Strategic Imperative

South Western Sydney is characterised by its diversity, multiculturalism and rapid population growth and by the pockets of disadvantage within its communities. The health services and staff of South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) have a reputation for developing new, innovative and responsive programs and services which address local health needs and concerns. However in an environment of increasingly scarce resources, it has never been more important that health services undertake research to understand the factors that contribute to and the actions that can address the multiple health problems in the community.

Over the last 15 - 20 years, there has been considerable expansion in the amount and quality of health and medical research in South Western Sydney, an increase in the depth of research expertise through the appointment of quality staff and development of organisational structures that support research. The construction of the new Ingham Institute at Liverpool represents a further milestone in this process.

The research environment in South Western Sydney is still relatively young, and although there are few of the traditions that can stifle research thinking and endeavour there are also areas which require further development. Opportunities abound as the research marketplace has not been crowded out by long established institutes competing for funds from entrenched paradigms. For research to continue to grow and thrive in SWSLHD, it is now the appropriate time for all stakeholders to consider the expansion of research horizons to further improve patient care and better meet the health needs of the growing and increasingly aged populations of the South West.

The decision to develop a new Research Strategy for SWSLHD offers health researchers and clinicians a tremendous opportunity to have a greater impact on the health of our community. The process for developing this Strategy is outlined in this scoping paper. In addition to reviewing policy and current research effort, it proposes a consultation process which will provide all staff, key partners and the community the chance to think critically about their experience of research in this District and to identify research development directions. This includes actions the District needs to take to attract the most skilled researchers, to make health and medical research increasingly “cutting edge” and vibrant, to foster a research culture and to ensure that there is a direct relationship between research and the clinical practice provided in local hospitals, community health centres and the broader community. These actions will be framed within a focus on understanding what can best benefit and have a direct impact on the health of local residents.

This Strategy will be the blueprint for research development in the short and medium term and will provide the gauge through which research success can be measured.

Aim

To develop a Research Strategy for the South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD)

Auspice of the Plan

The SWSLHD Board has established a Research and Teaching Committee whose role includes developing a strategic plan for research. The Chief Executive has requested that a research strategic plan is developed to embed a research ethos across LHD activities, with longer term (10 year) and shorter term (5 year) strategies. The Research and Teaching Committee will operate as the steering committee for this plan.
Overview

Fostering research is important in health systems because:

- It brings the wider community benefits associated with medical breakthroughs and with improved understanding of health, wellbeing, disease patterns, healing, health systems and services.
- It propagates an enlightened and innovative spirit of critical enquiry and analysis within the health service.
- It fosters policy, service development, clinical practice and care which is evidence-based; thus contributing to service and system quality, safety, effectiveness and efficiency.
- It can be an important factor in attracting and retaining high quality staff who are interested either in undertaking research or in working in centres of research and healthcare excellence.
- It supports a strong and enthusiastic teaching and training environment.

The current research policy and funding context is dynamic and potentially significantly influenced by the national health system reform, changes in funding arrangements proposed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), changes in the federal approach to funding universities and the role and priorities of the NSW Office for Medical Research (OMR) and the NSW Ministry of Health. These initiatives include:

- The release of the NHMRC Discussion Paper - Developing Advanced Health Research Centres in Australia in 2010 with the aim of encouraging centres through collaboration between universities, Medical Research Institutes and hospitals to support research and research translation.
- The Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research has commenced the development of a Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure to inform future decisions on where Australia should make strategic infrastructure investments to further develop its research capacity and improve innovation and research outcomes over the next five to ten years. An Exposure Draft was released in mid 2011.
- In May 2011, the Australian Government Minister for Mental Health and Ageing announced the Strategic Review into Health and Medical Research in Australia. The aim of the review is to consider how to optimise the future environment for producing world class health and medical research in Australia. The report is due in August 2012.
- In mid 2011, the NSW Government commenced a review of the current performance of health and medical research in NSW. The Review will assess the current performance of health and medical research in NSW, make recommendations on how the sector can be improved, better coordinated and leveraged; and propose ways in which the NSW health needs, clinical trials and commercialisation capacity can be better supported or expanded. It will include consultation with the health, research and business sectors and the wider community. The key outcome of the review is to develop a strategic health and medical research plan for NSW covering the next 10 years.

Within South Western Sydney there has been an increased focus on research and strategic research planning. This is evidenced by growth in the amount, range and quality of research, a strengthening in the commitment to research by local hospitals, health executive and universities, generous philanthropic funding, and the adoption of a stronger governance structure including the appointment of a research director. Key milestones include:

- the establishment of the Centre for Applied Nursing Research (CANR), Psychiatry Research and Teaching Unit (PRTU) and the Academic General Practice Unit in 1991, the Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation (CHETRE) in 1998, Collaboration for Cancer Outcomes Research and Evaluation (CCORE) in 1999 as collaborations between Sydney South West Area Health Service and various universities.
- the release of the Sydney South West Area Health Service Western Zone Research Strategy 2006-2011 in 2006. The strategy set five key strategic directions: the
establishment of the Ingham Institute; the development of research facilities; the
development of a western zone trials cooperative; and the creation of an internal
grants program. The strategy also included a commitment to focus resources on a
limited number of research themes.

• the establishment of the Ingham Institute of Applied Medical Research.
• commencement of the Ingham Institute research building incorporating laboratory
and non-laboratory space, a clinical skills centre and unique research MRI Linac.
• funding of a director of clinical trials, appointment of a biostatistician and creation of
an internal grants program
• production of an annual report on research activities.

The SWSLHD has emerging and potentially strong teaching and research strengths, including
epidemiological, health service and social research of international and national
significance. The new Ingham Institute will form the focus of the South Western Sydney health
and medical research hub. There are opportunities to build the Institute’s research program
through the District’s areas of service strength, particularly in trauma, early childhood and
ambulatory care (including primary care and general practice).

Future opportunities for developing national leadership roles in research are:

• Health services research – cancer services, critical care, trauma, electronic medical
record implementation and mental health
• Population health research - equity, health promotion and environmental health
• Clinical research – clinical trials
• Biomedical research – molecular biology, neuroscience, basic pharmacology,
immunity, inflammation, cancer and pancreatic disease.

Further capacity is required in clinical trials and biomedical research, and in other areas
where research can be undertaken including community settings. SWSLHD is also committed
to the construction of a new clinical school at Campbelltown Hospital, with associated
research facilities.

In May 2011, the SWSLHD Board and senior executive identified key directions to support
research:

1. Supporting clinical leadership

There is considerable clinical and research expertise and experience that can be leveraged
to support the development of the District’s healthcare services. Clinicians will need to be
encouraged and supported to assume state-wide and national clinical leadership roles.

The District will identify and appoint clinical leaders for clinical streams and centres of
excellence.

2. Supporting Education and Research

There is a need to embed and support a culture of research in clinical practice which will
both improve patient care and support staff recruitment and retention.

Access to clinical trials and biomedical research will be of critical importance in improving
patient care and in attracting and retaining staff. Opportunities for applied research projects
are also important, including translational research from the laboratory to the hospital setting
and into the community. The arrangements for attaining ethics approval is a barrier to
accessing clinical trials and undertaking research.

Towards this end, the need for a Research Strategic Plan was identified as a priority. A
SWSLHD Research Strategic Plan would aim to:

• Support and further develop the capacity for research across the SWSLHD.
• Enhance the profile of current research in the SWSLHD.
• Strengthen the quality and quantity of research in the SWSLHD.
• Encourage new researchers, including junior staff, and, sustain the commitment to
research of SWSLHD personnel in management, support and research roles.
• Identify the resourcing required to implement the strategies in the Plan and identify potential sources of funding.
• Develop governance arrangements which ensure accountability and responsibility for research conducted according to ethical principles, scientific, regulatory and professional standards and the principles of risk management.
• Ensure structures support creativity and lead to research which improves health and health service provision.

Scope

The SWSLHD Research Strategy will provide a framework and blueprint for research development over longer term (2021) and shorter term (2016) timeframes. Specifically it will document:

• goals and core principles of research within SWSLHD
• current research activities and entities, including the outcomes of the last plan and trends in SWSLHD research activities.
• key initiatives and developments at a national and state level
• outline issues associated with research including relationships with external bodies
• strategies, priorities and actions for the shorter term (up to 5 years) and longer term (5-10 years) which will maximise research opportunities and activities within SWSLHD. This will include consideration of strategies to:
  o improve the quality and quantity of research
  o consider the organisational structure necessary to support research and the relationship of SWSLHD with the Ingham Institute
  o identify and address infrastructure needs including workforce issues
  o enhance communication within SWSLHD and with external bodies (including issues related to branding of research)
  o set the direction for the future

Proposed Plan Terms of Reference

To develop a Research Strategy for South Western Sydney Local Health District which will:

a. Establish the vision, goals, principles and strategic directions for research in SWSLHD (to 2016 and 2021)

b. Outline the current research policy context, including the changes in approach to funding and prioritising research at a national and state level

c. Describe and evaluate the current research capacity. This will include an overview of each research entity, their key functions, research interests, governance structures and future priorities. It will also include an overview of non-institute research activities.

d. Summarise the outcomes of the Sydney South West Area Health Service Western Zone Research Strategy 2006-2011

e. Ensure wide ranging consultation occurs with key stakeholders

f. Outline the key issues for research with a focus on those areas which underlie a strong and vigorous research focus

g. Determine strategies, actions, priorities and a timeframe for implementation

h. Provide advice and draft plan to the SWSLHD Research and Teaching Committee.

Key Questions to be addressed

• Where do we want to be in terms of research in five-ten years?
• What are the main impediments to quality research in SWSLHD?
• How can we increase research activity (including success of grants)?
• Do the current structures for governance in SWSLHD support effective research?
• How will SWSLHD foster a research culture across all disciplines and facilities?
• How do we attract strong researchers (including students and supervisors) to SWSLHD?
How do we facilitate collaboration within SWSLHD, across the health system, and with universities, other organisations such as NGOs and the private sector?

What would encourage consumers to participate in research projects?

How should we communicate with our community, including those whose first language is not English?

How do we best consider and utilise the strengths, energy and unique characteristics of SWSLHD clinicians and researchers and the South Western Sydney community?

How do we ensure that research influences clinical practice in health and community settings?

Conduct of Planning

A working party will guide development of the Plan, reporting to the Board’s Research and Teaching Committee. It is proposed that the working party will comprise the Chief Executive, Research Director Ingham Institute, Chief Operating Officer Ingham Institute and a Senior Planner.

Consultation Process

This is an exciting opportunity for people interested in research to inform the research direction in SWSLHD for the next 5-10 years. Key stakeholders include research directors, senior researchers and research staff; ethics committee/s; clinical schools/universities of New South Wales, Western Sydney and Sydney; Medicare Local; Aboriginal health services; general managers; philanthropists; clinicians (including medical, nursing, allied health and population health staff in hospital and community health settings); clinical streams (including services such as Oral Health, Population Health, Mental Health and Drug Health); biotech and biomedical industry; NSW research entities; and patients/consumers. Consultation will occur via:

- use of information from other consultation processes such as the NSW Health and Medical Research Review and SWSLHD Allied Health Research Forum.
- a questionnaire to the directors of all research entities, clinical streams and major universities seeking their feedback on key research issues and directions. These will be supported by in-depth telephone or face-to-face interviews with a smaller number of key research directors and personnel.
- an online staff survey to broadly elicit staff input.
- meetings with the SWSLHD Community Participation Networks and key community groups.
- 2-3 half day facilitated forums for senior researchers to brainstorm strategic issues and devise and prioritise strategies. Additional meetings may be required to maximise reach.
- circulation of a draft strategy across SWSLHD.

The questions to be asked through the consultation process are explored below.

Consultation Questions

It is proposed that a standard set of questions are asked to obtain information about research activities in SWSLHD.

a. Questions for the Online survey

The following questions are similar to those asked recently in the SLHD On-line Research Survey. The first 14 questions provide drop down menus with the final questions using an open-ended format.

1. Please indicate which hospital or health centre and which clinical stream/service you mainly work in (including cross LHD services such as mental health, population health, oral health, etc.)
2. What is your primary role? (e.g. researcher, nurse, etc)
3. Are you involved in research as a part of your role?
4. Please estimate what percentage of your time is allocated to research.
5. How would you describe your research? (e.g. clinical, biomedical, etc)
6. If your research is in the areas of clinical trials, is it pharmaceutical industry led or investigator led?
7. Has your research received funding?
8. If so, how much funding have you received in the last five years?
9. From which of the following sources is your research funded? (e.g. NHMRC, ARC, SWSLHD)
10. Is your research in collaboration with others? If so, with whom?
11. How many research papers have you published in the last four years? (e.g. 0, 1, 2-4, 5+)
12. How recently have you published a paper? (e.g. Never, in the last year, 2-4 years, 5-10 years, 10+ years)
13. Where have you presented your research? (e.g. never presented, locally, national or international meetings)
14. Is your research affiliated with a research institute? (i.e. Ingham Institute, Other: )
15. What are the main research strengths of SWSLHD? (identify up to five)
16. Nominate five aspects of research effort which should be strengthened to make SWSLHD “cutting edge”.
17. What are the major barriers to research in SWSLHD?
18. What do you think should be the major research directions for SWSLHD?
19. What area of research do you think would have the most benefit for residents of South Western Sydney?
20. What do we need to do to make research “standout”?
21. Have you any further comments?

b. Questionnaire for Research and Clinical Leaders

Directors of research entities, clinical streams, universities, and related entities will be asked to provide written submissions into the research directions for SWSLHD. To assist with the coverage of their responses, they will be asked to respond to the questions below (i.e. similar to those questions asked in the 2006 SSWAHS Research Survey). Slight modifications to these questions will be required for agencies external to SWSLHD.

1. What are the major research directions of your service/area of interest? *
2. What are the major research strengths of SWSLHD?
3. What practical opportunities exist for building on or sustaining these research strengths in SWSLHD over the next five – ten years?
4. What specific initiatives or resources are needed in SWSLHD to exploit the opportunities described above? Do you have any recommendations on how to obtain these resources?
5. What are the major threats or barriers in SWSLHD to the research strengths?
6. Should any areas that are not current strengths be developed as major research strengths?
7. What new “flagships” or initiatives would strengthen SWSLHD research activity e.g. infrastructure, research initiatives/projects
8. Would you like to make any other comments or practical suggestions on the development of research in SWSLHD?

*This question (Q1) will be used with SWSLHD leaders only. For units with a large volume of clinical trials, these questions will also be asked about clinical trial activity specifically.

c. Targeted In-depth Interviews

In addition to the questionnaire above, in-depth interviews will be conducted with a small number of research leaders to ensure that key research issues and directions are fully explored and understood. These interviews will focus around the questions covered in (b) above.

d. Questions for Consumers

Consultation with consumers will occur through existing forums and/or targeted meetings seeking their views about participation in research. Potential questions are:
1. What are the benefits to the community of participating in health and medical research?
2. What are the benefits to individuals of participating in health and medical research?
3. What has been your experience (or that of someone close to you) of participating in health or medical research? Consider both the positive and negative aspects.
4. What would encourage or motivate you or family members to participate in research including clinical trials?
5. If you or your family members have English as a second language or come from a different culture are there specific issues that occur when considering participating in research?

### Indicative Timeframe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Indicative Timeframes</th>
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</table>
| 1. Scope project | Scoping paper  
Scope approved by Chief Executive  
Working Party formed  
Working Party commences | Sept 2011 |
| 2. Identify current situation | Identify policy parameters  
Identify current research activities  
Assess outcomes of previous strategies/initiatives.  
Map internal/external relationships | Sept – Oct 2011 |
| 3. Identify scope for improvement | In-depth face to face interviews, questionnaires & on-line surveys on current research activities – issues, gaps, strategic issues, areas for improvement.  
Consider outcomes from NSW Research Review | Oct - Nov 2011 |
| 4. Identify strategic direction | 2-3 forums across the District with senior researchers  
Other meetings as required to support this objective | Dec 2011 |
| 5. Develop Action Plan, strategies, responsibilities, timeframes. | Agree to strategies  
Stakeholder agreement to responsibilities, timeframes, performance indicators, implementation strategy. | Feb 2012 |
| 6. Disseminate project findings | Stakeholder consultation on draft report  
Endorsement SWSLHD Governance committees & AHIS  
Approval by the SWSLHD Board  
Finalise report and to printers  
Publication and launch  
Implement governance arrangements for Plan implementation. | March 2012  
April 2012  
May 2012  
June 2012  
July 2012  
Ongoing |

### Draft Table of Contents for the Research Strategic Plan

The following provides the preliminary structure of the plan:

1. Foreword
2. Introduction
   2.1 Background to SWSLHD
   2.2 Policy context
   2.3 Rationale for a research focus
   2.4 Vision, aims and principles
3. Research in SWSLHD
   3.1 Current research entities/organisation
   3.2 Research activities (including funded and unfunded, where collaborations exist, etc.)
4. Consultation Outcomes/Strategic Issues
   4.1 Research activity
4.2 Organisational structure (including research streams/clusters)
4.3 Participation by clinicians and patients in research
4.4 Infrastructure
4.5 Funding
4.6 Workforce (including recruitment and support)
4.7 External relationships
4.8 Collaboration
4.9 Communication

5. Action Plan - Strategies, actions, responsibilities and timetable (including potential costs)

Preliminary List of Stakeholders

- SWSLHD Research Centres/Groups
  - Ingham Institute
  - Centre for Applied Nursing Research (CANR)
  - Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation (CHETRE)
  - Collaboration for Cancer Outcomes Research and Evaluation (CCORE)
  - Translational Cancer Research Centre (TCRG)
  - Psychiatry Research and Teaching Unit (PRTU) and Schizophrenia Research Unit (SRU) at Liverpool (UNSW)
  - Centre for Research, Evidence Management and Surveillance (REMS)
  - General Practice Research Unit
  - The Simpson Centre for Health Service Research
  - Pancreatic Research Group (PRG)
  - Arthritis Research Unit (ARU)
  - Oncology Clinical Trials
  - UNSW Barretts Group
  - Heart & Brain Collaboration
  - Cancer Pathology
  - Antibiotic Resistance & Mobile Elements Group (ARMEG)
  - Liverpool Haematology Research Group
  - Psycho-Oncology Research Group
  - Aged Care Research Unit Liverpool
  - Brain Injury Rehabilitation
  - Early Years Research Group
  - Oral Regeneration Research Group (OREG)
  - Whitlam Orthopaedic Research Centre
  - Infant Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Research Unit

- Research leaders
- Clinical Stream Directors (including Directors Allied Health, Community Health, Population Health, Mental Health, Oral Health and Drug Health)
- SWSLHD Ethics Committee
- Facility General Managers
- Clinical Schools and key leaders in the University of NSW, University of Western Sydney universities and targeted other universities in NSW which collaborate with SWSLHD researchers
- Senior researchers
- Research staff
- Clinicians (medical, nursing and allied health)
- Aboriginal organisations such as Tharawal Aboriginal Medical Service, Marumali and Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council
- SWSLHD Community Participation Networks and multicultural groups
- Philanthropic entities
- Medicare Locals
- Biotech and biomedical industry
- Centre for Education and Workforce Development
- Facility Medical Staff Councils
- NSW research agencies e.g. Cancer Council; NSW Cancer Institute; Heart Foundation; Australian Cancer Research Foundation; National Breast Cancer Foundation
Acknowledgements

This Scoping Paper draws on a range of documents and other sources including:

Sydney South West Area Health Service Western Zone Research Strategy 2006 – 2011, SSWAHS 2006

A Research Strategic Plan for Sydney Local Health Network, Sydney Local Health District 2011

NSW Health and Medical Research Strategic Review Issues Paper, 1 September 2011 NSW Department of Health 2011

South Western Sydney Local Health District Strategic Response, South Western Sydney Local Health District 2011

2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure Exposure Draft, Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

