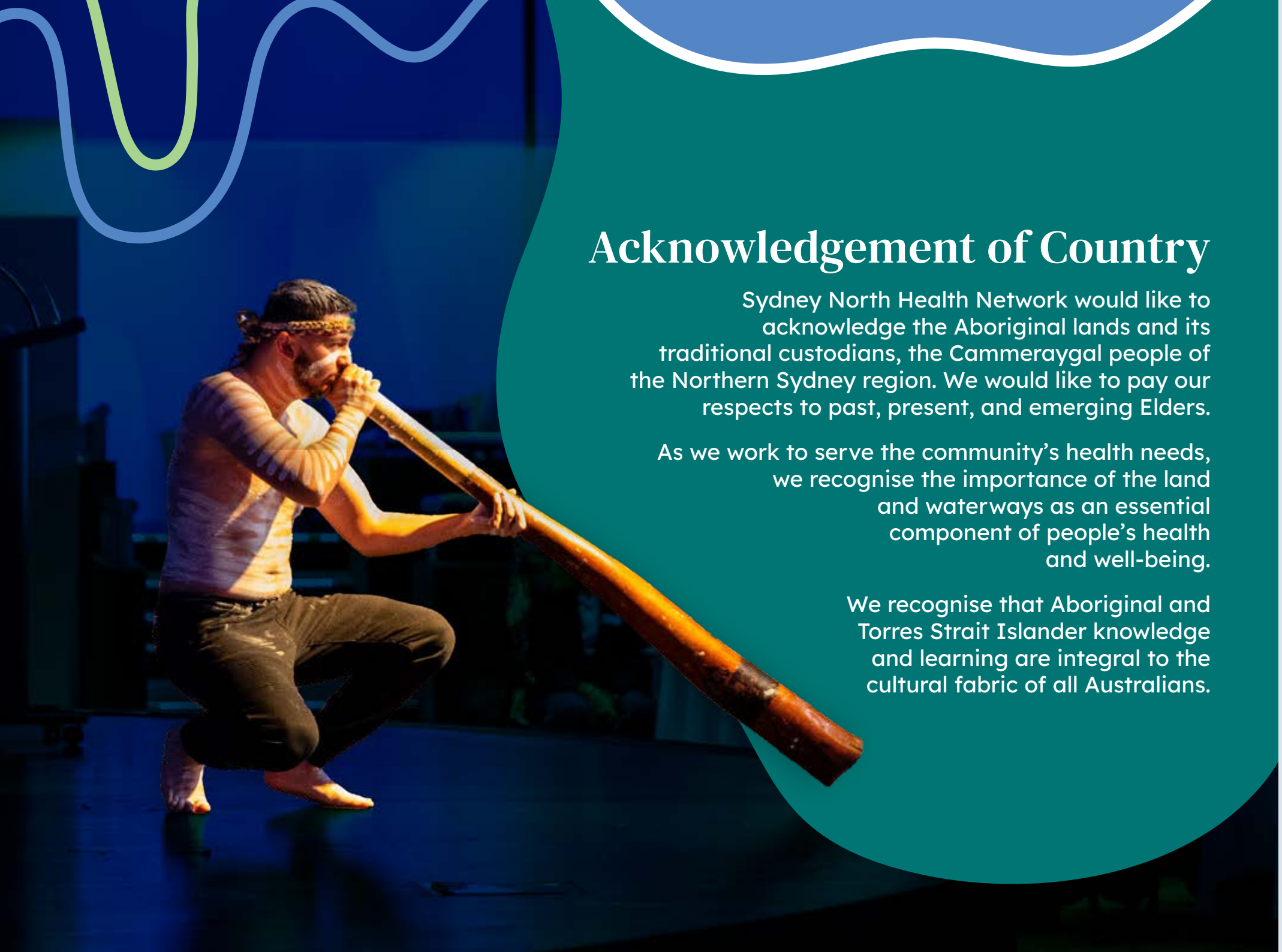
Sydney North Health Network

Annual *Impact* Report 2024-25

Achieving together –
better health, better care.

phn NORTHERN SYDNEY
An Australian Government Initiative

Sydney North Health Network



Acknowledgement of Country

Sydney North Health Network would like to acknowledge the Aboriginal lands and its traditional custodians, the Cammeraygal people of the Northern Sydney region. We would like to pay our respects to past, present, and emerging Elders.

As we work to serve the community's health needs, we recognise the importance of the land and waterways as an essential component of people's health and well-being.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and learning are integral to the cultural fabric of all Australians.

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A Few Words.

Kevin Barrow, *CEO*, Sydney North Health Network

Every day, I'm reminded of why we do this work. Whether it's complex stories of resilience or courage, or the quiet strength of our frontline GPs, the human side of healthcare is what drives us.

I've been especially proud of how we have worked collaboratively with our healthcare providers, service partners, and community members, listening deeply and responding boldly to build better systems that support those we exist to help.

We continue to face significant challenges: rising mental health needs, an ageing population, more complex care needs and a fragmented healthcare system under strain. Yet, through it all, our community has shown extraordinary commitment and passion.

As we look ahead, I encourage you to join us in shaping the future of healthcare in our region. Together, we can build a fairer, healthier future for Northern Sydney.

> "We will not do things to the community but with and through them, *listening and acting to deliver a fairer, more accessible system* that works for all."

“Progress happens when we listen with empathy and act with purpose. That’s how we build a healthier future.”

Ros Knight, *Chair,* Sydney North Health Network

This year has reminded us that meaningful change begins with truly listening to the people we serve.

I’m proud of the work we have done to strengthen partnerships and expand access, to support our diverse community.

Strong governance has been central to our success. Through clear strategic direction and a commitment to transparency, we’ve ensured that every decision is grounded in purpose and accountability.

To our staff, partners, health professionals and community members: thank you. Your commitment and care are the foundation of everything we do. Together, we can build a health system that uplifts our community.

The Human Side of Healthcare.

Northern Sydney is home to a dedicated and compassionate network of health professionals, service providers, community members and volunteers who make a profound difference every day. Yet, despite their efforts, gaps in the system persist.

Sarah's Story: A Lived Experience *of Resilience*

Sarah is a single mother and a carer for her brother with schizophrenia. She works night shifts to make ends meet and has had to move four times in two years due to rising rent. Her brother's disability plan barely lasts the month, and the constant pressure has taken a toll.

Overwhelmed and exhausted, Sarah broke down at a Centrelink office, pleading for help. Through local community Sarah was offered peer support, empathy, and practical assistance. Sarah's journey is a powerful reminder that timely support, accessible housing, and sustainable care plans aren't luxuries; they're essentials. Her story highlights the urgent need for systems that respond with humanity and flexibility when people are at their most vulnerable.

A special thank you to Kerry Gleeson, a lived experience advocate, for sharing Sarah's journey.

James's Story: The Hidden Struggles Behind the *Frontline of Care*

James is a dedicated GP who witnesses the growing complexity of patient needs every day. From older adults managing chronic conditions alone, to young people facing mental health challenges, and families lost in fragmented systems; he sees it all.

Many of James's patients require coordinated support, yet navigating services often feels like a maze. Poor communication and limited visibility across systems also make it harder to deliver the care people truly need.

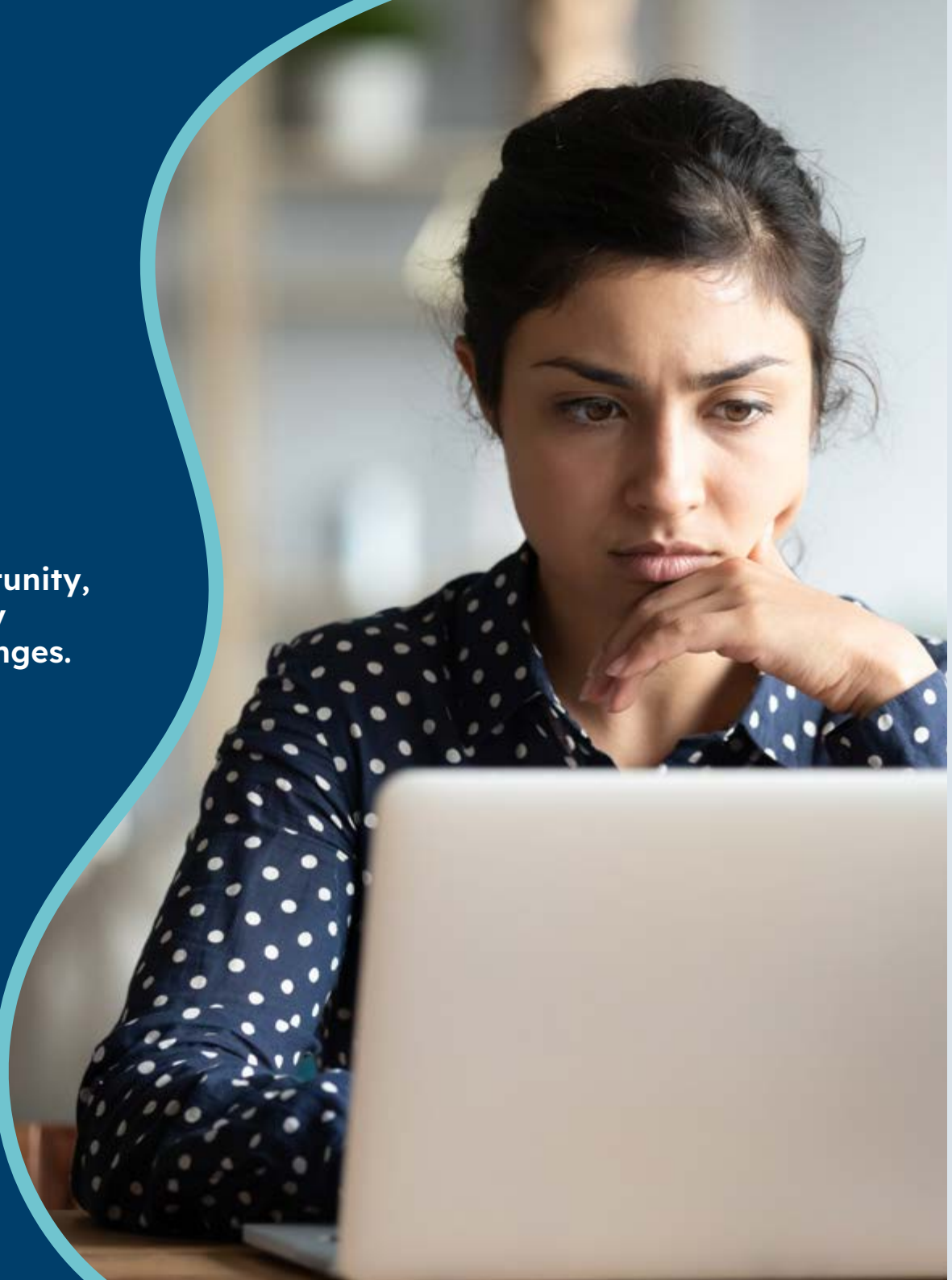
These challenges aren't new, and no single part of the system is to blame. Across our community, people like James are doing their best with limited resources, trying to make a difference in a system stretched thin. We need healthcare systems that reflect real-life needs and invest in community-led models that meet people where they are.

The Health and Care Crisis.

The *Challenges* Our Region Faces

Northern Sydney is often seen as a place of privilege, a region of natural beauty, opportunity, and prosperity. But behind this image, many communities face preventable health challenges.

Health outcomes may vary depending on where you live, how much you earn, the language you speak, age, housing situation, or whether you feel supported. When care is hard to access or doesn't reflect people's lived experience, the system fails them. These inequities are not just statistics; they are stories of real people with real challenges that in many cases are preventable.

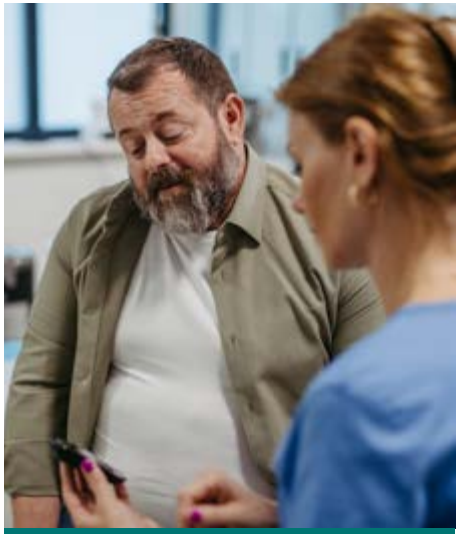


Where Our Community *Struggles*

Mental Health and Wellbeing

18.3% of residents experienced a mental health disorder and 8.9% live with high or very high psychological distress.

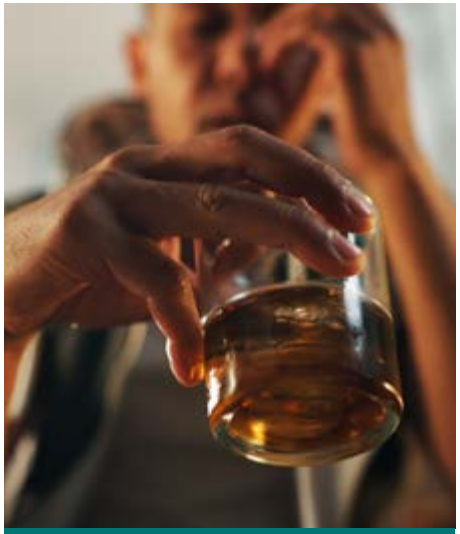
Northern Beaches and Hornsby report the highest rates of long-term mental health issues. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities face added stigma, and suicide remains a concern, especially among young and older males.



Disadvantage and Chronic Disease

Residents are 1.9 times more likely to have diabetes and 2.6 times more likely to die from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

In areas such Hornsby East, Dee Why North, Eastwood, Macquarie Park/Marsfield, and Ryde North, disadvantages are deeply entrenched. These communities face higher rates of chronic illness.



Alcohol and Other Drug Use

16.6% of adults engage in high-risk alcohol and drug use, exceeding the NSW state average of 15.5%.

Substance abuse is often a symptom of deeper pain. Without the right support, these struggles can lead to homelessness, fractured relationships, and declining health.

Housing Stress and Homelessness

35.1% of low-income households in Northern Sydney experience mortgage or rent stress, higher than the average 31.9% across NSW.

Manly, Fairlight, Hornsby East, Dee Why North, and Ryde North show the highest demand for homelessness support services. Without secure housing, people face greater health risks, isolation, and barriers to care.

Diverse and Vulnerable Communities

Nearly 29% of the population identifies as culturally and linguistically diverse, well above the NSW average of 23%.

Our region is rich in diversity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, CALD groups, LGBTIQA+ individuals, veterans, refugee populations and those without stable housing - all face greater barriers to care.

Access to Care and Preventable Hospitalisations

Preventable hospitalisations account for 36.2% of admissions. Common causes include cellulitis and kidney/ urinary tract infections.

Healthcare access (across Australia) is becoming harder with bulk billing rates dropping from 78.5% to 70.5% in the past year. For many, the system feels too complex, too distant, or too expensive.

An Ageing Population and Intensifying Workforce Strain

By 2041, it will have increased by 53.7%, adding approximately 85,000 people aged 65 and older.

Northern Sydney's ageing population is growing rapidly, placing more pressure on aged care services, hospitals, and community support systems. At the same time, our healthcare workers are under strain and exhausted.

Sydney North Health Network is working to build a system that listens, responds, and reaches people where they are - because everyone deserves the opportunity to live well.

Our Role in Solving These Challenges.

At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to supporting those most at risk of poor health outcomes.

We collaborate with health professionals, communities, service providers, government, businesses, charities, and universities to make this vision a reality.

As one of 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) established by the Australian Government, our mission is to:

- Coordinate care with Local Hospital Networks to improve quality, experience and resource use.
- Commission services to meet local health needs and close service gaps improving access and equity.
- Capacity is built through our primary care and mental health providers, assisting them through education and practice support to deliver high-quality care.

Our vision is simple:

Empower our community to live their best life.

We support health professionals to thrive in a complex and demanding environment by providing access to free education, wellbeing programs, digital tools, clinical guidelines and leadership development. By enabling connection and collaboration, we can improve referral pathways and navigate change, turning policy into practice.

Our goal is to make services visible, accessible, and culturally appropriate.

The Year in Review.

Driving *Meaningful Impact* Across Our Region

More than 3,500 health professionals built their capacity at 120+ education events - building a stronger workforce.

Almost 300 practices were supported with training, problem-solving, and change supports, turning policy into practice.

We funded 2 dedicated services supporting almost 1000 individuals to break the cycle of alcohol and other drug addiction.

159 people experiencing homelessness found support and stability through tailored services.

Vital mental health care supports reached **7,172 community members** when it mattered most.

Our Urgent Care Centre treated **over 10,524** patients, reducing strain on emergency departments and improving access to care.

Over **7,500 students in 50 schools** gained lifelong health skills through our GPs in Schools program.

Over 350 community voices shaped future services through co-design, ensuring care reflects **real needs and lived experience.**

Moments That Mattered:

Highlights From The Year

Bringing Together 350 Voices to *Reimagine Health* in Northern Sydney

Accessing care in Northern Sydney can be complex and fragmented. The Northern Sydney Wellbeing Collaborative is changing that - bringing together over 350 voices to redesign how health, social, and community services connect with one another.

This community-led initiative brings together service providers, healthcare professionals, community organisations, people with lived experience, and local leaders to co-design a system that is more connected, responsive, and equitable. Three Wellbeing Hubs will be established in the priority areas of Ryde, Hornsby, and the Northern Beaches, opening from mid-2026. These hubs will offer coordinated access to medical, mental health, and social support.

The Collaborative promises:

- Faster, easier access to the right care—when and where it's needed
- Early support that prevents crisis and reduces long-term harm
- Locally tailored services shaped by real community voices
- Stronger cross-sector coordination that eases pressure on hospitals

We're inviting community members, professionals, and organisations to help shape this transformation. Contact us at wellbeingcollaborative@snhn.org.au to express your interest.

Shared Words, *Shared Purpose*

"When I started 30 years ago, chronic disease and community service needs were minimal. Today, patients live longer with more complex conditions. They want faster, more equitable care, but the current fee-for-service model limits us. Collaborative care fits our training and the future. We need a cross-service, community-led health system with GPs at the centre of it."

Dr Margaret Bryce, General Practitioner.

"This approach so important, so exciting to see. Traditionally, we've looked at a system where people had to really twist themselves to fit into the system. And now we're asking the system to fit the people in."

John Milham, Lived Experience Consultant and Speaker.

Empowering 7,500 Young People Through Health Education and Awareness

The GPs in Schools program has been bringing real-world healthcare experience into the classroom for over 20 years. Last year's program supported over 7,500 students in over 50 high schools across the Northern Sydney region.

This program helps Year 11 students build health literacy, confidence, and awareness around key topics including:

- drugs and alcohol
- sexual health and contraception
- gender identity
- healthy eating and nutrition
- relationships and consent
- mental health and wellbeing

It also focuses on **how and when to access health services** and key skills in self-care and decision-making.

"I would absolutely recommend the GPs in Schools program. The students get involved, they get educated, and they get on track with understanding their mental health, physical health, and themselves. I 100% recommend it."

Public High School.

Standing with those experiencing a *suicidal crisis*

This year, we supported the Way Back Program. Delivered by Proveda, this program meets a critical need supporting the transition of people experiencing suicidal crisis out of acute health settings.

David's Journey with *Way Back*

At 19, David faced homelessness, addiction, and grief. He unfortunately found himself homeless and having a mental health care crisis after years of struggling in foster care. Following a hospital stay, The Way Back team helped him reconnect with a GP, access psychological care, secure housing, and pause debt repayments. He's now substance-free, hopeful, and completing a plumbing course.

David isn't the only one - the Way Back program supported 386 individuals across 65 postcodes, delivering over 3,500 services and achieving a 79.5% positive outcome rate.

Supporting Policy to Practice – *Strengthening Medicare Reforms*

We are a key partner in delivering the Strengthening Medicare Reforms program. The national 10-year plan is focused on person-centred care, better health outcomes, system efficiency, improving provider wellbeing, and was designed to build a stronger Medicare system for future generations.

As change champions we support General Practices and Residential Aged Care Homes through initiatives such as:

- MyMedicare registration support
- Aged Care Incentive Program coordination
- Chronic Condition Management resources
- Multidisciplinary team development
- Improved access to after-hours care

Our impact in the region:

- 75% of practices are accredited or in progress and 77% registered for MyMedicare
- 50% participating in aged care incentives and 65% engaged in workforce programs

“The PHN supports my Practice by taking an interest in the cultural and socioeconomic groups our Practice is familiar with. We receive incentives for participating in quality improvement and education and training. I am personally supported by a great team, I always feel they have heard me and go to find the answers for me.”

Practice Manager.

Where We Make A Difference, Together.

Backing the People *Who Care for Us*

Equipping Health Providers for Excellence

With over 127 events held throughout the year, our professional education and training services program teaches health professionals about latest research, treatments, clinical guidelines and best practices. It also supports policy changes and how to turn policy into practice.

Over 3,500 general practitioners, primary care nurses, practice staff, pharmacists and allied health professionals participated in SNHN educational events with overwhelmingly positive feedback:

“A great evening that provided rich content – excellent. I really appreciate all that you do for us, thank you.”

Anonymous GP.

“The PHN Nurse Network has been instrumental in aiding my growth as a General Practice Nurse. The educational workshops offered practical case studies that helped bridge the gap between theory and real-world application.”

Nurse O’Cher Arrua.

Investing in Future Nurses for Stronger Primary Care

We provide a 12-month intensive program for new primary care nurses, designed to foster connection, confidence, and long-term commitment to primary care. In 2024–2025:

- 29 nurses completed the program, with a **91% retention rate over two years.**
- We also held 14 networking events, including 3 wound care sessions for aged care nurses and 2 events for new graduates.

Connecting and Uplifting Practice Managers

With the introduction of Monthly Practice Manager Network Meetings, we wanted to provide a casual supportive environment where Practice Managers can connect, share and learn from each other. We facilitated **over 11 sessions with 170 attendees.**

Championing Leadership in Allied Health Teams

Our Allied Health Business Skills Program provides coaching and mentorship and is designed to give allied health professionals the tools to lead and grow a sustainable business.

Supporting Mental Health for a *Healthier Tomorrow*

Helping Refugee Communities Heal and Thrive

We also supported the STARTTS – Psychological Therapies Program. Offering free, culturally responsive psychological therapies in 70+ languages, tailored to the cultural and lived experiences of refugee clients, with 5068 service contacts and supported 311 clients in the last year.
With our support the initiative ensures **people who have endured unimaginable hardship are met with empathy, professionalism, and culturally safe care.**

Expanding Access to Alcohol and Drug Treatment

Helping Young People Find a Way Forward

Daniel, 20, was referred to SDECC by a youth housing service, seeking help with isolation and substance abuse. With support from the program, Daniel has now stopped using drugs, built new confidence, joined a gym, started mixed martial arts training, and is even considering a future in the armed services.

SDECC supports young people and CALD communities facing substance use, mental health challenges, and social disadvantage. In the past year, the program helped **494 new clients**, and 5062 service contacts to support.

Bridging the *Health Gap* in Diverse Communities

Creating Pathways Out of Homelessness

For people experiencing homelessness or from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, accessing healthcare can be incredibly difficult. That's why we fund the Health Equity and Access Program (HEAP) in collaboration with Street Side Medics. HEAP, launched in January 2025, provides health assessments, education, and referrals to trusted professionals.

One of many success stories

Josh had been a familiar face at the Manly clinic, known to the team for his long-standing struggle with alcohol dependency. During a visit in May, Josh arrived looking like a new man; clean-shaven, noticeably healthier, and proudly sharing that he had been alcohol-free for 30 days.

Simplifying Access to Healthcare Services

Extending Access to GPs and Health Support After Hours

We've helped expand after-hours access to GPs and health providers through the Top Ryde Urgent Care Clinic (UCC). Commissioned to ease pressure on emergency departments, the UCC offers bulk-billed, walk-in care. Data shows that 37% of UCC patients would have otherwise gone to the emergency department.

Supporting Our Aging Population, Wherever They Are

To improve care in Residential Aged Care Homes, we funded telehealth tools including mobile trolleys, iPads, and digital stethoscopes to assist GPs and caregivers in providing more streamlined care.

Enabling *Better Systems* for Better Primary Care

Through working collaboratively with the Local Health District we have:

- **Revolutionised communication between GPs and hospitals through eReferrals:** We reduced lost patient referrals, enabled a more complete clinical handover, and created better transparency for both doctors and patients.

"It's a game-changer, before, I never knew where my referrals ended up. Now, I can track their progress, and my patients feel more confident knowing their care isn't lost in the system." GP

- **Improved hospital discharge summaries and specialist letters:** We reduced failed document transmissions, from 13.7 to just 4.2% . This ensures almost 20,000 more discharge summaries reach GPs each year.

"These summaries are essential without them, we don't know what's happened in hospital or what needs to be followed up." GP

- **Enabled early detection through cancer screening:** We supported over 170 practices in integrating with the National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR), helping GPs easily track bowel and cervical screenings, update records, and order replacement kits.

Prepared Together: Building Community Resilience

Supporting Local Health Professionals in Disasters

Unlike hospitals, General Practices often lack disaster training, despite their vital role in community care. That's why we created PREPARE, a scenario-based training program that equips primary care providers with skills to plan, respond, and recover from emergencies.

64 health professionals have completed training in Disaster Health Management, with growing interest across the sector.

Fostering Unity and Readiness Across Our Region

From 2023 to 2025, with support from NSW Health and the Commonwealth, we received Community and Extreme Weather Resilience Grants to strengthen local wellbeing and preparedness.

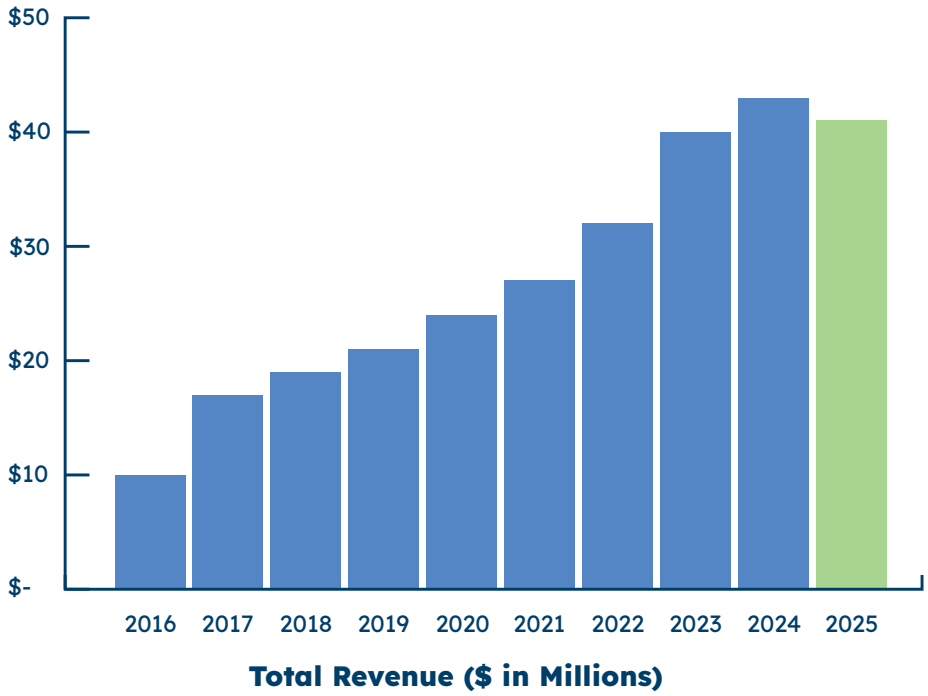
- **Community Grants funded:** Senior workshops, outreach for rough sleepers, therapeutic programs and outdoor camps.
- **Extreme Weather Grants supported:** Emotional resilience for children, social connection for isolated residents, and emergency planning for people with disabilities.

Together, these efforts are shaping safer, stronger communities.

Financial Report

Highlights From The Year

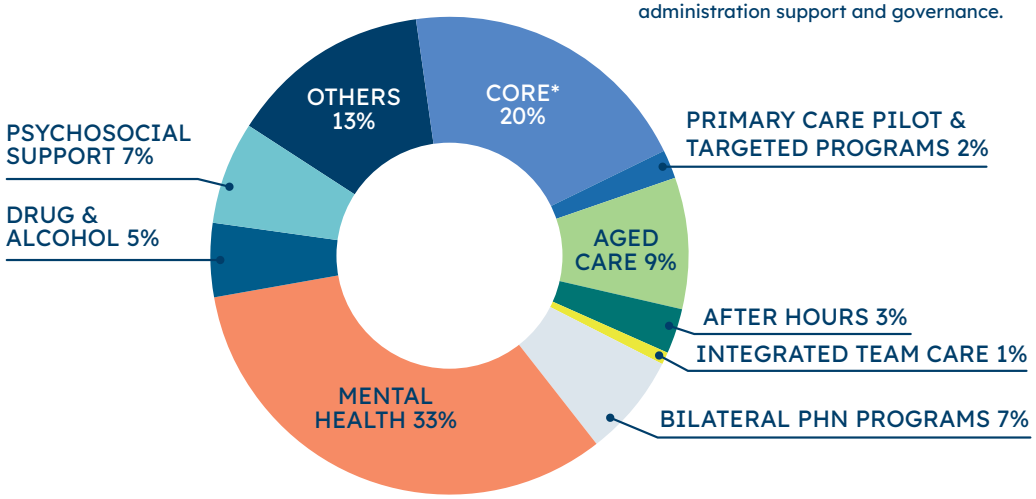
Statement of Financial Position As at 30 June 2025



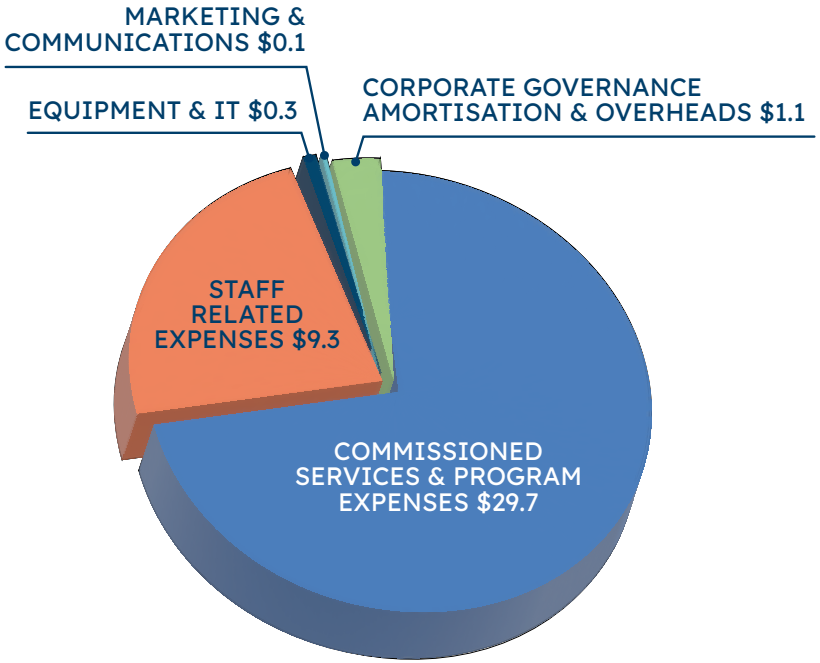
Total Revenue ($ in Millions)

Expense Classification %

*Core Costs include GP, Allied Health and membership support and training, administration support and governance.



Expenditure ($ in Millions)



Profit & Loss As at 30 June 2025

	2025 ($)	2024 ($)
REVENUE	**40,894,114**	43,140,005
EXPENDITURE	**40,599,011**	42,692,729
NET	**295,103**	447,276

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These are extracts from the 2024-25 Financial Reports.
The full financial report can be provided on request.

Balance Sheet As at 30 June 2025

	2025 ($)	2024 ($)
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	**20,537,659**	17,830,645
Trade and other receivables	**572,087**	163,588
Prepayments	**255,463**	682,507
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	**21,365,209**	18,676,740
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Right-of-use assets	**1,948,531**	85,220
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	**1,948,531**	85,220
TOTAL ASSETS	**23,313,740**	18,761,960
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	**2,344,092**	2,458,631
Contract liabilities	**15,561,870**	13,330,874
Employee benefits (current)	**806,236**	586,482
Lease liabilities (current)	**296,229**	95,086
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	**19,008,427**	16,471,073
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Employee benefits	**303,088**	344,003
Provision for make good of premises	**427,231**	416,000
Lease liabilities	**1,754,749**	5,742
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	**2,485,068**	765,745
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**21,493,495**	17,236,818
NET ASSETS	**1,820,245**	1,525,142
FUNDS		
Accumulated surplus	**1,820,245**	1,525,142
TOTAL FUNDS	**1,820,245**	1,525,142

Strengthening Our Systems

This year, we *strengthened our internal foundations* to better serve our healthcare professionals, services providers and community.

Building a Purposeful and Resilient Work Culture

We advanced cybersecurity and staff training, moving closer to ISO27001 accreditation. Financial systems were streamlined, with improvements in contract management, supplier engagement and operational efficiency leading to easier and more impactful collaboration.

Walking the Path of Reconciliation

In partnership with YarnnUp, we began co-developing our Reconciliation Action Plan - embedding cultural safety, respect, and inclusion into our workplace and services.

Mapping Health Equity for Smarter Action

We launched a Health Equity Dashboard using national data to identify vulnerable communities and guide smarter, more targeted planning.

Commissioning with Purpose

A new competitive dialogue model brought stakeholders into the commissioning process, co-designing services that better reflect local needs.

Embedding Sustainability for Long-Term Impact

We strengthened our sustainability focus, recognising the link between environmental health and community wellbeing. Our commissioning and procurement practices favour providers with strong environmental credentials and preventative care models. Operational efficiencies reduced our carbon footprint through digital solutions, smarter travel planning, and flexible work. Our Green Team continues to lead staff engagement in sustainable practices, supported by our involvement in the Better Business Partnership.

Through investing in our internal capabilities, strong governance and responsive support, Sydney North Health Network continues to be a workplace where people thrive, ideas grow, and meaningful change is made.

Looking Ahead:

Building a *Healthier Future* Together

FY24/25 was a year of deep listening, bold transformation, and laying the groundwork for lasting impact.

We strengthened connections, streamlined systems, and embraced collaboration - setting the stage for a more responsive, inclusive, and resilient health network.

As we move into FY25/26, our mission is clear: act as a catalyst and enabler for change, bringing communities together to reimagine, co-design, and deliver the health and social care services they truly need.

This coming year, we will:

- **Launch Wellbeing Hubs in Hornsby, Northern Beaches, and Ryde,** delivering integrated, community-led services.
- **Close the Health Equity Gap** by targeting resources and support where they'll have the greatest impact.
- **Support our Healthcare Professionals** through major Medicare reforms, tailored education, and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Build a More Connected and Seamless Healthcare System**, strengthening integration across services to improve access, coordination, and outcomes.
- **Expand Our Reach** by deepening partnerships across sectors - health, education, business, government, and community.

Join Us in Shaping the *Future of Health*

Whether you're a healthcare professional, service provider, local business, council, charity, lived experience advocate, funder, philanthropist, or simply a passionate member of our community, we need you.

Together, we can build a fairer, healthier future for Northern Sydney.

Let's make it happen.

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