Research Innovation and Change
Strategic Plan 2017-2021

“If you do not research you perish”1
The development of a vibrant and emergent research culture is central to the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) Board’s vision for the future. The MLHD is a relatively small District in terms of the capacity for research, and the level of research, when compared to larger metropolitan Districts, many of whom have dedicated research infrastructure and organisations.

This plan distinguishes between three levels of research. The first is pure research driven to achieve understanding in its own sense whereas the second level termed applied research seeks to solve a specific question. Each of these levels of research, in broad terms, requires large and dedicated research structures with guaranteed funding pathways.

The third level of research is termed translational research which is the short to mid-term priority for the MLHD. Translational research refers to research undertaken to convert the outcomes of the other levels of research to specific findings to guide innovation and thus change with a particular focus on improving clinical care.

This plan expounds the philosophy that change is constant as MLHD strives to provide the best possible service to the Riverina community with maximum value for every dollar spent. To put this philosophy into practice, change must be guided by the knowledge and insights gained from a structured and measured research effort.

MLHD will draw upon the results of locally led research but will look more broadly at research undertaken within NSW and beyond to ensure maximum benefit to MLHD and our community.

**AIM**

This plan seeks to define the MLHD strategy for research innovation and change in support of the MLHD Strategic Plan 2016-2021.
National and State Direction

The MLHD research plan must fit within the cascade of plans and priorities of National and State authorities.

At the NSW State level, the Office for Health and Medical Research (OHMR) is the NSW Health authority tasked with the implementation of a 10 year plan to build research capability in NSW and provide key state-wide infrastructure. The principles of OHMR projects are:

- To promote collaboration across disciplines and organisations
- Shared use of resources and infrastructure
- Encourage research close to the patient to promote translation
- Fostering leadership and innovation

The OHMR works with the state-wide Hub Council to determine the development and implementation of initiatives. This function includes identifying priorities for research capacity building within LHDs, universities, medical research institutions, industry and the community.

As part of the state-wide research effort, MLHD has a Service Agreement with the NSW Ministry of Health that requires MLHD to undertake translational research and to seek a cooperative approach with research partners within the LHD.

MLHD Strategic Direction

The MLHD Strategic Plan 2016-2021 identifies excellence, our people, partnerships and wellness as the principles by which MLHD will achieve the strategic vision. The plan embraces themes of seizing opportunity, collaboration, utilising the skills of our staff and striving to provide the best models of care for our patients.

To achieve the ambition of the MLHD Strategic Plan, a dynamic organisational culture embracing research, innovation and change is crucial and underpins the MLHD organisational philosophy of change based on evidence. At the core of such a culture is clinician-led research and this plan endorses steps to encourage, train and fund clinicians because their research will satisfy the themes of patient proximity and patient outcomes.

In addition to a strategic plan and cultural change, this plan also heralds the aspirational goal of developing a centre of excellence for translational research. The realisation of this goal will not be immediate, however intermediate steps aimed at improved organisational support for research, achieving a degree of funding independence to initiate research and drawing upon the skills and expertise of the MLHD partners in research will lay the foundations for a centre of excellence.

For the term of this plan establishing a research support node within the MLHD Executive and pursuing the establishment of a fund to provide seed financial support for approved projects whilst ongoing funding is sought, will represent substantial steps.
This plan derives from the MLHD Strategic Plan and is aligned to support the MLHD Strategic Principles.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLHD Strategic Plan 2016-2021 Principles</th>
<th>MLHD Research Strategic Plan Goals</th>
<th>Specific Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspire to Excellence</td>
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| • Generate and proactively implement better ways of working informed by research and innovation utilising technology | • Establish the governance and process to identify research issues, to share research outcomes and to collaborate with other research bodies | • Maintain the MLHD Board Subcommittee for Research Innovation and Change (BSCRIC)  
• Maintain and strengthen the Murrumbidgee Research Committee (MRC)  
• Establish and staff a research support node within the Directorate of Organisational Effectiveness including consideration of joint appointments with research partners  
• Develop a MLHD support plan for the NSW Rural Research Hub |
| • Meet and exceed the expectations of consumers in all care settings | • Include patient and Local Health Advisory Committee (LHAC) feedback when determining research priorities | • Offer a summary of MLHD research at each LHAC Forum including information on the value of translational research to MLHD |
| • Maintain an unyielding focus on quality and care | • Attach the highest priority to research seeking to improve patient care | • Ensure research governance processes meet NSW Health best Practice  
• Seek to contribute to clinical trials conducted by others where they are considered relevant to MLHD models of care |
| Together in Partnership                   |                                   |                |
| • Involve communities and consumers in decision making about healthcare | • Develop a consumer engagement approach based on the LHACs | • MRC to consult with the MLHD Manager of Marketing and Community Engagement to evaluate community understanding of the MLHD research effort |
| • Collaborate with others to create an interconnected system of healthcare | • Establish research partnerships that consult with out-of-hospital clinical care providers | • MRC and MLHD research staff consult regularly with the PHN and other out-of-hospital clinical care providers to identify issues that warrant research efforts by MLHD |
| • Involve communities and consumers in decision making about healthcare | • Ensure the MLHD research effort is marketed to the Murrumbidgee community | • Invite LHAC and other community organisations to comment on MLHD research activities |
| • Coordinate and integrate care for populations with the greatest needs, recognising that health and social outcomes are interdependent | • Ensure the MLHD research effort does not ignore specific populations | • MRC to monitor which populations are considered by MLHD to be of greatest need and to assess the degree of research effort required |
### Invest in Our People

- **Invest with our clinicians to participate in leadership and the planning, prioritisation and delivery of quality healthcare**
- **Provide the means to involve MLHD clinicians in research**
- **Develop a research training program for skills to develop research projects including the ethics process, and to undertake research**
- **Ensure the expertise and skills of MLHD research partners are integrated into staff research training**
- **Be known as the best place to work, volunteer, teach, learn and grow**
- **Ensure MLHD researchers, their research and their outcomes are applauded and proudly shared throughout NSW Health**
- **Develop an active program to promulgate research findings within NSW with a specific focus on rural NSW**
- **Ensure research and innovation are routinely highlighted in internal staff newsletters and to the Murrumbidgee community**
- **Continue to award and recognise significant research efforts in MLHD on an annual basis**
- **Ensure MLHD supports and participates in the annual NSW Rural Research Congress**
- **Commit to and be accountable by demonstrating and living our CORE values and behaviours**
- **Collaboration**
- **Openness**
- **Respect**
- **Empowerment**
- **Establish internal and external processes that draw widely to influence the MLHD research agenda including topics for research**
- **Maintain a free exchange of information with research partners and the Murrumbidgee community**
- **Advance the value placed on research involvement by individual MLHD staff though recognition, award and support**
- **Promulgate research findings to drive innovation**

### Focus on Wellness

- **Support people and communities to learn about, and become responsible for improving their own health and wellbeing**
- **Provide researchers with a well coordinated and conducted research management process**
- **Establish a database of research issues and manuals to assist with research preparation, approval and outcomes**
- **Shift the balance of care from hospitals to integrated primary and community based services**
- **Ensure research looks at the patient journey as a whole**
- **MRC to monitor detailed research priorities to ensure the balance of care is adequately addressed**

**CORE Values:**
- Collaboration
- Openness
- Respect
- Empowerment
The NSW Service Agreement demands a collaborative approach by MLHD and specifically identifies the following as MLHD research partners:

- Australian National University
- Charles Sturt University
- Notre Dame University
- University of NSW
- University of Wollongong

In addition, and beyond matters of research, MLHD will seek to collaborate with relevant Primary Health Networks with the MPHN being a major partner.

The MRC is the mechanism through which research collaboration is forged at the operational level.

To implement the plans of the MLHD Board an executive level committee titled the Murrumbidgee Research Committee has been established. Sponsored by MLHD, this committee is a partnership between MLHD and Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN), Charles Sturt University, University of NSW, Notre Dame University of Australia and The University of Wollongong and is tasked with promoting and supporting research projects that benefit the region, but may be transferable elsewhere.

The MLHD Director of Organisational Effectiveness is the lead Executive for research, innovation and change. All Executive staff are charged with implementing this plan but specific responsibility lies with Directors charged with overseeing clinical care and the Director of Organisational Effectiveness to ensure the aspirations and direction of this plan are achieved.

This plan does not restrict the array of research partners MLHD might engage as opportunities present. MLHD will undertake to support the strengthening of rural LHD research capacity by regularly reviewing potential partners for research. At the state level, MLHD will seek to engage with state-wide and rural research collaboratives. MLHD has endorsed the establishment of a NSW Rural Research Hub and will continue to foster the interchange of ideas through mechanisms such as the meeting of rural LHD CEs. MLHD will strive to ensure a substantial presence at the annual NSW Rural Research Congress with research presentations and research staff attendance.
REPORTING AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The Director of Organisational Effectiveness is responsible for implementing and monitoring the progress of this plan and will advise the CE accordingly and formally report to the BSCRIC not less than every six months. The BSCRIC is required to provide a written report to the MLHD Board not less than annually detailing the implementation of this plan. The report is to be framed in terms of the MLHD Strategic Plan Goals. In turn the BSCRIC and/or the MLHD CE are to be advised quarterly by the MRC on the collaborative and partnership components of this plan.

In addition, reports may draw upon the measures of success for this plan as follows:

- Streamlining business systems that support research with specific focus on steps that allow research to be managed, funded, approved, undertaken, and results disseminated under the MLHD banner.
- Skill development of the workforce referring to those steps that broaden and expand the interest for research within MLHD clinical staff, that provide staff with appropriate training to undertake research, and mentor staff when undertaking research.
- Development of the MLHD culture including measures undertaken to promote MLHD pride in research, marketing and implementation of research outcomes along with recognition of research efforts by MLHD staff.

CONCLUSION

MLHD will always be challenged by a variety of factors to provide equitable and quality healthcare to the Murrumbidgee community. Such challenges will call for MLHD to be agile, innovative and efficient which can only be achieved through a research-based ethos that seeks to find answers for the questions of today and the future. The challenges faced by MLHD can only be solved by decisions and practices that are based on evidence flowing from sound research. MLHD cannot achieve this on its own but must develop strong relationships that allow it to draw upon the skills of its partners to establish a vibrant and active research culture.

For the period of this plan, the MLHD focus is on Translational Research supported by a well coordinated management process that identifies the right questions for research, achieves the necessary resources including funding, supports the research effort as it is underway and then seeks to promulgate the research outcomes as widely as possible.

The highest accolade for MLHD is community recognition that the District provides quality patient-centred care. Such an accolade can only be obtained through a whole hearted organisation wide embrace of research.
REFERENCES

1 (2016) Alex Malley CE CPA Australia ABC News Breakfast 6 October

2 Pure research is experimental and theoretical work undertaken to acquire new knowledge without looking for long term benefits other than the advancement of knowledge – from Australian Standard Research Classification (ASRC), 1998

3 Applied research is original work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge with a specific application in view. It is undertaken either to determine possible uses for the findings of basic research or to determine new ways of achieving some specific and predetermined objectives – from Australian Standard Research Classification (ASRC), 1998

4 (2012) Referring to Translational Research Australia’s Chief Scientist Professor Ian Chubb offered the following comments: We need some sort of link to facilitate a pathway from discovery to health. We need to take the research from bench to bedside and transform basic-science breakthroughs into clinical applications on an appropriate scale.

5 There are a number of key state and federal documents that outline the future direction of research across the Local Health Districts that provide the context for this plan. These include:

- A National Health and Hospitals Network for Australia’s future(3). This describes how Activity Based Funding as a mechanism for funding, will be applied to research activity. It identifies the current issues as there is a lack of agreement as to how costs can be allocated to teaching and research.

- National Health and Medical Research Council Strategic Direction 2015-16 to 2018-19.


7 (2016) Murrumbidgee Local Health District Strategic Plan 2016-2021. The MLHD Vision is: Wellness is our goal, Excellence is our passion, Our people are our future

8 The MLHD has approved Terms of Reference for the MRC which has been functioning since early 2016. The TOR are contained at Appendix A.

9 The potential list of MLHD research partners should not be confined to this list. Additional partners should be considered as circumstances allow.