

# Strategic Plan 2023-2029



gateway  
health

People living well



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Gateway Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land on which we stand and pay our respect to the Elders, past, present and future, for they hold the memories, the traditions and the culture of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Gateway Health acknowledges and recognises people from different nationalities, cultures and identities. We are committed to providing an inclusive service and work environment where individuals feel safe, accepted, affirmed and celebrated.

# Introduction

We commend Gateway Health's Strategic Plan 2023-2029 to you. The plan builds on achievements and learning from the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan and draws upon the knowledge and priorities outlined in Gateway Health's Service Plan 2019-2029.

The priorities outlined in this plan are informed by the thoughts, ideas and experience of our staff, clients, stakeholders and Board. We would like to acknowledge and thank our staff who contributed to surveys and workshops; clients and community members who participated in focus groups, and representatives from a range of organisations who participated in interviews. Their wisdom, experience and hopes for the future of our organisation and the communities we serve, lie at the heart of this plan.

Over the next six years Gateway Health seeks to deliver services that:

- are designed to reach people experiencing the greatest health inequity and where we can make the greatest difference in health and wellbeing outcomes
- strengthen opportunities for social connection as a protective factor for health and wellbeing
- support a great start to life
- enable and support healthy aging
- strengthen early intervention and prevention approaches that support mental health and wellbeing
- address the health impacts of climate change

Achievement of these priorities will be informed and shaped by the ever-changing environment in which we operate – hence our plan is structured over three planning horizons over the next six years.

Our experience through the pandemic and response to bushfire and floods, has demonstrated and affirmed our strengths and capability to adapt, to be flexible and to find innovative ways to make it easier for people and communities to access the help and services they need. Our way of working is relationship based and builds on our deep connection to the communities we serve.



The 2023-2029 plan seeks to build on those strengths and commits us to:

- seeking innovative ways to make services more accessible where people live
- working with partners to advocate for and create pathways so community needs can be met
- providing the best possible experience and outcomes for our clients
- engaging in ways that build community capability and have a lasting impact
- maintaining our focus on health promotion, prevention and early intervention as the hallmark of Community Health's role in the wider health and social service system

Our goal as an organisation is to improve the health and wellbeing of communities and to deliver outcomes that matter to our clients. Our commitment and connection to the communities in which we work will assist us in contributing to healthy social and economic environments that enable people to live well.

We look forward to working with our clients, staff and partners over the next six years to deliver on our commitment to the priorities we have outlined in this plan.

Leigh Rhode, Chief Executive Officer  
David Koschitzke, Board Chair

## Vision

People living well

## Purpose

To provide care and services that connect the community, improve wellbeing, and strengthen health equity.



## Principles

**We RESPECT** the strength of individuals and the community, and their capacity to recover from adversity.

**We RECOGNISE** the importance of adaptability and responsiveness to enable us to deliver on our commitment to the community.

**We ACTIVELY LISTEN** and work alongside the community and each other to design and deliver better solutions.

**We BELIEVE** a learning culture is critical to enhancing the wellbeing of staff, clients and the community.

**We CONTRIBUTE** to creation of a connected and integrated health and community care system to achieve the best outcomes for our clients and community.

# Our community

While the region’s population is mainly concentrated in the regional cities of Albury Wodonga and Wangaratta, many people live in smaller townships and in the hills and valleys of the surrounding areas.

The communities of North East Victoria and southern New South Wales are changing. Originally founded on agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism, many parts of the region have been impacted by long standing drought, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic, flood, bushfire and pandemic. These events have led to many changes in economic and physical environments.

Populations across Local Government Areas in Gateway Health’s catchment are predicted to increase by very small numbers in some areas, with Wodonga and Albury projected to grow the most.





## Our approach

Development of the Strategic Plan 2023-2029 started in November 2022, with the appointment of strategic consultancy, Rapid Impact and the establishment of the Project Control Group (PCG) to oversee and guide the project. The PCG consisted of Gateway Health staff from across all levels and programs of the organisation.

The strategic planning process used a strengths-based approach and we followed public participation frameworks to generate evidence-informed decision making.

It was important to us that the strategic plan was also informed by the consumer, so we conducted extensive consultation with partners, community

and user groups, the board, leadership team and staff groups across Gateway Health.

Another important part of the consultation process included engaging with key stakeholders at all levels of government. These stakeholders provided a deep understanding of the changing context with a particular focus on national and state reforms, policy and investment priorities.

Underpinning all this, we undertook extensive data and information gathering and analysis of community demographics and projected demand across the Ovens and Murray region.

The Strategic Plan 2023-2029 is a culmination of this extensive analysis and consultation process.

# Priority 1

## Place-based approaches to improve health equity



A key part of People Living Well is easy and affordable access to local health and wellbeing support. The proposed Medicare reforms are driving innovative team-based approaches to care that enable healthcare workforce to spend more time with people in the community presenting with complex issues. Technology provides new opportunities to access healthcare, yet how and where this might be introduced requires careful thought, particularly for those who are less comfortable online or have connectivity challenges.

Gateway Health will work closely with partners to improve access to healthcare for people and communities in the region, particularly those that currently face the greatest health challenges. Being embedded more deeply into the community helps to address the power imbalances and challenge expectations that clients need to come to services for support.

Solutions will be co-created with clients and the community to overcome the challenges clients and the community have identified. These include a

lack of transport, long waiting lists, unaffordable services, and the complexities of navigating the health system. Creating welcoming and safe services will be at the heart of all Gateway Health service models so diverse communities are informed, feel confident, and are able to access the help they need.

### Objective



People with the greatest health inequity have better access to health and wellbeing services across the region

### Strategies

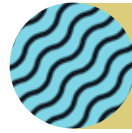


- Create and strengthen service access through partnerships with the people, and in places, where Gateway Health can have the greatest impact
- Introduce new models of care that make it easier to access and navigate services



# Priority 2

## Strengthened connection



Community connection is a proven protective factor and strongly correlates with good health and wellbeing. Over the last decade, which includes the impact of COVID-19, many more people in the community have found themselves socially isolated.

Loneliness and social isolation in the region are likely to be further exacerbated with over 22,000 people living alone, an increase of 12 per cent over the five-year census period. Gateway Health clients reported that many people are yet to re-engage in their pre-COVID activities, and due to a range of reasons such as social anxiety, are spending more time at home.

Gateway Health seeks to strengthen community connection and engagement across all services and programs given the importance of its contribution to improving individual health and wellbeing, and the overall resilience of the diverse communities in the region.

The wisdom of those with lived and living experience will be pivotal to addressing the barriers that stop people from engaging in community life.

Care will be taken to ensure those with additional life challenges such as new arrivals, those facing insecure food and accommodation, and those that feel anxious or unsafe outside their home, have access to the support they need.

Increased intergenerational approaches will ensure the ageing population and diverse communities continue to feel valued and engaged, and their knowledge, experience, and support, are able to transcend generations.

### Objective



To increase the opportunities for connection within and between people, communities, and generations as a protective factor for health and wellbeing

### Strategies



- Implement approaches that strengthen social and intergenerational connection, pathways, and activities
- Actively support the safety and belonging of diverse communities



# Priority 3

## A great start to life

Recognising the importance of the early years for children’s development and continued success over their lifetime, the Australian Government is developing an Early Years strategy.



Gateway Health supports this work as it observes first-hand how health inequity can stand in the way of parents providing their children with the support they know their children need. Across the region, family disadvantage is higher than the Victorian average with a greater number of children growing up in low-income, welfare-dependent families. In addition, children living in Benalla, Wangaratta and Wodonga, carry a greater disease burden and health risk.

Gateway Health will work with its partners to bring together and coordinate a continuum of support to address the health and non-medical factors that young families face from pre-conception, through to pregnancy and the early years. Non-medical issues can often include food insecurity, legal challenges, and housing instability, all of which can impact a child’s physical and emotional health and development, and family wellbeing. Early help



pre-pregnancy will be a cornerstone of Gateway Health’s approach.

In response to feedback from young families, more opportunities will be created for parents to socialise, learn from each other, share their journey, and normalise the daily challenges and joys of raising their children.

<b>Objective</b> 	To support children to have a positive life trajectory
<b>Strategies</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a Child and Family Hub</li><li>• Increase access to ante-natal, paediatric and developmental assessments and support</li><li>• Support families and communities directly or through partners to enable families to thrive</li></ul>






## Priority 4

### Healthy ageing

A published report by the Australian Human Rights Commission suggests the majority of Australians (83%) believe ageism is a problem. A recently published article in the Lancet identifies ageism as a social determinant of health, that is, a non-medical factor that in its own right impacts health. This information is particularly pertinent as the 2021 census reported almost half the overall population growth across the region (7,235 people) occurred in the 65 and over age group. All local government areas (LGAs) in the region experienced significant growth in this age cohort and the trend is set to continue.

Gateway Health is invested in keeping people in our region healthy and connected as they age. This includes having services in place that enable health and other wellbeing risk factors to be identified and addressed early with affordable and available screening and other diagnostics. Digital literacy is

fast becoming a pre-requisite to fully participate and engage in the health system and community life. Gateway Health will be mindful of ensuring digital services are accessible for people as they age, particularly as more medical and allied health consultations and services move online.

<p><b>Objective</b></p> 	<p>Individuals are living well for longer and enjoying life as they age</p>
<p><b>Strategies</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand services for older people aimed at reducing the risk of functional decline</li> <li>• Keeping people well at home and in their community</li> </ul>

## Priority 5

### Improved mental health and wellbeing



The recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System speak specifically to the need to improve the mental health and wellbeing of people in rural and regional Victoria. The system reforms are extensive and systemic and include improved access to treatment, care, and services, through to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of specific groups and places.

Gateway Health’s intended approach is consistent with the Commonwealth’s 2030 Vision for mental health and suicide prevention which is focused on local community solutions, connected and easy to navigate services, and investment in prevention and early intervention. Connecting services will require far greater integration between alcohol and other drugs (AOD), mental health and family violence, and embedding the knowledge, insights and experience of those with lived and living experience into service design.

#### Objective



To create with local partners the conditions in the region that support the mental health of people in our communities so they can thrive

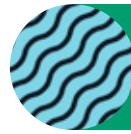
#### Strategies



- Build the capability within communities to better manage stress and strengthen mental health protective factors across the lifespan
- Use local knowledge and networks to bring community-based mental health reforms to life
- Design, implement and evaluate an integrated AOD, mental health, and family violence, response

# Priority 6

## Climate adaptation and health





Over recent years, communities in the region have been devastated by unprecedented climate and health events including fires, floods, drought, infestations, heatwaves and COVID-19. These events have tested the resilience of our communities, and reinforced the need for ongoing support to address the emotional trauma and impacts on families and communities.

In addition to responding to climate emergencies, Gateway Health is committed to actively contributing to broader community discussions and action on climate change, and the preparedness for emerging health threats and impacts. This includes partnering with local government and other agencies to support a regional sustainability agenda.

Gateway Health has taken steps to support the community through climate emergency events with its Community Recovery and Resilience Program.

This trauma-informed workforce supports local disaster recovery responses, strengthens community resilience and preparedness between disasters, and addresses the compounding trauma that accumulates with each event.

The success of the model is built on strong relationships with local government, local knowledge and networks, and community trust. Further advocacy is essential to ensure Gateway Health can maintain this invaluable capability and continue to be there for the community and other local agencies.

<b>Objective</b> 	To actively support the community to take positive action in the preparedness and recovery from climate events that impact health and wellbeing
<b>Strategies</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Further develop models to address the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing</li><li>• Be leaders in Community Recovery and Resilience</li><li>• Continue to build an environmentally sustainable Gateway Health</li></ul>



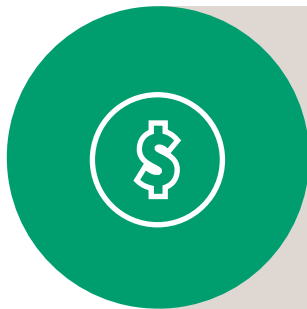
## Strategic enablers

Gateway Health will continue to invest in its people and the organisation to build the capability required to deliver the strategic priorities and to ensure financial sustainability. Some of the key strategic enablers include:



### Digital and data transformation

- A digitally enabled, simplified client journey
- Digitised, shared back-office systems



### Financial management to support growth and sustainability

- Productivity improvement initiatives delivered
- Deployment of an advocacy campaign for funding indexation that reflects the cost of doing business



### Improved client experience and engagement

- Streamlined access and engagement processes
- Implementation of initiatives to improve the integration and connection of services for clients



### Grow our workforce

- Grow the lived and living experience workforce
- Workforce capability built to deliver the strategic plan
- Initiatives introduced to strengthen the wellbeing culture and a safe working environment



# gateway health

People living well

Freecall: 1800 657 573  
E: [info@gatewayhealth.org.au](mailto:info@gatewayhealth.org.au)  
[gatewayhealth.org.au](http://gatewayhealth.org.au)

## Wangaratta

45-47 Mackay Street,  
Wangaratta, VIC 3677  
T: (03) 5723 2000

## Wodonga

155 High Street,  
Wodonga, VIC 3690  
T: (02) 6022 8888

## Myrtleford

32 Smith Street,  
Myrtleford, VIC 3737  
T: (03) 5731 3500

