

Date: 8 January 2014

New health plan for south western Sydney

Preventing illness, improving research and education and strengthening the health workforce are just some of the priorities outlined in South Western Sydney Local Health District's eight year Strategic and Healthcare Services Plan launched recently.

The District also launched its five year Corporate Plan, which guides the way the organisation aims to achieve the vision set out in the Strategic and Healthcare Services Plan.

SWSLHD Board Chairman Professor Phil Harris said the District's Strategic Plan outlines how SWSLHD will continue to deliver high quality health services to one of the most diverse and fastest growing populations in NSW.

"SWSLHD provides health services to people from scattered rural townships to more densely populated cities. We have a rapidly expanding older population, with older people being significant users of health services. On the other hand, we also have some of the highest birth rates in the state," Professor Harris said.

"The most significant challenge we face is the rapid population growth expected across the District over the next 10 to 20 years. The SWSLHD population will grow by 20 per cent by 2021, with an additional 179,000 people.

"The District also has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in NSW with almost half of all residents speaking a language other than English at home.

"All these factors provide significant challenges for the future. The Strategic Plan provides us with a map of how we will continue to provide high quality health services to meet the needs of people in south western Sydney," he said.

Some of the strategies outlined in the Plan include:

- Focusing on prevention
- Embedding research and education in service delivery
- Bringing health care closer to new communities
- Strengthening partnerships with other health providers
- Growing specialty centres of excellence.

"For a long time health systems have focused on treating people after they get sick. We will be concentrating greater effort towards helping people avoid ill health by providing children with the best possible start in life, closing the health gap in Aboriginal communities and enhancing programs which address smoking, obesity, healthy eating and drinking and falls prevention," Professor Harris said.

"However we will also need to ensure that specialist health services are available when people need them and in locations that are more accessible," he said.

Professor Harris said a sustainable workforce was also key to the success of the Districts' ability to deliver first rate results.

“Our greatest asset is our staff. We aim to be an employer of choice and attract a skilled workforce that feels valued and supported to deliver first class healthcare and meet the changing needs of the local community,” he said.

Copies of the Strategic and Healthcare Services Plan and Corporate Plan are available at:
www.swslhd.nsw.gov.au/publications.html