



# Population Health – Research Plan to 2030

# Summary

South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) is committed to advancing population health research to improve community health outcomes. Population health research investigates factors influencing health status and evaluates policies and interventions to enhance the health and wellbeing of populations. This plan's research focus areas include healthy populations, built and social environments, and prevention in health services, aiming to establish SWSLHD as a leader in population health research.

Guided by the SWSLHD Keeping People Healthy: Prevention Strategy to 2028, specifically Change Priority 3: "Use data, evidence, and research to drive innovation and value," the plan seeks to:

- generate new knowledge;
- translate research into policy and practice; and
- build research capacity.

It is also underpinned by the NSW Population Health Research Strategy 2018-2024 and the SWSLHD Research Strategy to 2030.

The SWSLHD Population Health Research Committee will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Population Health Research Plan to 2030. This committee will report to the SWSLHD Research Operational Committee. Additional governance and leadership for this plan are provided by the Director of Population Health and Director of Research & Epidemiology, with support from key stakeholders and committees.

The plan outlines clear measures of success, including increased research training, grant applications, publications, and citations. A mid-term review and final evaluation will ensure ongoing implementation and inform future focus areas. This comprehensive approach ensures research efforts are systematically evaluated and continuously improved, ultimately driving better health outcomes for the community of south western Sydney.



# Context

SWSLHD is dedicated to promoting healthier communities through robust population health research. This commitment is deeply embedded in both District and state plans, particularly the *NSW Population Health Research Strategy 2018 – 2024*, *SWSLHD Research Strategy to 2030* and the *SWSLHD Keeping People Healthy: Prevention Strategy to 2028*.

The NSW Population Health Research Strategy focuses on three key areas:

1. **Generating New Knowledge:** Advancing our understanding of population health through cutting-edge research.
2. **Translating Research into Policy and Practice:** Ensuring that research findings inform health policies and clinical practices.
3. **Building Research Capacity and Capability:** Developing the skills and infrastructure needed to conduct high- quality research.

These key areas emphasise the importance of evidence-based interventions and the translation of research findings into practical applications that can improve community health outcomes.




The *SWSLHD Population Health Research Plan* aligns with these overarching goals and is specifically guided by Change Priority 3 from the *Keeping People Healthy Strategy*: "**Use data, evidence, and research to drive innovation and value.**" This priority underscores the critical role of research in fostering innovation, improving health services, and delivering value to our community.

By aligning our research efforts with local and state strategic plans, we ensure that our work not only contributes to the broader objectives of health promotion, disease prevention, and innovation but also advances health equity outcomes for the community of south western Sydney.






# SWSLHD Population Health Research Plan to 2030

This strategy aims to use data, evidence and research to drive innovation and value.

 <b>Healthy populations</b>	 <b>Healthy built and social environments</b>	 <b>Prevention in health services</b>
<p><b>Focus areas</b></p> <p><b>New beginnings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoking during pregnancy.</li> <li>• Healthy eating.</li> <li>• Physical activity.</li> <li>• Childhood obesity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Young people and adults</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaping.</li> <li>• Mental Health.</li> </ul> <p><b>Healthy Ageing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falls.</li> <li>• Social Isolation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Focus areas</b></p> <p><b>Social determinants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing.</li> <li>• Vulnerable communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Food security</b></p> <p><b>Healthy built environment</b></p> <p><b>Climate change</b></p> <p><b>Heat</b></p>	<p><b>Focus areas</b></p> <p><b>Cancer screening and early detection</b></p> <p><b>Prevention in clinical services</b></p> <p><b>Health service provision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity of access.</li> <li>• Equity of outcomes.</li> </ul>



## Measure of success

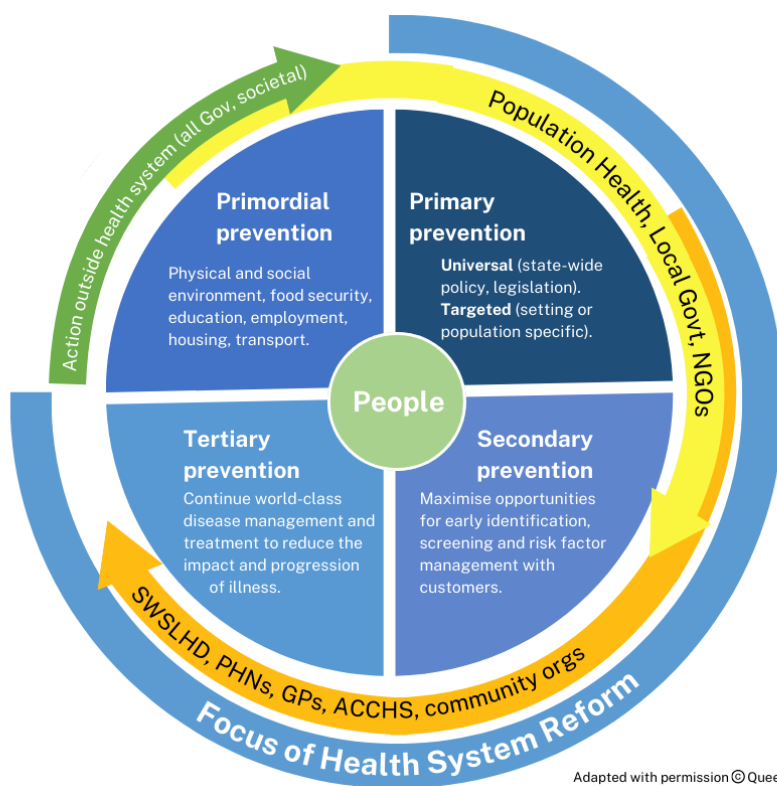
<p> <b>Process deliverables</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate three prevention programs and initiatives p.a.</li> <li>• 20 per cent increase in Population Health staff participation in research, training and development.</li> <li>• Engage two PhD students p.a.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Outputs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 per cent increase p.a. in the number of research grant applications submitted.</li> <li>• 20 per cent increase p.a. in the number of successful competitive grants.</li> <li>• 25 per cent increase p.a. in the number of research publications.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Research impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 per cent increase p.a. in the number of citations.</li> <li>• At least one Population Health services has translated our research into practice.</li> <li>• At least one clinical service across SWSLHD has referenced our work as part of decision support to change policy or practice.</li> <li>• Improvement in the population level indicators of health for which we are responsible, specifically in an area of our research that can be attributed to us.</li> </ul>
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# Overarching Frameworks

The research aspirations and goals are guided by several key frameworks. The Translational Research Framework is central to the approach, ensuring that the research not only generates new knowledge but also effectively translates findings into practice and policy. Additionally, the research themes are informed by the Prevention Framework, which encompasses primordial, primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies.

These frameworks collectively shape the research agenda, focusing on the continuum of prevention and the integration of research into everyday health practices.



## Criteria

The focus areas of the Research Plan have been determined using the criteria outlined in the NSW Health Guide to Setting Research Priorities.

These criteria include:

- **Research evidence could make a difference:** Prioritising studies with the potential to significantly impact health outcomes.

- **Relevance to current population health strategic priorities:** Ensuring alignment with existing health priorities and challenges.
- **Addressing gaps in knowledge:** Focusing on areas where additional research is needed to inform policy and practice.
- **Potential to address health inequalities:** Targeting research that can reduce disparities and improve health equity.
- **Anticipated return on investment:** Considering cost-effectiveness and potential benefits of research initiatives.
- **Leveraging areas of excellence:** Building on existing strengths and expertise in the district.
- **Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships:** Encouraging collaborative efforts with other institutions and stakeholders.



## Governance

Primary governance for the Research Plan and leadership for its implementation lie with the Director of Population Health and the Director of Population Research & Epidemiology. These positions are pivotal in ensuring the successful execution of the plan and the achievement of the outlined measures of success.

The importance of collaborating with key stakeholders to implement the Research Plan is recognised.

These stakeholders include:

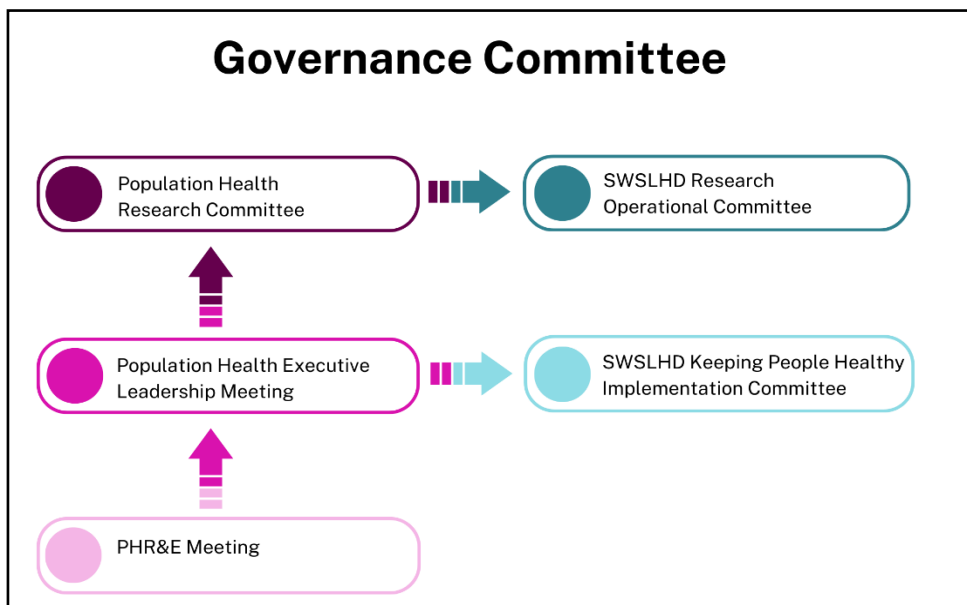
- **SWSLHD Population Health Units.**
- **SWSLHD Clinical Services and Streams.**

- **Universities that partner with SWSLHD.**
- **Local and State Government.**
- **SWS Primary Health Network.**
- **International, national, and interstate funding, academic and research organisations.**
- **Communities and individuals likely to be affected by the research.**

These groups will be engaged in the implementation of the Research Plan as appropriate.

The governance structure will include the following key committees to ensure comprehensive oversight, risk identification, and progress monitoring:

- **Keeping People Healthy Implementation Committee:** Provides strategic direction and oversight over the implementation of the Keeping People Health Prevention Strategy.
- **Population Health Executive Leadership Meetings:** Facilitates high-level decision-making and coordination across the service.
- **Population Health Research Committee:** Focuses specifically on the implementation and progress of the research plan. This committee will report to the SWSLHD Research Operational Committee. Reports to the SWSLHD Research Operational Committee will align with the SWSLHD Research Strategy to 2030.
- **Collaborative Research Activity Management Committee:** Weekly team meeting with the Population Health Research & Epidemiology unit to discuss where research is up to and any new updates from key stakeholders within and external to the department.



By maintaining strong governance and stakeholder engagement, the Research Plan aims to drive innovation, improve health services and deliver value to the community.

# Measures of Success

To gauge the success of the Research Plan, a range of process deliverables, outputs, and research impact metrics will be used.

These include:

- **Process deliverables**
  - Evaluate three prevention programs and initiatives per annum.
  - 20 per cent increase in staff participation in research training and development per annum.
  - Engage two new PhD students per annum.
  
- **Outputs**
  - 25 per cent increase per annum in the number of research grant applications submitted.
  - 20 per cent increase per annum in the number of successful competitive grants.
  - 25 per cent increase per annum in the number of research publications.
  
- **Research impact**
  - 25 per cent per annum Increase in the number of citations.
  - At least one Population Health service has translated our research into practice.
  - At least one clinical service across SWSLHD has referenced our work as part of decision support to change policy or practice.
  - Improvement in the population level indicators of health for which we are responsible, specifically in an area of our research that can be attributed to us.

By setting clear and quantifiable measures, it allows research efforts to be systematically evaluated, transparently communicated, and continuously improved, ultimately driving better health outcomes for our community.

A mid-term review will be conducted to track performance and inform implementation in the latter half of the Research Plan's term, including the refinement of actions as needed. A final review will be conducted at the conclusion of the plan's term to assess overall progress and impact over the five-year period.

