient outcomes.

We will maintain our role as an Australian leader in clinical education and post-graduate training, through formal teaching, mentoring and coaching approaches, as well as better on-the-job, team-based improvement models and heightening our commitment to clinical and non-clinical leadership.

An excellent place to work and learn

Outcomes	Objectives	Victorian Health Reform Priorities
Our workforce is highly <b>engaged</b> and <b>agile</b> , and <b>safety</b> is paramount	Use effective communication channels that enhance organisation <b>decision making</b>	Expanding service, workforce and system capacity
	Redesign and create new roles and flexible <b>workforce configurations</b> that meet patient needs most efficiently and effectively	
	Provide a safe, healthy working environment and opportunities for health improvement	
We provide outstanding <b>education, learning</b> and <b>advancement</b> opportunities	Provide opportunities for <b>formal and informal learning</b> for all staff and trainees, including inter-professional learning and learning from patient experiences	
	Offer maximum opportunity for <b>advancement</b>	
Teams are <b>well-led</b> and achieve high <b>performance</b>	Provide <b>leadership</b> that inspires, enables delivery of a quality patient experience, responds to change and recognises staff excellence	
	Embed a culture of accountability focussed on ownership of results, high-quality feedback and on-the-job coaching	

## Priority 5

In the face of growing demand and tight budgets, the overall productivity and sustainability of health services is a key challenge for Governments, boards and management.

At Austin Health, rigorous financial practices, along with government investment in key areas, have allowed us to generate small operating surpluses, even in these challenging circumstances.

We will continue to show financial accountability and leadership through sound financial performance, freeing up funds to reinvest in Austin Health, update equipment and stay abreast of technological advances, as well as to allocate our limited resources in a way that maximises overall quality and performance.

We recognise the role of electronic management systems in supporting clinical decision making and streamlining patient care. We will invest in systems that will deliver a fully electronic medical record and support efficient and effective patient and business management systems.

Austin Health is committed to environmental sustainability. Through the implementation of environmental management strategies, we aim to be an exemplar amongst public health services for responsible and sustainable resource use.

### A productive and sustainable organisation

Outcomes	Objectives	Victorian Health Reform Priorities
Our <b>resources and facilities</b> support best patient care	Achieve a <b>surplus budget</b> to enable reinvestment and cash sustainability	Increasing the system's financial sustainability and productivity
	Develop, upgrade and consolidate <b>physical infrastructure</b> and facilities to support modern service models.	
Our staff and patients have timely <b>access to information</b>	Develop information systems that <b>heighten clinical and business effectiveness</b> , consistency and efficiency	Utilising e-health and communications technology
	Increase public <b>transparency</b> of the results of our care, and capacity to access care remotely	Increasing accountability and transparency
Our <b>environmental impact</b> is minimised	Prioritise environmental health in all aspects of the design and delivery of our <b>services</b>	Increasing the system's financial sustainability and productivity
	Incorporate environmentally sustainable design principles and concepts into <b>new builds</b>	
	Reduce <b>energy and water</b> consumption, minimise <b>waste</b> and increase <b>recycling</b> initiatives	

# Next Steps

This Strategic Plan sets the strategic direction and agenda for our health service for the next five years. These objectives will be translated into programs of work with clear accountabilities and timelines that will be reflected in the annual Austin Health business improvement plans over coming years. These plans will be actioned at all levels of the organisation through the executive and through the development of annual department plans. Implementation and performance will be monitored regularly by the Austin Health Board.



