# CONSUMER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2026–2031

Government of South Australia

Health
Northern Adelaide
Local Health Network

sahealth.sa.gov.au/nalhn

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*Northern Adelaide Local Health Networkrlu tampinthi Kaurna miyurna yaitya yarta-mathanya Kaurna yartarna-arra ngadlu warpulayinthi.*

*Ngadlu tampinthi purkarna pukinangku, yalaka, tarrkarritya.*

*Ngadlu tampinthi yaitya mathanya kuma parnaku tuwila yartangka.*

*Northern Adelaide Local Health Network acknowledges the Kaurna people as the traditional custodians of the land where we proudly work and deliver health and wellbeing services.*

*We also honour Kaurna Elders past, present and emerging.*

*We recognise Aboriginal cultural authority, and their ongoing spiritual connection to Country.*

**Terminology**

Throughout this document we use the term Aboriginal to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

**Consumers**

Consumer is a person who has used, or may potentially use, health services, and includes family and carers.

Consumers are commonly identified by health services as patients, clients, participants or service users at point of care.

**Community**

Community refers to any group of people or organisation that represents or brings a collective voice of health consumers or specific health communities.

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**EVERYONE HAS A STORY. MATTERS. CONTRIBUTES. GROWS.**

# JOINT MESSAGE FROM NALHN GOVERNING BOARD CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Adelaide's thriving northern suburbs tell a story of surging population, changing demographics and increasing diversity.

It is predicted the northern population will grow 27% by 2041 with changing needs and increasing demand for health and medical care and services.

Northern Adelaide Local Health Network's (NALHN's) role at the centre of public health care in Adelaide's north will become even more vital.

As communities grow and change, public health services play a critical role in ensuring the health, wellbeing, and resilience of the population. While our public hospitals and GP Plus in the northern suburbs are a major focus of our services, NALHN's responsibilities also include preventive health and improving health literacy amongst our community.

Working in partnership with our northern community will continue to be critical for NALHN in its delivery of health and medical services.

To guide how we connect to consumers and community, NALHN has developed our Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2026–31. In preparing this strategy we acknowledge that NALHN's community is both unique and complex in its health care needs and providing the best care for our people will always be our top priority.

Through this strategy we commit to:

- Partnering with consumers and the community in planning and delivery of our services.
- Building relationships with consumers and the community based on trust, respect and transparency.
- Welcoming and acting on feedback.
- Ensuring that our continuing engagement with consumers and our community is inclusive, culturally safe and accessible.

In developing this strategy we linked with a diverse group of consumers and community to hear their voices and understand their views.

We are grateful to the many consumer representatives, community and staff who contributed their insights and experiences in shaping this strategy. Your voices have guided us, and your participation will be critical to our success.

We are pleased to launch the NALHN Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2026–31.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Judy Searle, Governing Board Chair and Karen Puvogel, Chief Executive Officer**

# MESSAGE FROM CONSUMER COMMUNITY CO-FACILITATORS

The Northern area that NALHN services is growing rapidly, with many varied demographics represented in the population it serves.

NALHN is constantly reviewing the needs of this population and how best to serve them.

They do this by partnering with consumers not only as individuals directly relating to their care needs but by involving consumers in decision-making across all levels of the organisation by engaging with them on strategic issues affecting the overall delivery of services.

Through its Consumer Community, consumers are embedded across the organisation where they provide the consumer perspective and assist in influencing decision-making on behalf of all consumers.

The Consumer Community is made up of members of the public who live in the NALHN catchment area or care for someone who lives in the area.

It has representatives from many and varied population groups ensuring issues concerning all members of the community are heard and considered when decisions are made. To do this, Consumer Representatives may be asked to seek feedback from the community and feed this back to NALHN. Members also attend governance and strategic meetings, working groups, codesign projects, and assist with research.

As Co-Facilitators we strive to deliver a safe and comfortable environment for the Consumer Community to share their experiences.

We work alongside the Consumer and Community Advisor to support the group and to foster their knowledge, ensuring they have the tools to undertake their role.

The Consumer Community is grateful for the respect and consideration it is shown and looks forward to continuing to serve the local community and NALHN. We are always focused on ‘person centred care’.

**Robyn Furniss and Tina Artis,**
**NALHN Consumer Community Co-Facilitators**

# NORTHERN ADELAIDE LOCAL HEALTH NETWORK – OUR NETWORK


NALHN is one of SA's 10 Local Health Networks which deliver public hospital care and community-based health services across the state.

NALHN provides health and medical services to a community of approximately 450,000 across the north and north-east of Adelaide.

We employ more than 6,500 staff to deliver these services.

**Our network includes:**

- **Lyell McEwin Hospital,** the major hospital in the north and north-east offering emergency care, complex and multi-day surgery, medicine, obstetrics, paediatrics, allied health and outpatient services.
- **Modbury Hospital,** a general hospital offering emergency care, elective surgery, medicine, outpatient and sub-acute services, rehabilitation, geriatric and palliative care.
- **Watto Purrunna Aboriginal Health Services** across four locations.
- **Primary health services** including the Elizabeth GP Plus Health Care Centre and GP Plus Super Clinics at Gilles Plains and Modbury.
- **Northern mental health services** in hospitals and in the community.
- **Clinical education, teaching and training** the health and medical professionals of the future with student numbers increasing every year.

# OUR CONSUMERS

## 2024–25

**127,715**
PATIENTS ATTENDED NALHN'S EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

NALHN DELIVERED
**8,686**
ELECTIVE PROCEDURES
**4,389**
EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

**3,772**
BABIES WERE BORN

**494,694**
OUTPATIENT EPISODES OF CARE INCL. 147,155 NEW APPOINTMENTS

WATTO PURRUNNA ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDED
**63,026**
PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO 9,511 CLIENTS

# OUR COMMUNITY

## NALHN'S CATCHMENT

**33%**
OF SA'S METRO POPULATION

**27%**
GROWTH IN POPULATION FORECAST BY 2041

**24.6%**
SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S ABORIGINAL POPULATION LIVES HERE

**30.2%**
OF POPULATION ARE BORN OVERSEAS

**23.3%**
COME FROM NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

**50%**
OF SA'S MOST DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE LIVES HERE

# OUR VISION

Our community has the best possible health and wellbeing throughout their life.

# OUR PURPOSE

To deliver exceptional health and wellbeing services that enhance the quality of life for our community.

# OUR VALUES

Values are at the heart of our organisation and inform our culture and how we work.

## IN NALHN WE BELIEVE THAT...

### EVERYONE HAS A STORY.

We are compassionate and will walk a mile in your shoes – patients, families and staff.

### EVERYONE MATTERS.

We are welcoming, respectful and inclusive. In NALHN, rank doesn't have it's usual privileges.

### EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES.

Everyone builds the culture and makes NALHN better. We listen and learn.

### EVERYONE GROWS.

We promote recovery, wellbeing, creativity and innovation. We are all on a growth journey – patients, families and staff.

# LISTENING TO OUR CONSUMERS AND COMMUNITY

This strategy was shaped by meaningful input from a wide range of voices across our community and within our hospitals and services.

Engagement was designed to embrace a broad diversity of views, including people that have used our services and organisations that provide a range of services to the Northern community.

The insights gathered through this engagement shaped our understanding of what matters most to consumers – respect, communication, cultural safety, involvement in decision-making, and a health system with senior leaders that listen and respond.

This strategy aligns with key frameworks that establish NALHN's vision, structure and operation, and guide consumer and community engagement in health care. See Appendix for details of the key frameworks and plans which have informed this strategy.

## OUR ENGAGEMENT INCLUDED:

CONSUMERS ACCESSING NALHN HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

SESSIONS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES

NALHN'S CONSUMER COMMUNITY

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

STAFF VIEWS AND INPUT

NALHN undertakes a range of ongoing and regular engagement throughout the year as part of its deep commitment to consumer experience and continuous improvement.

- **Consumer Representatives** are embedded throughout NALHN, being members of our governance, safety & quality and research meetings. Providing their insight and input into all aspects of the network, from planning, designing and evaluating new services to participation in projects.
- **NALHN's Consumer Community** comprised of a diverse membership of community representatives, participates in quarterly workshops to provide regular advice and insight to NALHN staff. NALHN's Governing Board and executive staff join the Consumer Community workshops to build relationships and hear feedback first-hand.
- **NALHN's Aboriginal Consumer Reference Group** is a conduit between staff and the Aboriginal community and an Aboriginal Health Community Forum is held annually to support codesign of services and provide input into models of care.
- **NALHN's Consumer Engagement Service** asks consumers and community members to provide feedback via a range of channels including an online form. This feedback tool can be used to flag issues, but also for consumers to celebrate and pass on appreciation of staff who have provided care and support.
- **The Patient Reported Measures (PRMS) Program** enables NALHN staff to respond rapidly to seek an early resolution or remedy for consumer concerns.

  Inpatients are surveyed on day 2 of their hospital stay, and then again after discharge to understand their experience.

  PRMS provides clear data on performance by hospital divisions against key criteria and supports continuous improvement.

# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Our engagement drew a strong response from consumers, community and staff on how they viewed NALHN and our services, how they perceived our engagement with them and how we could improve and reach more people.

**The following themes emerged:**

## COMMUNICATION

Many responses nominated clear, transparent and effective communication via a variety of accessible channels from NALHN to consumers and community as a critical priority.

In particular the insights gleaned through this engagement reinforced that diverse communities need to receive information using a range of communication techniques and through a variety of channels. This process ensures all our consumers have access to clear culturally appropriate information.

## OUTREACH TO COMMUNITY

There was support for NALHN to develop a stronger visibility in the northern community outside its hospitals to raise its profile, create awareness about services and support, deliver information on preventive health care, and continue to build strong two-way communication.

This included support for outreach to new and emerging communities in the northern suburbs and to connect with children and young people and their families through developing new engagement processes.

## CODESIGN OF NALHN'S SERVICES

There was a strong interest in the ongoing codesign process through which NALHN is partnering with consumers and community to plan and deliver services.

Through our engagement, community members told us they valued genuine partnership with NALHN and believed the codesign process supports better person-centred outcomes.


Community
Building Connections
Families and Schools
Person-centred
Accessible Health Information
Together
Diverse
Listening
Genuine Partnership
Knowing Your Rights
Safe spaces
Communication
Families and Schools
Person-centred
Building Connections
Genuine Partnership
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# NALHN'S PRIORITIES FOR ENGAGING WITH CONSUMERS AND COMMUNITY

## TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

- **Communication and information sharing**

  Ensure transparent and effective communication and information sharing for consumers and the community.

  Provide accessible, timely, and clear information about services, changes, rights, and responsibilities. Use diverse formats (written, digital, verbal, visual) for different groups and needs.

  Promote health literacy – ensuring information is accessible in a range of languages.

- **Building trust**

  Provide clear and transparent information. Communicate openly and encourage feedback. Demonstrate how feedback is responded to and leads to improvements.

- **Digital engagement and innovation**

  Use digital technology to improve engagement, open new communication channels and build new opportunities for feedback and input.

> Having information available that is easy to access, pitched at right level - not too technical, engaging – not too wordy or overwhelming.
>
> The info is there but (NALHN) just need to get it so that targeted population groups can know and access these services.
>
> Response from Community Roundtable on good communication

## SUPPORT DIVERSITY

- **Cultural safety and respect**

  Ensure that consumers and community from diverse backgrounds feel respected, valued and safe to provide feedback.

- **Equity and Inclusive**

  Engage with diverse communities and provide information in ways that are accessible and culturally sensitive.

  Explore barriers to engagement from different communities and groups and work on reducing barriers.

> Engagement and making sure that people feel heard and listened to. Sometimes they don't get straight to the point – but this should be catered to.
>
> Response from Community Roundtable on effective communication for diverse groups

## BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

- **Develop and strengthen local partnerships**

  Promote understanding of NALHN and its services.

  Step up outreach to the NALHN community, with collaboration with local government, schools, community groups and non-government organisations.

  NALHN expands its outreach to community, attending community events to provide information on services and how to access them.

- **Develop Youth Advisory Council to engage with children and young people**

  Dedicated focus on children and young people and their needs and views.

> Go to the community to engage, for example places of worship, community spaces.
>
> Communities will be open… this can help overcome trust issues.
>
> Response from Community Roundtable on how to reach diverse groups

## CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

- **Consumers at forefront of NALHN services**

  NALHN places consumers and their experience at the centre of our service, with their needs and views informing how we deliver our service.

- **Codesign of services**

  Involve consumers in planning, designing and evaluating services. Ensuring processes and support enable community members to contribute effectively and meaningfully.

- **Feedback and complaints system**

  Ensure consumers and community understand feedback opportunities and complaints systems and how NALHN responds and provides remedies. Commitment to closing the feedback loop, so consumers and community are valued, heard and feedback is acted on.

> Authentic consumer engagement is about listening, hearing, and valuing the voice of the consumer and their experience of health care at NALHN. We need to know the challenges, the good, the bad and the overarching issues to improve the service we provide.
>
> Response from NALHN staff member on consumer engagement

# ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

NALHN leadership and staff will work together with consumers and our community to achieve these priorities.

Every level of NALHN's organisational structure is responsible for building our relationship with consumers and community and maintaining strong and effective connections.

## NALHN LEADERSHIP

- Governing Board
- CEO
- Executive
- Decision making committees

**Overall accountability for the strategy and for consumer and community engagement.**

**Approves the strategy and oversees regular monitoring of implementation and efficacy.**

## CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT GROUPS

- NALHN Consumer Community
- Aboriginal Consumer Reference Group

**Provide input into service planning, delivery, and evaluation, represent community and consumer views, advocate for groups that are underrepresented and require services.**

## NALHN PROGRAM AND CLINICAL SERVICES

- Women and Children's
- Surgical Specialties and Anaesthesia
- Mental Health
- Medicine
- Critical Care
- Aged Care, Rehabilitation and Palliative Care

**Key roles in embedding and delivering person-centred care and listening to consumer voices.**

## NALHN CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

**Dedicated internal resources for facilitating consumer representative groups, connecting with the broader community, through forums, and codesign workshops, reporting to leadership on the progress of the strategy. Responding to consumer complaints in a timely and professional manner.**



# MEASURING OUR EFFORTS

Effective tracking of engagement activities, consumer and community sentiment and progress on implementation will tell NALHN how we are faring and how we can improve.

We will determine our success in achieving our priorities through the following key measures.

## TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

- Increased understanding of NALHN's services.
- Expanded methods and diversity of communication techniques.
- Increased accessibility to health literacy available in a variety of languages.

## SUPPORT DIVERSITY

- Consumers and Culturally & Linguistically Diverse community members feel respected and heard by NALHN.
- Care, services and communication are culturally safe and reach key audiences.
- Care delivered by NALHN is equitable, respectful and person-centred.

## BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

- Stronger and effective partnerships with community organisations are developed.
- Greater awareness is created about NALHN, its services and how it can help consumers and community.
- Partnerships are based on transparency and trust.

## CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

- Consumers feel confidence in their health service and heard by NALHN staff.
- Consumer feedback is responded to and acted on, and the feedback loop is closed.
- Consumers participate in and feel valued and heard in codesign of NALHN services.

# ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

This document enshrines NALHN's commitment to effective and quality engagement with consumers and community over the period 2026–31.

The strategy will undergo a mid-term review conducted with consumer and community input.

This process will determine if targets are being met and indicate if the strategy can be adapted to address new and emerging issues and approaches.

Meanwhile, NALHN will continue to engage with consumers and community through its regular and ongoing activities. These include:

- Surveying inpatients and consumers through the PRMS system
- Consumer Community
- Aboriginal Consumer Reference Group
- Outreach in the community
- Consumer Representatives as members on NALHN's governance, strategic, safety and quality meetings and participation in working groups and projects.

If you would like further information on NALHN's engagement with consumers and community contact us at: Health.NALHNConsumerCommunity@sa.gov.au

# APPENDIX

**These frameworks are:**

- NALHN's Strategic Plan 2020–2025
- NALHN's Consumer and Community Framework 2025
- NALHN's Aboriginal Health Framework and Action Plan 2021–2026
- SA Health's Consumer, Carer and Community Engagement Strategic Framework 2021–2025
- The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards – Partnering with Consumers Standard
- The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum
- NALHN's Person-Centred Practice Program

FOR MORE
INFORMATION
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