

Southern NSW Local Health District

# Strengthening community engagement

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## Southern NSWLHD Community Engagement Framework

November 2023

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Southern NSW Local Health District acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this Framework.

We advise this resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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Published by Southern NSW Local Health District

[snewlhd.health.nsw.gov.au](https://snewlhd.health.nsw.gov.au)

First published: January 2024

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# 1 Introduction and context

## 1.1 What is community engagement?

Consumer, carer and community engagement is about sharing information and decision making between consumers and community members and health services. Engagement enables health service organisations to better plan, design and deliver services that meet the needs of local communities, gather feedback and deliver improved services.

Our new Community Engagement Framework will actively involve our communities in Southern's key decision-making processes – across systems, processes, governance and administration. Community engagement already occurs in Southern. This Framework will build on existing efforts to expand the scope of engagement activity and implement a consistent and systemic approach, supported by appropriate infrastructure and sound governance.

Community can be described as a group or groups of people with a common cause, interest or location (including cultural groups) who work directly or indirectly to support and promote their needs and interests. Consumers are people who use, have used, or are potential users of health services including their families and unpaid carers.

Community engagement focusses on identifying new things health services could or should be doing and takes place with 'broader' groups who are able to speak about the types of healthcare they would like and contribute to addressing issues such as access, health literacy and strategic priorities. In community engagement participants may not identify as health consumers.

Consumer engagement helps us to design or improve existing services meeting known health needs. It focusses on improving what health services are already doing by learning from consumer's lived experience.

Effective community engagement builds trust, relationships and collaboration.<sup>1</sup> It creates and empowers ownership in the healthcare system by:

- Understanding the community's needs, priorities and values about health and healthcare
- Developing accessible and appropriate services leading to better health outcomes
- Educating community members so they can participate in an informed way
- Increasing health literacy and health system literacy
- Increasing transparency and accountability for the system<sup>2</sup>

Good community engagement:

- Builds relationships with diverse community groups
- Is explicit about the goal of the community-engagement initiative
- Is intentional in the design of a community-engagement initiative.<sup>3</sup>

Together, community and consumer engagement support us **to deliver person centred care**.

<sup>1</sup> Joint Community Engagement Framework Sub-Group for the East Toronto and Downtown East Toronto Ontario Health Teams [Framework for Community Engagement](#)

<sup>2</sup> Health PEI [Engagement Toolkit](#)

<sup>3</sup> [RISE brief 5: Community engagement](#) (2019)

## 2 Our framework

### 2.1 How will we engage with Southern communities?

#### Our principles

Our principles will shape our culture for community engagement and paint a picture of what we are aiming for. They will help Southern to design engagement processes and focus us on the things we need to think about to do engagement well.

These 5 principles were agreed by a group of Community Consultative Committee members who shared their experience and expertise to help us decide what good engagement looks like and describe the actions and behaviours that support it.

Our engagement is:

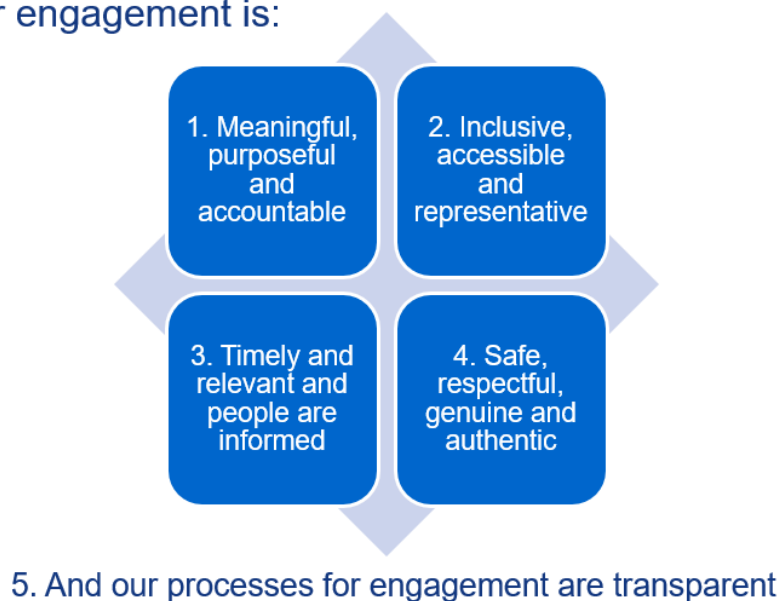


Figure 1 Southern principles for community engagement

Each of the principles has actions and behaviours that support it. These are outlined in appendix A.

## A range of strategies to reach diverse audiences

Southern is building new structures to enable our community engagement to be more comprehensive and representative, focused on priority issues for our communities and services and provide more opportunities for participation across the spectrum of participation.

Engagement activities will use a mix of online and in person approaches to support broad access for community members to participate. We will work in partnership with other agencies and organisations to leverage engagement opportunities, and we will implement a mix of strategies to get information out to communities about engagement activities and opportunities.

We will build a network of community members who are interested in working with us by expanding our existing community engagement web page so that people can register their areas of interest, and develop a protocol for staff access for the purpose of engagement activities.

Some groups in our communities require specific or unique approaches to ensure engagement is effective and respectful. The Aboriginal community engagement for the new Eurobodalla hospital through Connecting with Country is a good example of engagement that values and respects Aboriginal cultural knowledge partnering with Aboriginal in design and development.

Protocols will be developed to guide staff about effective and appropriate ways to engage with diverse groups by working through community leaders and Elders and involving relevant internal and external services and organisations.

### 2.1.1 Local engagement

At a **local level** we will focus on placed based approaches to suit community needs:

- Consultation and information sharing forums will be held in each Local Government Area twice a year:
  - Conducted after hours in a hybrid in person and online format
  - Focused on predefined topics.
  - Issues / requests / questions submitted prior to the forum
- Projects, consultation and other activities
  - Local working groups will be formed to undertake time limited projects according to community priorities and service needs
  - Targeted consultation on local service priorities through focus groups and surveys
  - Events and expos (information sharing and informal consultation)
- Local Community Engagement Working Groups (previously Community Consultation Committees)
  - Community Consultation Committees will transition their focus to supporting local projects.
  - Secretariat support provided by a member of the committee, remunerated as per NSW Health remuneration policy
  - A reporting template will be provided to escalate issues to the respective Network Community Engagement Committee or facility.

### 2.1.2 Network engagement

At the **Network level** we will introduce structures and activities to support a strategic approach to planning and prioritisation

- Network Engagement Committees
  - We will establish Inland and Coastal Engagement Committees to represent local community interests at a Network level with a strategic focus on planning and prioritisation across each network.

- Reporting from the District and local services, consultation and activities will inform deliberations and the committees will support ongoing monitoring of engagement within each network.
- Membership will represent each Local Government Area in the Network and priority population groups. Where there are existing engagement structures for hard to reach groups it will be a priority to formalise links with these rather than duplicating existing mechanisms.
- The committees will meet quarterly and report to the Community Engagement Subcommittee of the SNSWLHD Board.
- Partnerships – a key focus will be developing and strengthening partnerships with other agencies, community organisations and groups to and leverage engagement activities conducted by other services and organisations and share learnings from our own engagement activities.

### 2.1.3 District-wide engagement

At a **District level** we will strengthen governance, coordinate implementation of the framework, implement systems and infrastructure to support engagement and oversee monitoring and evaluation:

### 2.1.4 Partnerships and collaboration

A strong message from community in the consultation for this framework was that we should expand partnerships and alliances. Partnerships can be key strategies to support access to hard-to-reach groups and are an important way to ensure communities are not overburdened by engagement.

Southern has a range of existing partners that we regularly meet and work with including Councils, Coordinare Primary Health Network, other NSW government agencies (Police, Education, Transport, Communities and Justice, Regional NSW), and other community providers and organisations (Aboriginal community controlled services, Lands Councils, aged care, child care, disability services . We aim to strengthen and expand these relationships to support and add value to our own engagement activities, and leverage engagement strategies conducted by others to include health.

We will also strengthen connection and communication with local community organisations and groups who are key knowledge holders in communities across Southern. These connections can support sharing of important information and communicate engagement opportunities in their networks.

We will build a community engagement directory that can be navigated by LGA and different focus area so that it is easier for staff to leverage existing engagement activities and identify key contacts for other organisations and community groups.

## 2.2 When will we engage with the community?

The table below captures SNSWLHD activities where community engagement plays a critical role.

When/why	What	How	Engagement level	Audience
Health planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Plan</li> <li>- Clinical Services Plan/s</li> </ul>	To seek and capture community input on service planning, service delivery, service measurement and evaluation.	Website, social media Community workshops, surveys and consultation campaigns  Network Engagement Committees	Inform, consult and involve	Local, Network & District-wide
Health information, public health alerts	To provide the community with timely health information and alerts  Consult with target audience when designing consumer information	We Are Southern magazine and newsletter  Website, media and social media	Inform and consult	Local, Network & District-wide
Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New developments</li> <li>- Redevelopments</li> <li>- Art and design</li> </ul>	Include consumers and communities in design of new facilities (co-design).  Engage community in infrastructure projects to create sense of ownership and connection  Invite people with lived experience to help improve patient/consumer experience and ensure facilities are welcoming and accessible to all	Website, media and social media  We Are Southern magazine and newsletter  Community town halls and pop ups  Connecting with Country – Aboriginal community engagement	Inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower	Local & Network
Facility updates and notices	Keep community updated about any	Local Community	Inform, consult	Local



	changes to their local facility	Engagement Working Groups  Local media  Social media		
Service review and improvement	To work on an ongoing basis with the community to ensure that community ideas, concerns and aspirations are listened to and understood.	Network Engagement Committees  Your Feedback webpage and email address  Consumer Feedback Hotline	Inform, consult	Local & Network
Connect with health, government and community partners	Strengthen partnerships and collaboration.  Utilise existing networks to share information with a wider audience or targeted audiences	Local Community Engagement Working Groups  Network Engagement Committees  Annual Public Meeting LGA quarterly updates LGA town halls	Inform, consult, involve and collaborate  Local & Network	Partner organisations
Monitor local issues	To work on an ongoing basis with the community to ensure that community ideas, concerns and aspirations are listened to and understood.	Local Community Engagement Working Groups	Consult and involve  Local	Partner organisations

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## 2.3 Governance

The Southern Local Health District Board is committed to a genuine process of engagement with our communities. The Board will have governance accountability for implementation of the Framework through its Community Engagement Subcommittee.

The Subcommittee will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the Framework and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The network Engagement Committees will report to the Subcommittee following each meeting.

Membership of the Subcommittee will be expanded to include representatives from the network Engagement Committees.

SNSWLHD Executive will provide quarterly community engagement reports to the Subcommittee (Appendix D)

## 3 Appendices

### 3.1 Appendix A: Our Principles

#### **Our engagement is meaningful, purposeful and accountable**

- We understand why we are engaging and agree what success looks like, and that is different for different projects and engagements.
- We engage to make a difference and reflect on the process and outcome together
- We ensure people are given reasonable time, resources, and the opportunity to provide feedback
- We tailor engagement to the project's needs and circumstances. One size does not fit all
- We take time to be informed about the context and history
- We understand risks and mitigate them
- We measure and evaluate what we do to improve practice

#### **Our engagement is inclusive, accessible and representative**

- We understand diverse opinions contribute to understanding the broad range of community views and values
- We recognise who subject matter experts are and connect early
- We support different levels of participation and different ways to engage
- Our engagement opportunities are promoted
- Our processes involve the right number and types of people to ensure a cross section of view points
- We understand diverse opinions contribute to understanding the broad range of community views and values
- Our communication is effective – it is clear, concise, objective, and understandable
- Our processes are person centred and support participation

#### **Our engagement is timely and relevant and people are informed**

- We provide accessible, timely and relevant information in different formats
- We ensure people have time to provide informed contributions

#### **Our engagement is safe, respectful, genuine and authentic**

- Everyone's point of view is valued, and we share our knowledge, skills and experiences
- We have genuine intent and focus on listening
- We ensure peoples safety, privacy, and security are protected
- We recognise participants time and contributions

#### **Our processes for engagement are transparent**

- Our engagement is open and honest and sets clear expectations. We explain what can and cannot be influenced and why.
- Our engagement has realistic aims
- We advise people on how their input affected the decision and outcome
- We ensure there are pathways for questions and feedback, and concerns and requests are addressed
- We ensure people understand their role and how their input will inform the process and outcome






We ensure clear processes are in place to address concerns and requests

## 3.2 Appendix B: Community Engagement reporting template

Example: Community Engagement Update November 2023

Activity	Audience	Participation	Feedback	Action
Eurobodalla Health Expo 28 October 2023	Residents Batemans Bay, Moruya, Narooma	350+ attendees 40+ partner organisations	Highly engaged audience and new connections made between stallholders	LHD to increase support for 2024 event. Organiser Brad Rossiter to share model with other Local Community Engagement Working Groups
Queanbeyan Local Community Engagement Working Group 20 November 2023	Local Queanbeyan residents	7 Working Group members Queanbeyan Hospital DoNM Guest speaker: Diabetes Nurse	Question raised about continuity of diabetes clinic given staff changes	LHD to provide diabetes clinic update to group. Share clinic details with local media and on Facebook
Eurobodalla Regional Hospital site artefact consultation 11 November 2023	Local Aboriginal community	35 local community members	Range of views shared	Consulting archaeologists Biosis will collate feedback to inform decisions about artefact display or reburial
Quarterly MP/LGA Update 6 November 2023	Reps from 7 LGAs including mayors and GMs Local members Coordinare	23 attendees	Request for heat and bushfire community messaging resources	Resources supplied

### 3.3 Appendix C Our framework on a page

Southern Community Engagement Framework 2023 - 2026							
Governance Community Engagement Sub Committee	Our Purpose	To improve the wellbeing of the community we serve					
	We will achieve this through	Working with our communities and stakeholders to support the health of our communities					
	Supporting our strategic priorities	Elevating the human experience		Keeping people healthy and well		Supporting our people	
	Enablers	Principles to drive a culture of effective engagement	A suite of strategies delivered across local, network and district levels	Knowledge and capacity building for community and staff	Infrastructure and systems to support engagement	Robust governance	Partnerships
	Methods	Biannual themed LGA forums Local projects, focus groups, events Local Community Engagement Working Groups (Formerly CCC) Network Engagement Committees – Coastal and Inland Community engagement register		Engagement contacts database Community engagement page on myHub - case studies, engagement calendar, training information, tools and resources Templates – planning, reporting, feedback, escalation.		We are Southern Online consultation (have your say) Traditional and social media Training and capability building	
	Focus Areas 2024	Closing the Gap		Healthy families		Mental health	
	Values	 Collaboration	 Openness	 Respect	 Empowerment	Foundation	 elevate together as one

## Strengthening Community Engagement

SOUTHERN NSW LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT  
PO Box 1845 Queanbeyan NSW 2620

+612 6150 7999

[SNSWLHD-Feedback@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SNSWLHD-Feedback@health.nsw.gov.au)

[www.snswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.snswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au)