



# Better health, together

## WA Primary Health Alliance Strategic Plan 2020 - 2023

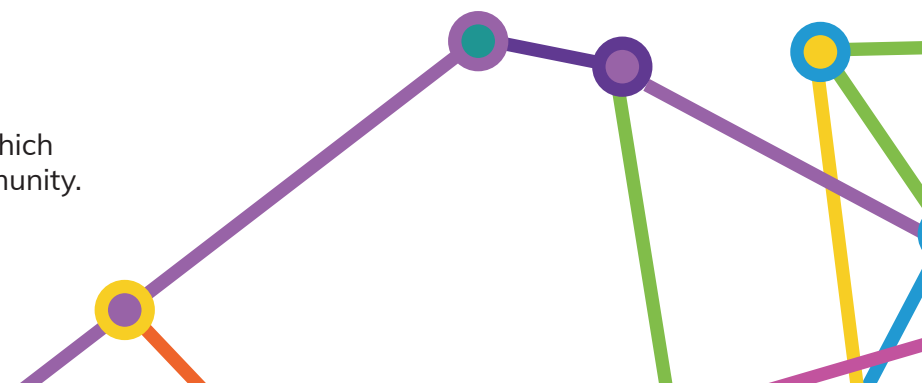


WA Primary  
Health Alliance

**phn**  
PERTH NORTH, PERTH SOUTH,  
COUNTRY WA

An Australian Government Initiative

WA Primary Health Alliance acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the country on which we work and live, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.



As recently as 2015, we were preparing to start operating the three Primary Health Networks in WA and were identifying a name for our new organisation. Now, five years later, although most people call us WAPHA, we have taken time to reflect upon the importance of the last word of our name – Alliance. The use of this word was a deliberate acknowledgement of the importance of collaboration in the ongoing development of the primary health care system and the role primary health care plays in the health and wellbeing of all Western Australians.

As we have prepared this strategic plan, the world has experienced a once in a century public health challenge. The impact of COVID-19 on our communities and our health will take years to fully understand; but despite the ongoing threat of future waves of infection, in Western Australia, our government, healthcare organisations – including WAPHA – and our communities have worked together in a spirit of collaboration and purpose that we can all take great pride in.

Our new strategic plan, Better health, together, builds upon the collaborative spirit and establishes an ongoing commitment to working with communities, working with primary health care providers and working with partners across the health system in Western Australia. We instinctively know that a more connected and collaborative primary health care system will improve health equity and health outcomes for all Western Australians.

This plan sets out our priorities for the next three years and a path towards our vision of a more connected primary health care system - a system that minimises barriers to accessing primary health care and ensures those with the greatest health needs are cared for as close to home as possible. We would like to thank all of our colleagues and partners who have contributed to the development of this plan, and to all those who we will partner with in the coming years to deliver **Better health, together.**

Dr Richard Choong and Learne Durrington  
Chair and CEO, WA Primary Health Alliance

# 01.

## INTRODUCTION

### Primary health care

Primary health care services are integral to an effective and efficient health system. Every day thousands of Western Australians access primary health care services, whether that is their general practitioner (GP), a pharmacist, a community nurse, an allied health professional, an Aboriginal health worker or another of the many primary health care practitioners working across Australia.

The primary health care system is integral to the health of individuals and families within our community. It provides a range of health promotion, prevention and screening services as well as early intervention, treatment and management for a range of chronic and complex health issues.

An effective primary health care system keeps us well and out of hospitals and other care facilities. This means we can stay close to our loved ones and active within our community.

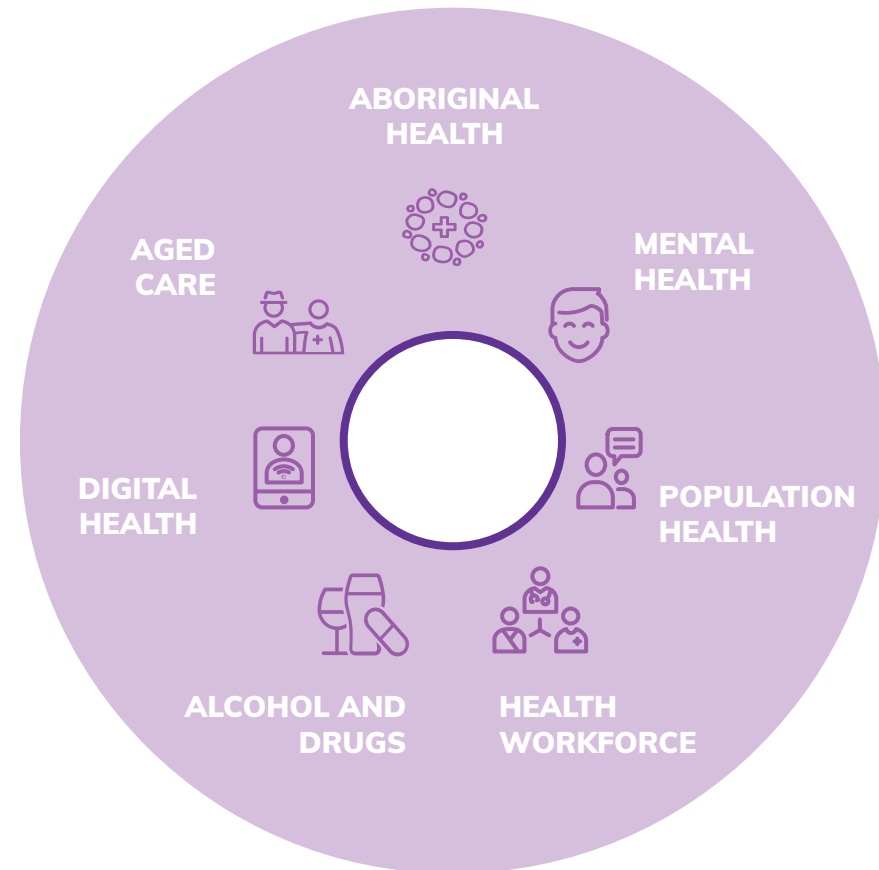
# Primary health networks

In 2015, the Australian government established the Primary Health Network Program across the country. Locally, the Primary Health Networks (PHNs):

- engage with local communities to understand what primary health care services would make a difference, particularly for those people at risk of poor health outcomes.
- commission health services to meet the prioritised needs of people in their regions and address identified gaps in primary health care.
- support GPs and all primary health care workers to continuously improve the vital care they provide.
- help to better integrate the local health system, and in doing so improve patient care and experience.

Nationally, the 31 PHNs work together to progress the seven national priorities for primary care, and are a central pillar within the National Health Reform Agreement 2020-25; with PHNs identified as the GP and primary health care partners for the State-funded health and community services.

PHNs across Australia are focusing on seven priorities, or pillars. WAPHA will establish strategies for each of these pillars.



# WA Primary Health Alliance: Operating WA's three PHNs since 2015

**WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) shapes, strengthens and sustains a health system that works for people.**

Our role is to simplify and increase access to primary health care by planning, influencing and directing investment towards important primary health care services.

As part of the Australian Government's PHN initiative, we operate across the state to improve access to health care that is closer to home for those at risk of poor health outcomes. We do this by operating the state's three PHNs – Perth North, Perth South and Country WA. We are unique in that this coverage allows us to have a state-wide footprint.

As a state-wide agency, we systemically improve the quality and standard of primary health care across WA. Through our three PHNs, we support a population of over 2.5 million, and cover an area of almost 2.5 million square kilometres.

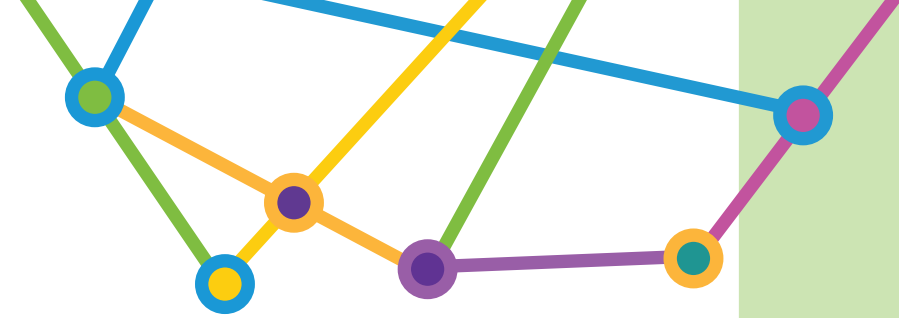
These PHNs provide a structure for the delivery of primary health care that is particularly helpful for executing policy change and managing crises.

We invest over \$140 million a year into the primary health care system in WA. We directly commission services, and support GPs and all primary health care workers to deliver targeted initiatives.

Whilst the Commonwealth guides our spending and allocates funds to each of our three PHNs, we do have some flexibility to direct funds where they are most needed.

Our investment sits alongside that of State and Commonwealth agencies, and our strong partnerships and ability to look system-wide at issues of equity and access, mean we can help shape, strengthen and sustain a health system for the future.

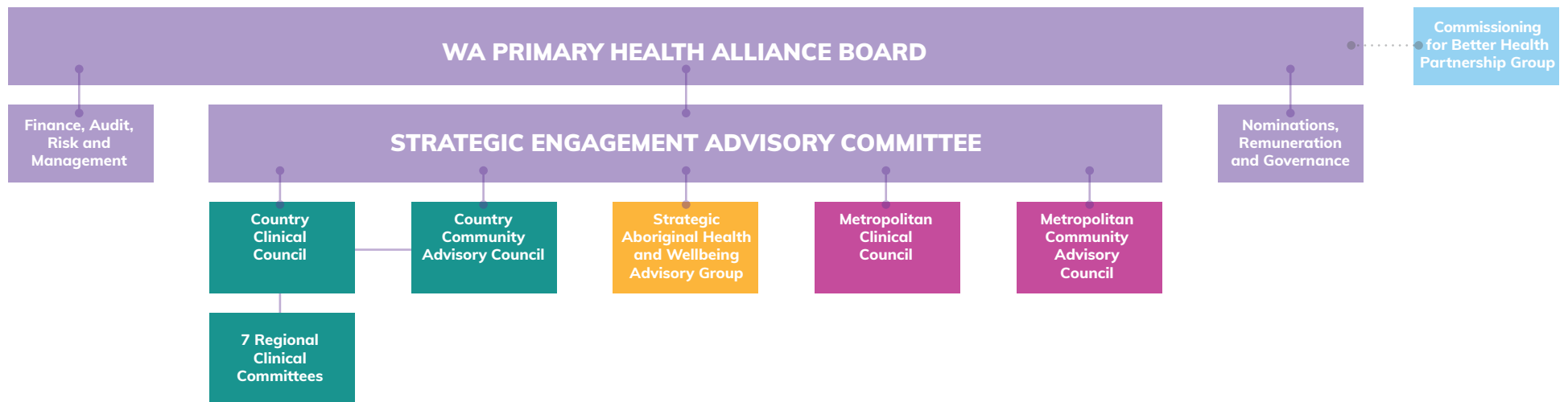




We are guided by a strong governance framework which we hold ourselves accountable to.

Our governance framework places significant focus on stakeholder engagement, to ensure advice from communities, clinicians and consumers directs our decisions on prioritising, linking and funding primary health care services.

### WAPHA Governance Structure March 2020



# Meeting local, state and national expectations

WAPHA is founded on the principle that there are benefits to the community of a single organisation operating all three PHNs in WA. We are the only organisation in Australia that operates multiple PHNs and that is a unique opportunity for us and communities across Western Australia.

We understand the local health needs of our communities, partner with other state-wide agencies and have a scale that enables us to progress state and national priorities, and address health inequity.

This strategic plan has been developed to ensure WAPHA continues to focus first and foremost on local needs, leverages state-wide partnerships and implements national priorities.

## Meeting local needs

We listen to local communities to understand who they are, their specific health needs, and how their world is changing.

Our role is to simplify and increase access to primary health care by planning, guiding and directing investment towards important services that meet local needs.

We also focus on identifying areas where primary health care services are less available than in other areas; and target our funding with an intent to address these gaps of health inequity.

## Progressing state-wide priorities

WAPHA's state-wide structure and strong partnerships give us the opportunity to shape a health system fit for the future.

Working alongside other state-wide agencies, such as the Mental Health Commission, the Aboriginal Health Council of WA, and the Departments of Health and Communities, means that we can ensure that primary health care is appropriately represented to shape the direction of the WA health system and deliver better connected, patient-centred, high quality, innovative and sustainable care.

## Enabling national health reforms

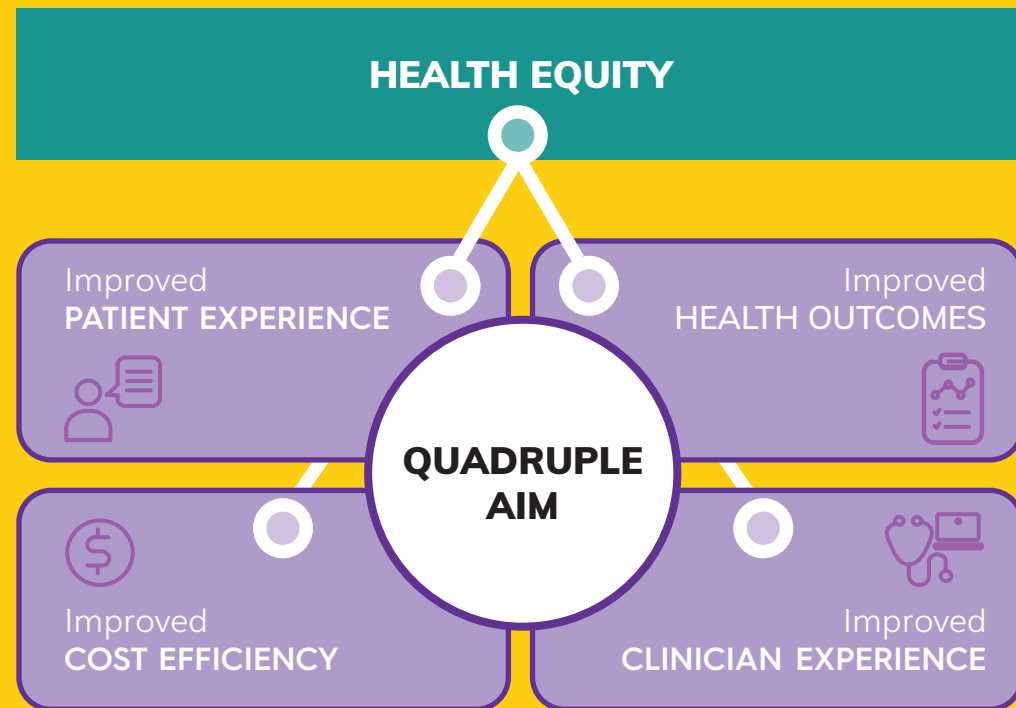
Although WAPHA is not a government agency, we work on behalf of the Commonwealth to progress the strategic objectives of the National Health Reform Agreement. We do this by aligning national priorities for primary health care with the priorities of the WA government, and by working with State-funded health system to continuously improve the health outcomes for Western Australians and address health inequity.

We successfully apply for innovation and pilot funding to pursue new opportunities and contribute to national programs seeking to advance primary health care across Australia. We will continue to work with other PHNs nationally, to ensure our collective value and impact is optimised.



# Quadruple aim in health care

In our approach to commissioning and engaging with service providers, WAPHA is guided by the objectives of the Quadruple Aim in health care.



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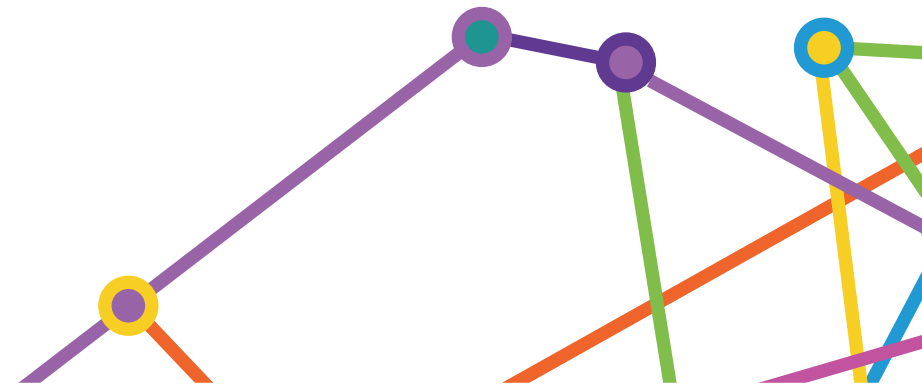
## WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S THREE PHNS

### The three PHNs in Western Australia

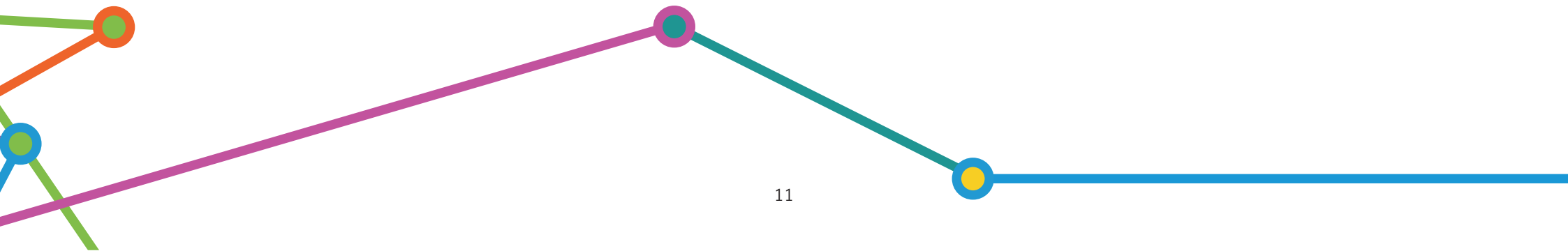
Country WA

Perth North

Perth South



As operator of all three of the state's PHNs, we are uniquely positioned to enhance primary care for all Western Australians by improving access to seamless care and addressing health inequity within our community.



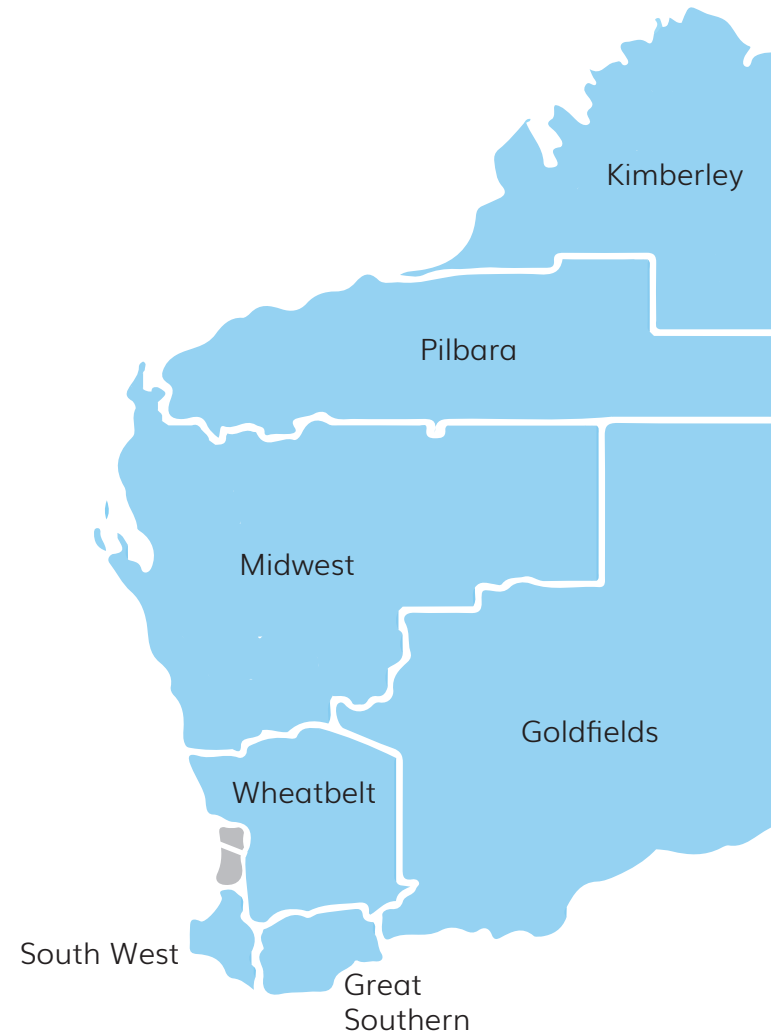
# Country WA PHN

Covers 2.5 million square kilometres and is the largest PHN in Australia in terms of geographical coverage, and has a population of more than 500,000 people.

Country WA PHN is generally aligned with the boundaries of WA Country Health Service (WACHS) reflecting the same regional structure.

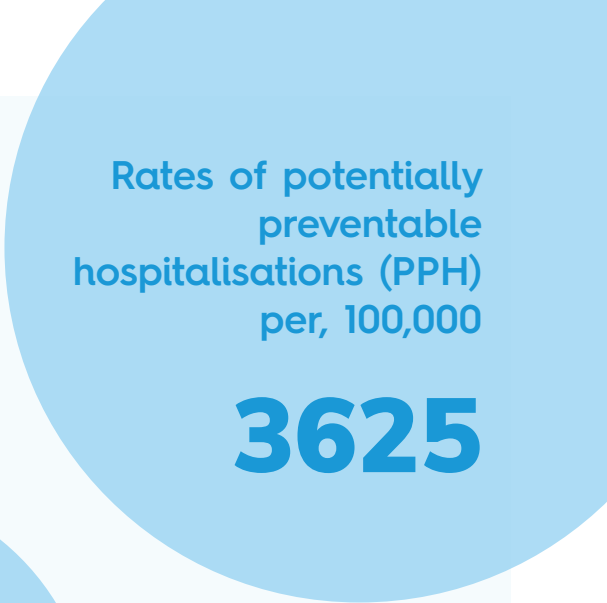
Each region is unique and reflects different health needs and service availability.

Remoteness and rurality are contributing factors to poorer health outcomes and poorer levels of service access. The Kimberley and the Pilbara have some of the highest regions of socio-economic disadvantage in WA.



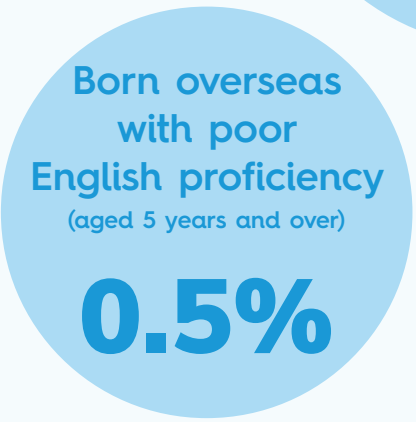
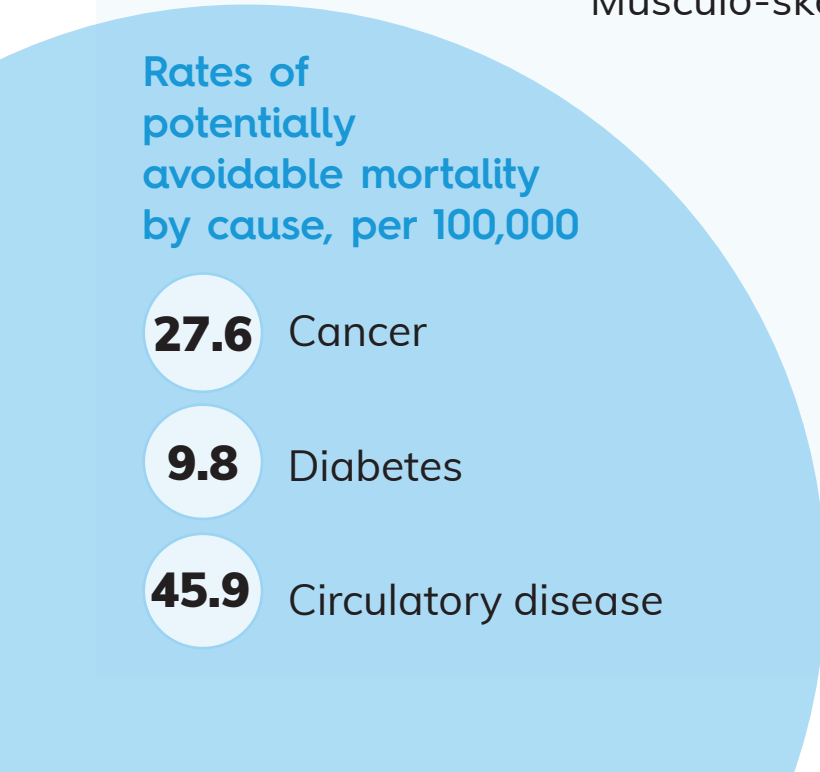


**Carry one of the four risk factors for adult chronic disease**

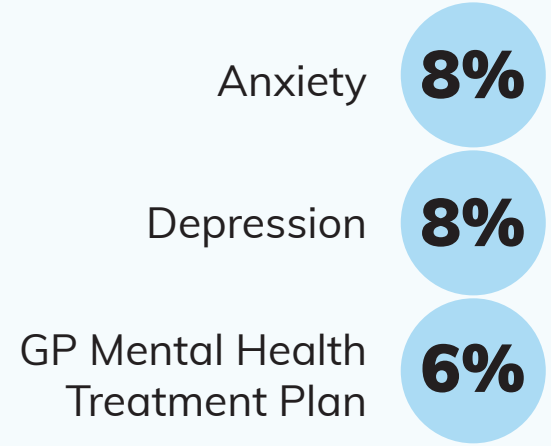


**Most common chronic diseases**

- 
- High blood cholesterol
  - Respiratory system diseases
  - Musculo-skeletal conditions



**Prevalence of mental ill health**



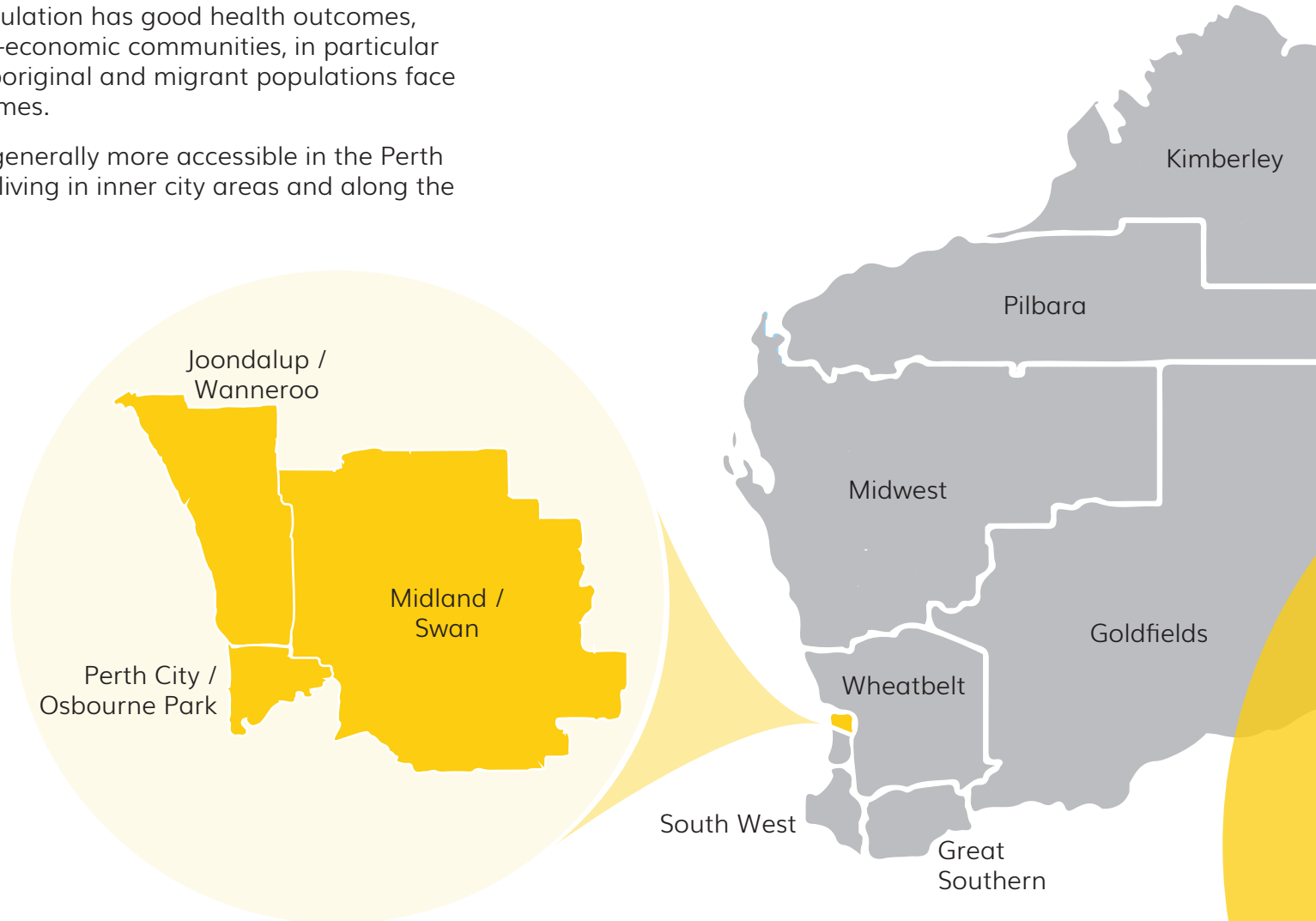
\* Ranking areas in Australia according to the relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage

# Perth North PHN

The Perth North PHN covers 2,975 square kilometres, and has a population of more than a million Western Australians.

On average, the population has good health outcomes, however lower socio-economic communities, in particular those with higher Aboriginal and migrant populations face poorer health outcomes.


Health services are generally more accessible in the Perth North PHN to those living in inner city areas and along the coastal corridor.




People identifying as  
Aboriginal or Torres Strait  
Islander

**1.4%**

Carry one of the four risk  
factors for adult  
chronic disease

**72%**  males

**72.7%**  females

Rates of potentially  
preventable  
hospitalisations (PPH)  
per, 100,000

**2,335**

**Most common chronic diseases**



High blood cholesterol  
Respiratory system diseases  
Musculo-skeletal conditions

Index of Relative  
Socioeconomic  
Disadvantage (IRSD)\*

**1039**



**Prevalence of  
mental ill health**

Anxiety **9%**

Depression **8%**

GP Mental Health  
Treatment Plan **8%**

Rates of  
potentially  
avoidable mortality  
by cause, per 100,000

**25** Cancer

**4.7** Diabetes

**28.4** Circulatory disease

Born overseas  
with poor  
English proficiency  
(aged 5 years and over)

**2.3%**

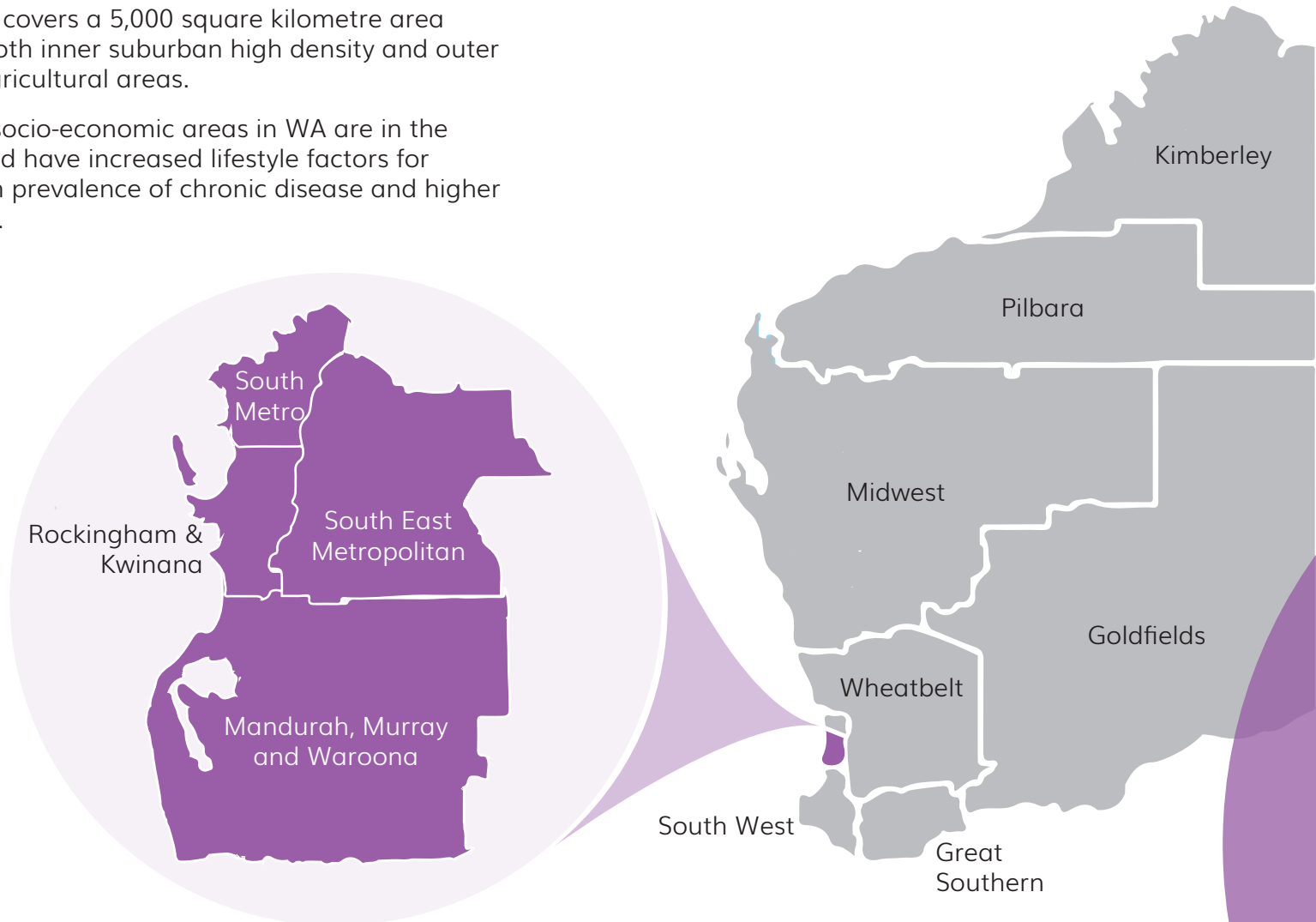
\* Ranking areas in Australia according to the relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage

# Perth South PHN

Perth South PHN catchment area comprises 35% of West Australia's population, equating to approximately 900,000 people.

The catchment area covers a 5,000 square kilometre area and encompasses both inner suburban high density and outer metropolitan and agricultural areas.

Some of the lowest socio-economic areas in WA are in the Perth South PHN, and have increased lifestyle factors for chronic disease, high prevalence of chronic disease and higher hospitalisation rates.





People identifying as  
Aboriginal or Torres Strait  
Islander

**1.8%**

### Carry one of the four risk factors for adult chronic disease



**72%** males



**75%** females

Rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations (PPH) per, 100,000

**2,445**

### Most common chronic diseases



High blood cholesterol  
Respiratory system diseases  
Musculo-skeletal conditions

Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSD)\*

**1013**



### Prevalence of mental ill health

Anxiety **8%**

Depression **9%**

GP Mental Health Treatment Plan **8%**

Rates of potentially avoidable mortality by cause, per 100,000

**28.2** Cancer

**5.4** Diabetes

**33.6** Circulatory disease

Born overseas with poor English proficiency (aged 5 years and over)

**2.2%**

\* Ranking areas in Australia according to the relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage

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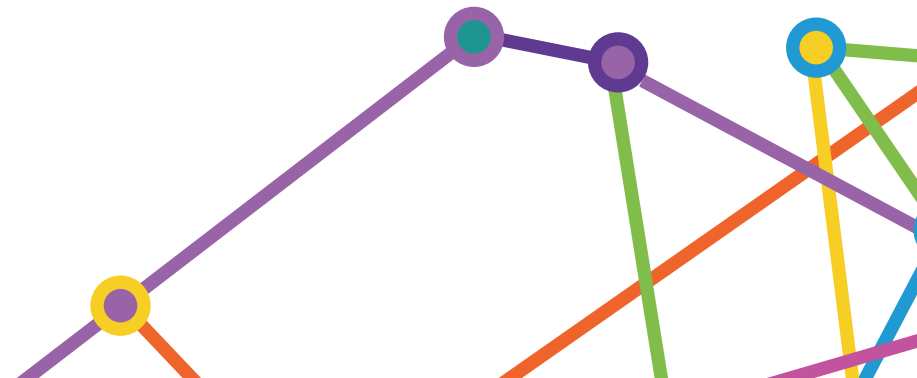
## WHERE WE ARE GOING

### Our Mission

To shape, strengthen and sustain primary health care through partnerships and strategies that improve people's access and health outcomes

WAPHA's state-wide structure and strong partnerships give us the opportunity to shape a health system that is fit for the future.

The next page describes how we do this.



Our strategic partnerships are critical to our ability to plan, deliver and improve primary health care across Western Australia.

WA's response to COVID-19 in the autumn of 2020 highlighted the benefits and potential of working together as a connected system. We will learn from this response and use it as the basis for achieving a more connected health care system.

We will continue to strive for a system that is based upon collaboration; and which is sustainable and responsive to current and future health needs.

The health system across Australia is undergoing an exciting transformation. The potential of new technologies, treatments and data to achieve even better health outcomes is within our grasp.

We will strive for the continuous improvement of quality and outcomes, and will build the evidence to demonstrate this improvement.

In addition, local, state and national priorities have informed this strategic plan and are the inspiration for how we will deliver a better primary health care system across the state.

We recognise that some people and communities do not have the same access to quality health care and experience prolonged poor health outcomes.

We will constantly engage and listen to our communities and commissioned service providers to understand their needs, preferences and what will make a difference at a local level.

We will be directed by their insights and will prioritise our resources to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded groups, and those experiencing the greatest barriers to care.

**Leveraging  
our strategic  
partnerships**

**Aligning  
our work to  
evidence and  
health  
priorities**

**Prioritising  
our efforts and  
investment  
to address  
inequity**

## Our values

This strategic plan has been influenced by our values, which are an essential part of who we are and what we stand for.

### **Courage**

We are willing to be bold and challenge the status quo

We make considered but bold decisions and choices that progress our organisation and the health of our communities. We are willing to challenge the status quo and stand behind causes we believe in to support and bring a voice to the needs of our community.

### **Humility**

We have the curiosity and the hunger to learn

We are open to others' opinions and willing to admit our mistakes. As we move towards our vision, we will be responsive to feedback, build on lessons learned and strive for continuous growth and improvement.

### **Respect**

We treat all people with dignity and value the collective power of teamwork

We have a high regard for whomever we interact with and, in particular, will respect the insights of our partners, clinicians, our people. Importantly, we listen and respect the voice of our community members.

# Courage

# Humility





# Respect

## Wisdom

We make decisions in the best interests of our communities

We prioritise research, innovation and data-driven decision-making to ensure a responsive and high quality, primary health care system that addresses the needs of priority groups and the Western Australian community more broadly.

## Integrity

We do what we say we will do

Integrity is core to everything we do – we will deliver against our strategic priorities in order to meet the vision we have articulated.

# Wisdom

# Integrity

# Our vision: *Better health, together*

In 2019, WAPHA launched the Better health, together program; a program designed to better understand the people and communities we serve and to bring together organisations from across the health system in the spirit of partnership and collective impact.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of the PHNs across the country bringing a single point of coordination to primary health care in their regions at a time of crisis.

A more connected primary health care system working as part of a more integrated health system across WA will improve health outcomes of Western Australians and address health inequity.

## **That is why our vision is simply Better health, together.**

This vision is an enduring, transformative and collaborative vision that will sustain beyond the life of this strategic plan:

### **Enduring**

WAPHA is committed to building a strong, sustainable primary health care system that will better connect the health system and in doing so help those people and communities with the greatest need and improve health outcomes.

### **Transformative**

The National Health Reform agenda will change how health care will be delivered now and into the future. WAPHA will support GPs and all primary health care providers to adapt to, and thrive, within this new environment.

### **Collaborative**

The success of this transformation will require WAPHA to partner with GPs, primary health care workers, health service providers, government and communities to deliver the collective impact of better health, together.

On average, Western Australians have some of the best health outcomes in the world. However, WAPHA knows there are people and communities across WA who continue to experience enduring, poor health outcomes. WAPHA is committed to investing in strategies that will help people and communities that experience barriers to care improve their health outcomes and realise value from our commissioning of primary health care services. We will focus on the primary health care needs of these priority areas in our approach to improving population health outcomes and addressing health inequity.

We will work across the health system to support people with complex multimorbidity who often experience a substantial burden because of the treatments they receive as well as the burden of their chronic health problems.

**Communities experiencing enduring disadvantage**

This includes some older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, LGBTI communities, people in poverty or deprivation, and socially and culturally marginalised groups.

**People with, or at risk of, developing chronic and complex health issues**

This includes mental disorders, problematic and harmful alcohol and drug use, chronic conditions and complex co-morbidities – for example, obesity and chronic heart failure.

**People at risk of developing significant health issues**

This includes earlier intervention and management for people with co-existing chronic conditions and complex care needs in general practice, with emphasis on data driven quality improvement and research to identify innovative solutions to support prevention activities.

**Communities facing gaps in the health system**

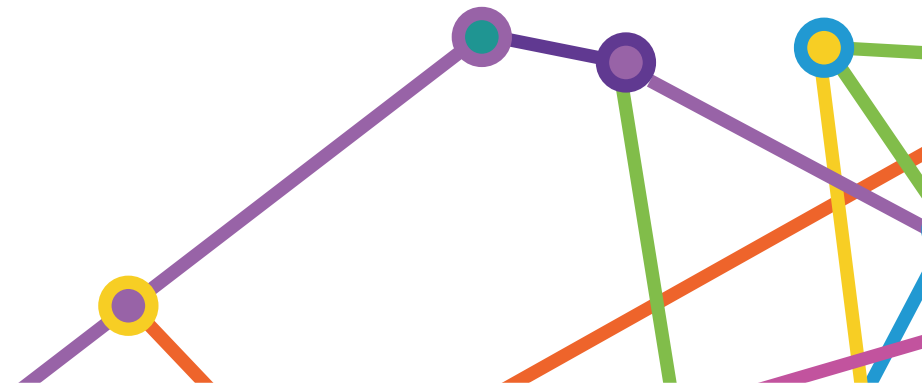
This includes integrating primary health care, and our commissioned services, into the local health environment through effective partnerships. Utilising data informed assessments about health priorities to better address the needs of Western Australians.

# 04.

## HOW WE WILL DELIVER

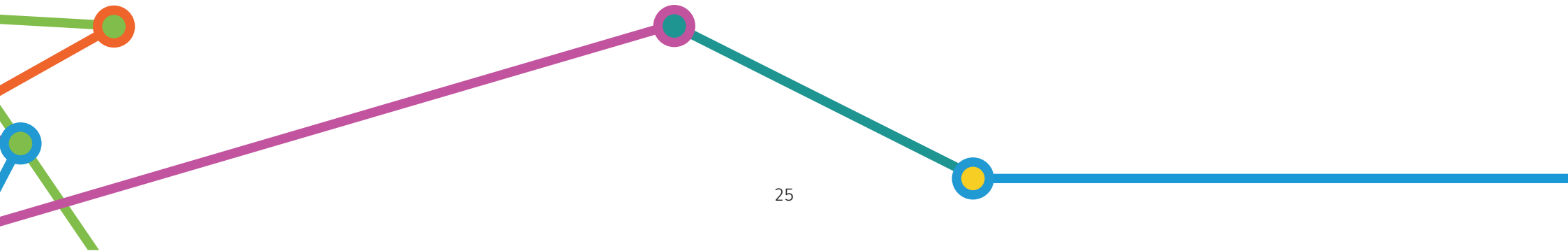
### Our strategies and drivers of success

We have identified four strategic priorities that will be imperative as we progress towards our vision. These strategies bring with them a set of commitments that will guide our focus over the next three years. Our strategies are underpinned by four drivers of success which are critical to ensure we maximise the impact of our strategic priorities.





Our strategic plan is deliberately ambitious and intended to continue the momentum we have built since our inception. Our mission and vision set the direction for the next three years, and we intend to deliver on this by actioning our key strategies and drivers of success. This will allow us to facilitate a more connected and collaborative approach to primary health, where all Western Australians can access the care they need seamlessly and close to home.



# Our strategic priorities

## Empower people and communities

We will engage and advocate for people and communities across WA to help them be active participants in their own health and wellbeing, improving health literacy, investing in early intervention activities, and advocating for participation in public health initiatives.

## Commission services in a planned and targeted way

We will think strategically to commission services in a way that ensures primary health care is accessible to all Western Australians. In doing so, we will prioritise our funding towards services that address the barriers to access and gaps in primary health care; and target resources to support the most vulnerable populations. We are committed to continuously improving our commissioned services to ensure they deliver the greatest impact, measured against the Quadruple Aim.

## Promote and prioritise an integrated health system

We will scale up initiatives that focus on better connecting the primary health care system and greater integration with WA's hospitals and other mutually dependent funded services. In supporting the transformation of the health system, we will adopt an approach to design and commission services that removes duplication, fosters connection and strives for seamless patient care.

## Continuously improve primary health care practice

We will bring a more structured and data driven approach to quality improvement and share insights to support continuous improvement across the primary health care system. We will advocate for quality and value-based primary health care that continually adapts to meet the health care needs of Western Australians, keeps people healthy, prevents disease and reduces demand for hospital services.

# Our drivers of success

## Mature collaborative partnerships

Our partnerships are pivotal to our success; we will continue to focus on growing and leveraging new and existing relationships in a way that optimises service design and delivery. We will seek opportunities to enhance connections across the wider WA health and social care system, and to improve the sharing and use of information with our partners that goes beyond state borders. This will truly enable us to build better health, together.

## Evidence and best practice

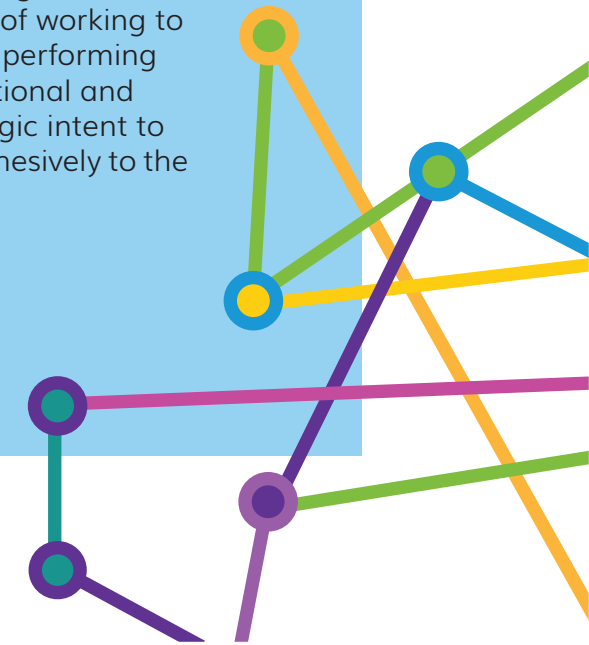
We will take a systemic approach to the use of evidence; drawing critical insights to drive continual improvement in primary health care. We will focus on value; value in the services we commission and value from the perspective of the people and communities we serve. To achieve this, we will continue to grow our capability in analytics and support primary health care workers to provide evidence informed care.

## Strong governance

In conjunction with the National PHN Performance and Quality Framework, we will uphold strong corporate governance and will accelerate governance protocols to support the primary health care system to do the same. We are committed to transparent practices, accountability, measured risk, strong compliance and intelligent financial decisions.

## Operational excellence

We will continue to invest in our people, our practices and our systems; nurturing the development of our people and our organisational culture; and developing better ways of working to establish an agile, efficient and high performing organisation. We will develop operational and action plans that cascade our strategic intent to ensure all WAPHA portfolios work cohesively to the achievement of our vision.



# Our strategic objectives for *Better health, together*

Our strategic plan has been developed to close the health equity gap and to align the WA primary health care system towards the Quadruple Aim.

## Better for patients



A high performing primary health care system will empower Western Australians to own their health journey and more seamless care in a way that directs the right services, to the right people, at the right time. WAPHA will maintain a focus on patient activation and satisfaction and hold ourselves accountable for pursuing better patient experiences.

## Better cost efficiency



WAPHA is responsible for a significant but relatively small amount of the overall health budget. It is therefore critical we direct funds where they will deliver the most impact, and where there are deficiencies in the provision of primary health care. Our strategic plan will see us invest in being more data-driven, making strategic commissioning decisions to maximise the value of our finite funding. The focus on strong governance will be critical in increasing financial accountability in the primary health care system.

## Better for clinicians



The WA primary health care system is built around a diverse range of primary health care practitioners. Our strategic plan will see WAPHA continue to invest in nurturing talent, supporting evidence-informed practice, leveraging new ways of working, and better connecting practitioners across divided lines of practice and across geographical and organisational boundaries.

## Better health outcomes



All aspects of our strategic plan are focused on creating the environment for the primary health care system to achieve the best health outcomes for people. We will build partnerships to close current service gaps, reduce duplication and design services that best meet the needs of our communities. Our plan is also focused on the continuous improvement of primary health care performance, keeping people healthy closer to home and only using the State's hospitals and specialist services when absolutely necessary.

## Better health equity



WAPHA will better align commissioned activities to community needs and move us towards a system that removes the barriers to accessing high quality primary health care. Through our plan, we will direct resources to where they are most needed and where they will have the greatest impact.

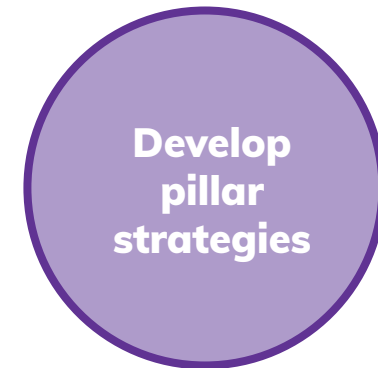
# Our plan for successful implementation

We are investing in the implementation of this strategic plan.

This strategic plan is underpinned by seven pillar strategies – in line with the seven Commonwealth priorities introduced at the start of this plan (e.g. Aboriginal health).

These pillar strategies align with the overall strategic plan but are more detailed and specific on the topic they address; articulating what Better health, together means in the context of the area in focus.

The pillar strategies will be commenced in 2020 and will identify the priorities for WAPHA's commissioned services and the specific outcomes those services are seeking to achieve.



A Strategic Roadmap that complements this strategic plan plots WAPHA's year-on-year focus over 2020-2023.

We have engaged staff and key stakeholders to consider how the strategic plan should be put into practice and distilled our strategic priorities and drivers of success into a set of manageable and logical business plans.

This roadmap will guide and prioritise how, where and when we invest in building WAPHA's internal capabilities, for example in the areas of analytics and evaluation.

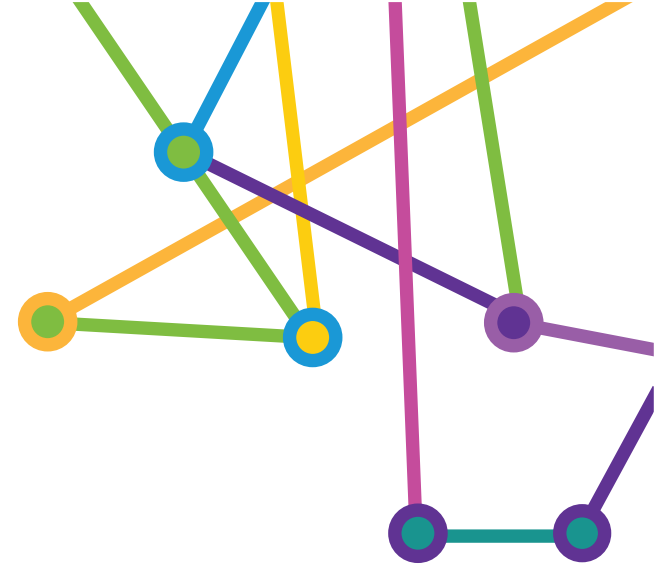
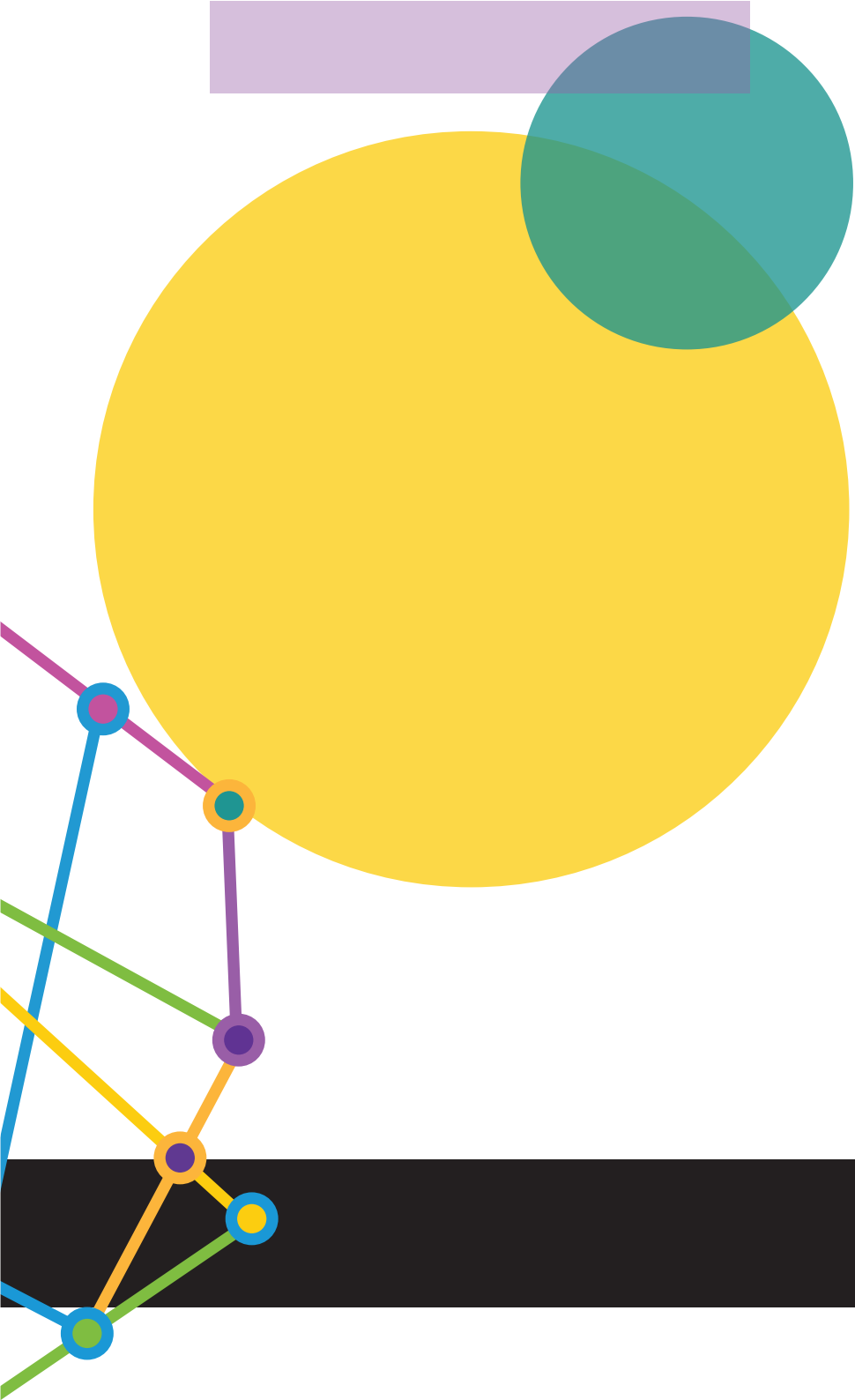


In 2019, WAPHA launched the Better health, together program. As part of this program, we hold forums attended by our partners and stakeholders from across the WA health system.

These forums complement other stakeholder engagement initiatives delivered by WAPHA and our partner organisations.

Subject to external influences (such as COVID-19) that prohibit us from doing so, we will continue these forums as a platform for us to genuinely connect with our community and ensure we are delivering against our strategic priorities.





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