

# Our way- together



First Nations Health Equity Strategy 2025-2028



South West Hospital and Health Service First Nations Health Equity Strategy 2025/26-2027/28  
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For further information about this document please contact the First Nations Health Equity Team.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

South West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) pays respect to the First Nations people of the lands on which all our services are located – for their resilience, determination, cultural knowledge and wisdom.

Approximately 16% of South West residents identify as First Nations people across the region we serve. We recognise it takes the strength and courage of current and future generations, both First Nations and non-Indigenous people, to work together for equality, recognition and holistic health advancement for First Nations people.

We reflect on the past and give hope for the future as we genuinely aspire to represent, advocate for and promote the needs of all First Nations people of South West Queensland and commit to walk together on our shared journey to health equity and create healthy communities across South West Queensland.

We recognise that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people within their respective communities each have their own unique languages, beliefs, cultural practices, traditions and diversity. The primary term used in this document and Action Plan is First Nations people.

Traditional Owners	Pronunciation
Bidjara people	Bid-jara
Boonthamurra people	Boon-tha-murra
Budjiti people	Budge-it-ee
Gunggari people	Gon-gari
Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay people	Car-milla-roy/Gah-mih-lah-rye
Kooma people	Coo-ma
Kullilli people	Cul-lil-lee
Kunja people	Koon-yah
Mandandanji people	Mand-an-dand-gee
Mardigan people	Mar-d-gan
Wongkamurra people	Wahn-koo-mah-rah
Yuwaalaraay/Euahlayi people	You-wal-a-ray/You-al-e-i

# OUR COMMITMENT TO SOUTH WEST COMMUNITIES

Our first *Our Way – Together* Health Equity Strategy marked an important beginning for South West HHS. South West has embraced the learning, reflection and growth achieved over the past three years.

This journey has strengthened our understanding and deepened our resolve, positioning us to move forward with purpose and confidence into the next phase of our work. Guided by partnership, respect and shared responsibility, we will continue working together to achieve meaningful lasting change now and into the future, but we know there is more to do.

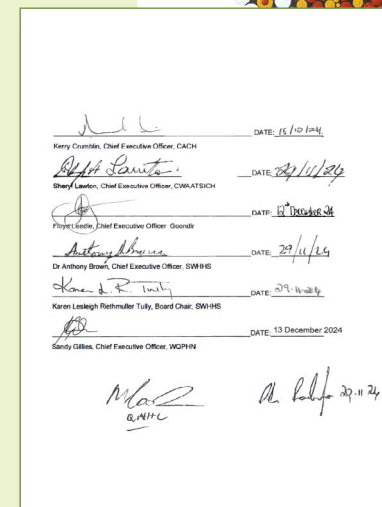
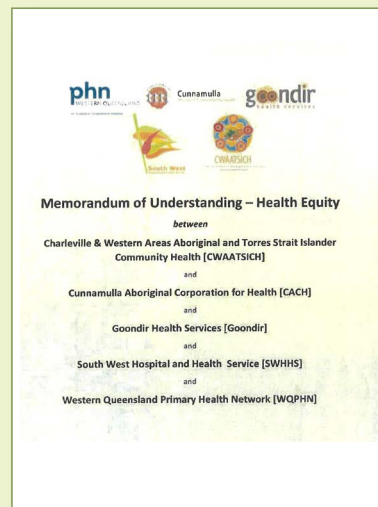
Through a strong and detailed range of commitments across six Key Priority Areas, we are committed to delivering a seamless coordinated service that meet the needs of our First Nations people and communities. Together, we will continue to address inequities and progress towards achieving genuine health parity across South West Queensland by 2031.

This next edition reaffirms our ongoing commitment to improving health, wellbeing and lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Standing shoulder to shoulder with our partners, we continue our journey towards Closing the Gap in health outcomes, *Our Way – Together*.

**Karen Tully**  
Board Chair

**Dr Anthony Brown**  
Health Service Chief Executive

**Shelley Lawton**  
Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Engagement



# WALKING TOGETHER: THE APPROACH

Building on our progress so far this Strategy has been informed by a range of sources to support a truly collective approach. We created opportunities to hear and respect all voices by engaging with staff, stakeholders, communities and consumers across the South West about our progress to date and what more we need to do.

The team engaged staff, community and consumers across the South West through targeted surveys, online yarning sessions and face-to-face community visits to listen, understand current challenges to adapt our response, strengthen and advance our successes. Our Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) are key implementation partners in this Strategy.

We have taken significant steps together to strengthen our ways of working in partnership for the benefit of our communities with a strong focus on reframing our relationships, good governance, innovation and partnerships to enhance culturally appropriate, person centered and continuity of care improvements in health and wellbeing outcomes that are co-designed for First Nations people and families living in the South West. We give genuine thanks to everyone who has taken time to participate, either in face-to-face meetings, virtual sessions or over the phone. We also give special thanks to First Nations people generally, for their strength and courage in sharing their stories, and telling us what true health equity means to them. Their insights and suggested actions for change are valued and sincerely appreciated.

**Together, we're continuing to make meaningful progress toward health equity. Keep informed on our progress online.**

[VIEW PROGRESS](#)



## Our next steps:

Success comes from sustained and co-designed action

1. Strategies have been developed as the overarching approach to guide our ongoing work to First Nations Health Equity by building systemic change, addressing the six key priority areas and identifying areas of focus for the next three years.
2. A supporting Action Plan sets out the steps we will take to action, including how we will monitor, measure, and evaluate our progress against these commitments.
3. A co-ordinated, governed and comprehensive approach with our prescribed stakeholders ensures strong and sustainable partnerships to thrive to enhance “*Our Way – Together*” First Nations Health Equity for people in the South West.
4. Place-based and co-designed approaches are led by communities, in recognition that local individuals are best placed to understand local needs and improve health outcomes for their communities.
5. We will also maintain transparency through regular public reporting on the strategy's progress ensuring actions and efforts mitigate and minimise harms to First Nations health to achieve the best health gains possible.
6. We have zero tolerance for any form of racism and / or institutional discrimination within our service.



# OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

## Shaping real health outcome foundations

*Our Way – Together* is South West HHS's ongoing commitment – to our communities, our partners and everyone who relies on our services – to improve health outcomes for First Nations people across the South West.

The first three years of *Our Way – Together* have established strong foundations for this work. This next tranche presents a significant opportunity to build on these foundations and further accelerate meaningful progress. This next phase continues to be underpinned by strong legislation, the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* and *Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2023*, which further strengthens expectations for greater collaboration.

Building on current success and momentum, addressing legislative Key Priority Areas (KPAs), a supporting Action Plan will provide the next set of actions and commitments to reduce health inequity for First Nations people in the South West.

These actions will continue to focus on our legal requirements – and social responsibilities – to:

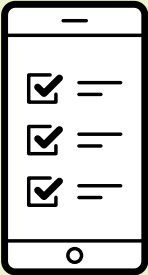
- Actively eliminate racial discrimination and institutional racism.
- Increase access to healthcare services.
- Influence the social, cultural, and economic determinants of health.
- Deliver sustainable, culturally safe and responsive healthcare services.
- Work with First Nations people to design, deliver, monitor and review health services.
- Develop a culturally safe, skilled and valued First Nations workforce.

**Closing the Gap in Health Equity requires sustained collaboration with our partners, communities and everyone who access our services. We are deeply committed to this continued shared journey of listening, learning and unlearning to drive real, meaningful improvements in culturally safe care and health outcomes for generations to come, *Our Way – Together*.**

# INSIGHTS

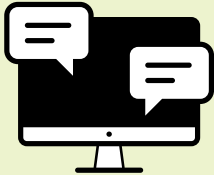
September – November 2025

The insights shared by community members, partners, and staff have guided the development of this strategy, ensuring our priorities and actions reflect the needs, experiences, and priorities of those we serve.



24

Survey responses from staff and community



127

South West HHS staff engaged in virtual consultations



9

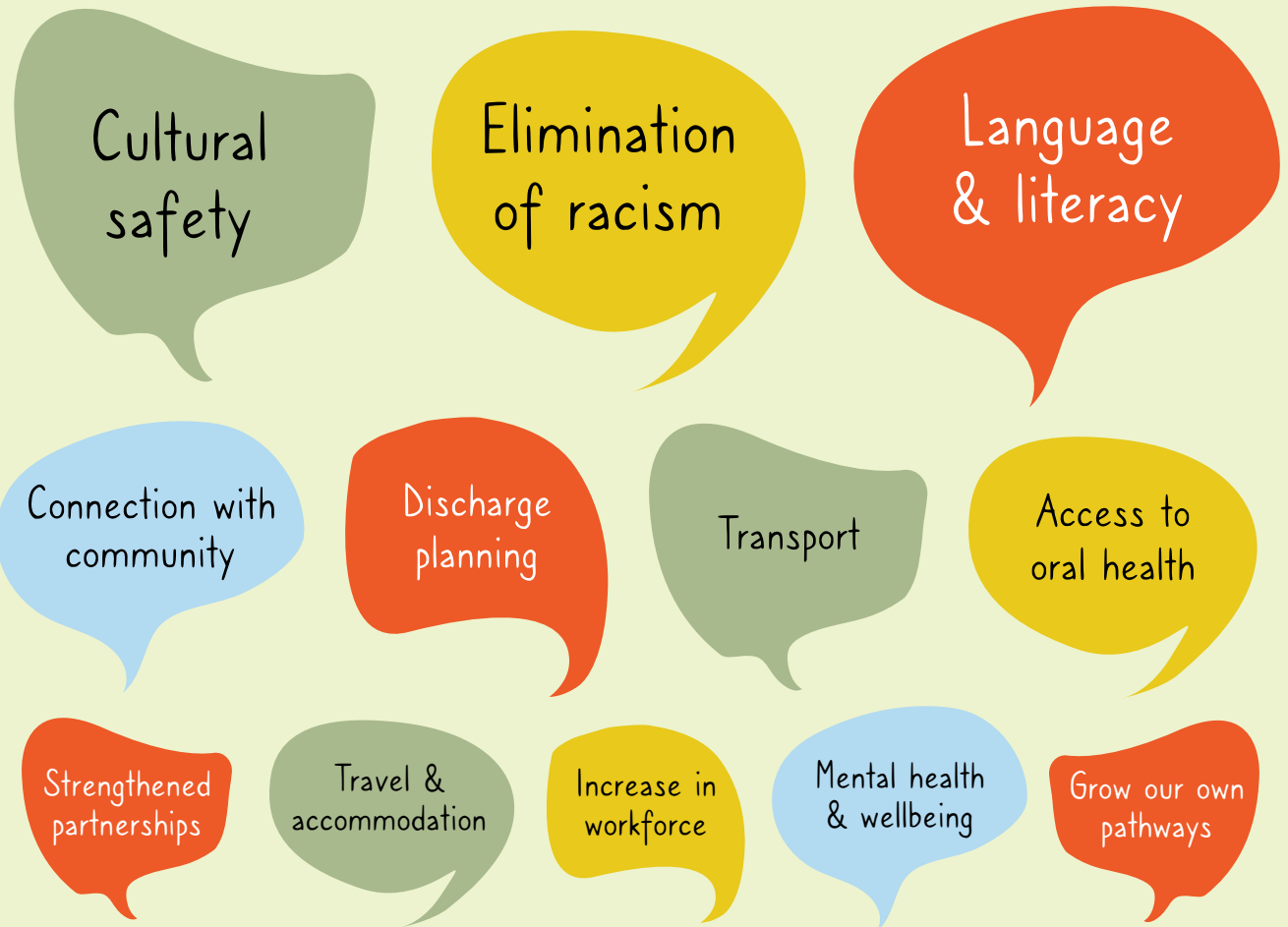
Communities visited and local yarns held





# LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITIES

This visual reflects what we heard through yarning with staff and community. By listening deeply and learning together, these words capture the themes that came through most strongly, with larger words reflecting what was shared most often.





## OUR CHALLENGES

- Understanding and addressing how institutional racism influences the experiences of our First Nations staff and patients.
- Disparities in chronic health conditions, mental health and social determinants of health.
- Limited access to transport and accommodation for patients accessing services beyond their community.
- Identified gaps in discharge planning and support, particularly for patients receiving care outside of their community.
- Lack of adequate data collection systems, and no ability to share or integrate data between partner health services, impeding analysis and understanding.
- Identified gap in access to health information and understanding across the community.

## OUR OPPORTUNITIES

- Continue to design healthcare services and health communication, specifically for First Nations people to increase their health literacy.
- Continue to build on existing partnerships, advocate for change and strengthen shared decision-making and integration of systems that underpin better health outcomes.
- Continue to connect with community groups to integrate and celebrate the diversity of our workforce and communities.
- Continue to partner with First Nations patients, their families, extended families and our communities to identify and act on ways to improve health service delivery.
- Continue to collaborate and learn from our staff and consumers to achieve a much more informed, equitable and culturally capable health service.
- Continue to evaluate what we do to ensure improvements are fully embedded from the top down and bottom up.
- Continue to empower and engage a compassionate and culturally competent workforce.
- Continue to embed culturally safe practices, education and accountability measures that improve the experiences of First Nations staff and patients.

## Performance, Monitoring and Review

Successful delivery of strategic outcomes will require the collective commitment and effort of our workforce to champion and deliver on strategies and their associated actions to our First Nations Health Equity Committee, and the South West Hospital and Health Board.

South West HHS will review the Health Equity Strategy and our action plan annually to update and adapt for further improvement as targets are met, and activities are embedded as core components of business. Progress against implementation plans and Key Priority Areas will be reported on a quarterly basis.

We will also publicly share our progress every six months online.

<b>KEY PRIORITY AREA 1</b> <b>Actively eliminate racial discrimination and institutional racism.</b>	<b>KEY PRIORITY AREA 2</b> <b>Increase access to better health services.</b>	<b>KEY PRIORITY AREA 3</b> <b>Influence the social, cultural and economic determinants of health.</b>	<b>KEY PRIORITY AREA 4</b> <b>Deliver sustainable, culturally safe and responsive healthcare services.</b>	<b>KEY PRIORITY AREA 5</b> <b>Work with First Nations people to design, deliver, monitor and review health services.</b>	<b>KEY PRIORITY AREA 6</b> <b>Develop a culturally safe, skilled and valued First Nations workforce.</b>
<p><b>1.1</b> Continue to promote and embed our zero tolerance towards racism and institutional discrimination.</p> <p><b>1.2</b> Further promote visibility of 'have your say' and other feedback opportunities for First Nations people and staff.</p> <p><b>1.3</b> Embed cultural safety and cultural capability programs that are co-designed with First Nations people that have local place based informed information that include appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication approaches.</p> <p><b>1.4</b> Introduce Unconscious Bias and Racial Equity Training, to further support all South West staff to enhance better understanding of Health Equity and Health equality for consumers and the First Nations staff.</p> <p><b>1.5</b> Through role descriptions, and other HR and communication material, demonstrate a deeper commitment to the elimination of racism and institutional discrimination.</p>	<p><b>2.1</b> Alongside our partners, further strengthen the focus on promotion, prevention and public health services that meet expressed needs of First Nations people.</p> <p><b>2.2</b> Continue to develop and implement integrated care and services, closer to home, that support social and emotional wellbeing needs.</p> <p><b>2.3</b> Utilise and enhance virtual care models of care that are accessible, clinically /non-clinically supported and culturally informed.</p> <p><b>2.4</b> Following introduction of new Patient Travel reforms, undertake an audit of data to inform baseline for further improvements.</p> <p><b>2.5</b> Informed by patient experiences, introduce pre-planning protocols for transport, accommodation and wider discharge support – particularly for people leaving community for treatment.</p> <p><b>2.6</b> Continue to enhance South West HHS facilities to demonstrate culturally safe and welcoming environments.</p> <p><b>2.7</b> Complete the development of local facility service booklets across all HHS facilities, including references to the availability of First Nations support services.</p> <p><b>2.8</b> Alongside our partners, raise further awareness of culturally appropriate support, including community-based services, to improve choice at end-of-life.</p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Where legislation and other considerations allow, improve information sharing arrangements with our partners and other stakeholders.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> Continue to work closely with government and other partners to address social determinants of health.</p> <p><b>3.3</b> Support and promote wider community and staff awareness of culturally appropriate Domestic and Family Violence prevention and health response pathways.</p> <p><b>3.4</b> Ensure the continuation of culturally appropriate, high-quality, maternity and postnatal services close to home, and for those birthing off country.</p> <p><b>3.5</b> Work with our partners to provide support and referral pathways for children and families with complex developmental issues.</p>	<p><b>4.1</b> Raise awareness of the benefits and encourage uptake of GP led health assessments/action plans and other measures that support people to take greater control of their care pathways.</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Ensure funding allocations, for existing and future programs, are long term and sustainable to deliver genuine outcomes for First Nations people and communities.</p> <p><b>4.3</b> Continue to promote information about consumer rights and feedback mechanisms that support people who use our services share their experiences.</p> <p><b>4.4</b> Continue to implement measures and local innovation to minimise Discharge Against Medical Advice – for instance through Discharge with Medical Support.</p> <p><b>4.5</b> Co-design resources to support incoming staff and teams to better familiarise themselves with the communities they serve.</p> <p><b>4.6</b> Support our seniors and Elders to age well, with dignity and independence.</p> <p><b>4.7</b> Develop a sustainable, culturally informed co-designed continuity of care plan/model for Mental Health and Other Drugs between primary health care providers, ACCHOs and acute system.</p> <p><b>4.8</b> Protect children from harm and promote safety, wellbeing and the best interests of children embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guiding principles – safeguarding our children and young people (<i>Child Safe Organisation Act 2024</i>).</p>	<p><b>5.1</b> Take further steps to mobilise voices and advocacy of First Nations consumers and communities.</p> <p><b>5.2</b> Develop a South West HHS First Nations Engagement Framework to support all consultation and engagement activities across the region.</p> <p><b>5.3</b> Develop a Cultural Heritage Policy to guide and inform First Nations Engagement Framework.</p> <p><b>5.4</b> Demonstrate accountability across First Nations deliverables, performance measures and outcomes.</p> <p><b>5.5</b> Support our staff and anyone accessing our services to be more comfortable in asking and/or identifying themselves as First Nations people.</p>	<p><b>6.1</b> Develop and implement a South West HHS First Nations Workforce Strategy and Implementation plan.</p> <p><b>6.2</b> Ensure our first nations staff have appropriate professional development opportunities.</p> <p><b>6.3</b> Seek feedback from First Nations colleagues on their working experiences.</p> <p><b>6.4</b> Attract, retain and upskill First Nations staff through targeted initiatives that continue to grow our entire First Nations workforce.</p> <p><b>6.5</b> Continue to look for opportunities to enable South West staff and our local ACCHO partners to effectively work together.</p> <p><b>6.6</b> Informed by best practice, progress a supportive cultural supervision and mentoring program for South West staff.</p>

# ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER STRATEGIES



The health equity legislative requirements in the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* and *Hospital and Health Boards Regulation 2023* provide the authority to redesign and reshape the way health systems deliver services in partnership with First Nations people, organisations and key stakeholders. Accomplishing health equity for First Nations communities is a key priority at all levels of government and this is reflected in key strategic documents.

## Strategy Documents

### Government priorities include:

- HEALTHQ32 First Nations First Strategy 2032
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020
- Qld Government Statement of Commitment to Reframe the Relationship 2019
- Making Tracks Together
- Queensland Health Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation

### South West HHS priorities include our:

- Strategic Plan
- Consumer Engagement Strategy
- Clinician and Employee Engagement Strategy
- Equity and Diversity Strategy
- Safety and Quality Strategy
- Disability Strategy
- Aged Care Strategy
- Digital Strategy



**RACISM** does not belong here

**YOU**  
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