

SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT

Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream Position Paper

2024-2029



Health
Sydney
Local Health District

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Foreword by Clinical Director

The Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream plays a vital role in the provision of healthcare services by Sydney Local Health District (the District). Our primary mission is the provision of robust and high-quality anaesthesia and pain management services tailored to the complex requirements of our consumers. Our team, resolute in commitment, is driven by a patient-centric approach, delivering evidence-based practice with an evolving focus on sustainability in healthcare. We foster symbiotic relationships with stakeholders including hospital-based and community healthcare providers, government agencies, and community-based organisations, to provide healthcare that is equitable and effective, for the benefit of all.

The purpose of this position paper is to outline the direction of the Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream for 2024-2029. Our principal goal for this period is to ensure that our Clinical Stream continues to meet the evolving needs of our community while promoting environmental and social responsibility. We have identified five key objectives for the Clinical Stream that will help us to achieve this goal:

1. Strive to develop co-designed and co-produced policies, plans, new service models, and research studies with our consumers and stakeholders.
2. Identify and address the social and environmental factors that contribute to an individual's or community's wellbeing.
3. Provide healthcare services that are responsive to the needs of our diverse consumers, and address equity concerns.
4. Implement strategies and programs that provide best practices for health promotion and health protection.
5. Provide more community-based care where feasible, that is accessible to individuals in their local communities.

As the Clinical Director of the Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream of Sydney Local Health District, I am pleased to share our comprehensive strategy for enhancing healthcare services for our local and regional community. Our approach will involve building strong partnerships with our consumers, implementing innovative technologies, particularly through enhanced ICT support, reducing clinical variation, addressing medical environmental sustainability issues, as well as pursuing initiatives that will strengthen the partnership with our Aboriginal and multicultural communities. By collaborating with consumers, healthcare providers, and community organisations, we are confident in our ability to create a sustainable and equitable healthcare system that benefits all individuals.

This Position Paper by the Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream serves as a crucial guide for our future endeavors, highlighting our commitment to sustainability, innovation, and excellence in healthcare delivery.

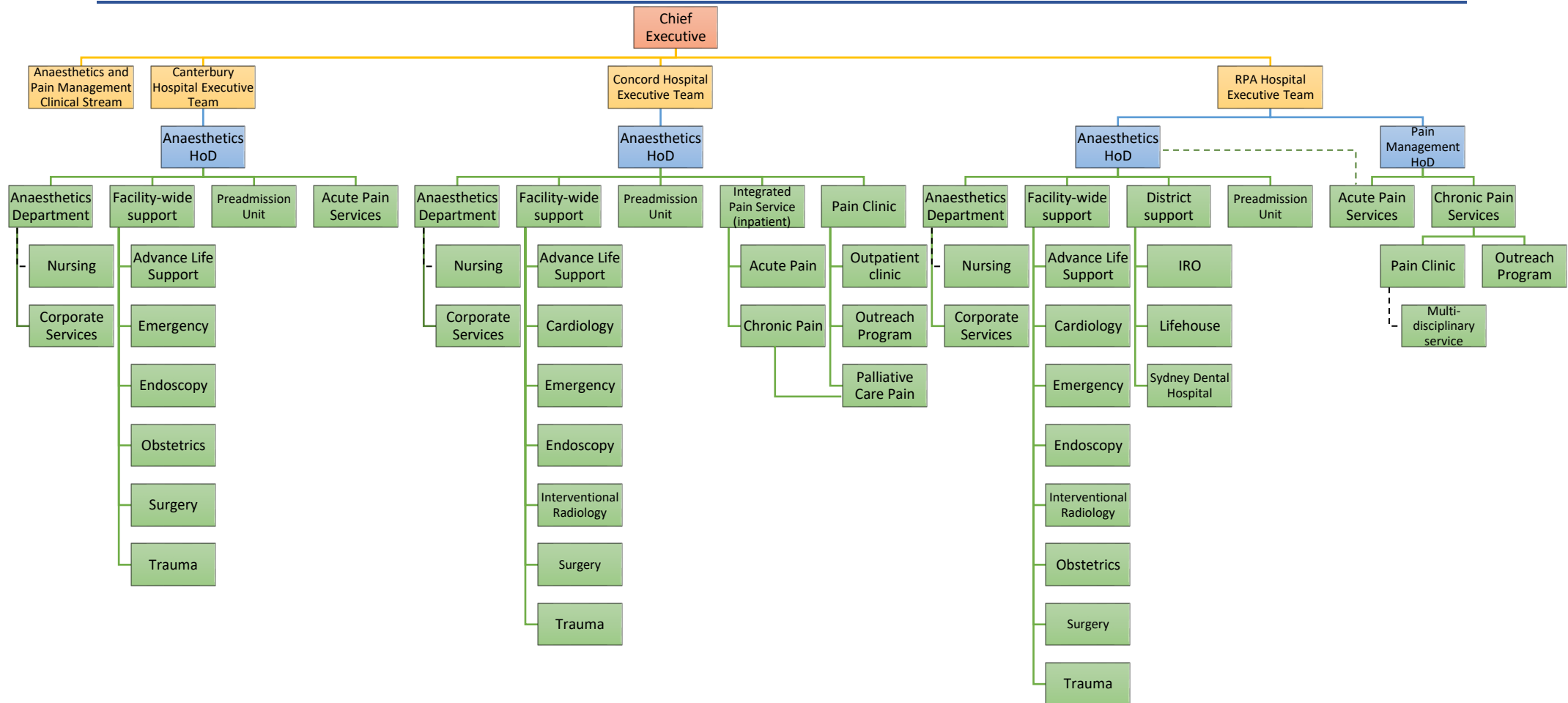
Dr Michael Paleologos
Sydney Local Health District Clinical Director
Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream

Our Clinical Stream

The Anaesthetics Service provides comprehensive support to a large number of Departments and Disciplines throughout the District. This includes providing anaesthetic and sedation to patients undergoing surgical and interventional procedures, managing obstetric analgesia, participating in the Trauma Teams and Cardiac Arrest Teams, delivering advanced airway support in the Emergency Departments and Intensive Care Units, and conducting anaesthetic allergy testing. Additionally, the Anaesthetic Service has administrative oversight of the Preadmission Clinic and the Perioperative Service to ensure patients are well-prepared for their procedures. Our important clinical contributions extend further to include participation in niche multidisciplinary District services including Interventional Neuroradiology, Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO), Liver Transplantation, Uterine Transplantation, High-Risk Obstetrics, Structural Heart Program, Burns, Advanced Gastrointestinal Program, and the Sarcoma Surgical Program.

Pain Management Services are provided through an Acute Pain Service and a Chronic Pain Service. Acute pain services are provided across Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH), Concord Repatriation General Hospital (CRGH), and Canterbury Hospital via a consultative service to inpatients who require specialised techniques of analgesia, such as Patient Controlled Analgesia, opioid infusions, epidural analgesia, and continuous regional nerve blockade. The District operates two Chronic Pain Services, one based at RPAH and the other at CRGH. These services comprise of multidisciplinary teams of experts who provide a comprehensive patient assessment and therapeutic interventions in a holistic care setting. While primarily an outpatient service, the Chronic Pain Service also accommodates a limited number of inpatient admissions, performs interventional procedures in the operating theatres, and undertakes combined procedures with interventional radiology. The team evaluates the impact of pain on an individual's daily activities, equipping them with relevant information, recommendations, and treatments to improve their quality of life and function within the community. This team of healthcare professionals, including doctors, psychologists, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists constitute the Chronic Pain Management Department, and they support a variety of other clinical services across the District.

Sydney Local Health District Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream Relationship Chart



Our Priorities at a Glance

Focus Area One: Our Communities, Partnerships and Local Environment

- 1) Improve collaboration with Primary Health Network and external healthcare providers to develop an integrated healthcare process where clients can undergo their pre-operative assessments more efficiently and without unnecessarily attending hospital.
- 2) Partner with Pharmacy and Primary Health Network to enhance pain education in the community and meet the objectives for responsible opioid stewardship.
- 3) Raise awareness in the District and community of the significant impacts and challenges faced by patients living with Chronic Pain to promote enhanced dialogue and resourcing for improving their care.
- 4) Work with the District Aboriginal Health Unit and the SLHD Population Health to ensure our services are delivered in a culturally sensitive way and in a culturally safe environment.
- 5) Promote the discipline anaesthesia through education of the general public of the role anaesthetists play in their care, and promote the achievements of our anaesthesia community.

Focus Area Two: Our Patients, Families, Carers and Consumers

- 1) Leveraging technology to enhance value by introducing digital check-in and electronic communication to outpatient clinics to streamline administration processes, enhance patient-centred care and improve the overall outpatient experience.
- 2) Implement the ACI Patient Reported Measures Program at Pain Clinics and Preadmission Units to provide patients with the opportunity to provide direct and timely feedback regarding their health-related experiences and outcomes.
- 3) Enhance our partnership with Palliative Care to develop innovative pain management models that offer safe, standardised and best practice care to enhance the quality of end-of-life care for consumers.
- 4) Implement a Triple AAA Care approach for consumers with chronic pain, which includes enhancing clinician **Awareness** of pain through education, improving **Accessibility** to specialised multidisciplinary care, and developing **Affordable** and equitable pain treatment options and services.

Focus Area Three: Our Services

- 1) Increase anaesthetics staffing and support for non-surgical disciplines (Endoscopy, Interventional Radiology, Interventional Neuroradiology, Cardiology, and Bronchoscopy) to facilitate safe and efficient procedural interventions of increasing complexity for patients across the District.
- 2) Establish a new Hub-and-Spoke Model of Care at RPAH and CRGH to centralise chronic pain management for patients with palliative and end-of-life care needs.
- 3) Implement a comprehensive Opioid Analgesic Stewardship Program in collaboration with other stakeholders to ensure that clinicians and consumers understand the implications of opioid analgesic prescribing for acute and chronic non-cancer pain, and the need for safe and responsible prescribing.

- 4) Collaborate with the District Aboriginal Health Unit and the District Population Health team, and Primary Health Network to develop a culturally responsive pain management service to ensure we are catering to the needs of our Aboriginal and multicultural communities.

Focus Area Four: Our Facilities and Digital Health

- 1) Implement an eMR-based anaesthesia record and preanaesthetic assessment form, and improve the efficient and safe delivery of care by our pain service through the implementation of an Acute Pain Service “APS” eMR template.
- 2) Active involvement in all facility redevelopment activities to ensure that anaesthetic services are appropriately equipped and resourced with the most advanced technology to support an increasing range of surgical and interventional procedures being provided to an increasingly complex range of patients.
- 3) Partner with ICT to increase the use and scope of telehealth in Preadmission Clinics and Pain Clinics to reduce the need for face-to-face consultations and patient hospital attendance, particularly for remote and rural patients.

Focus Area Five: Our Staff and Education

- 1) Support the implementation of the National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021-2031 through collaboration with planning and education to create a more flexible and responsive workforce.
- 2) Continue to prioritise a culturally safe, equitable and inclusive working environment to ensure optimal recruitment and retention of a highly skilled workforce that meets the needs of our consumers.
- 3) Establish a formalised structure of simulation activities that includes intra- and interdisciplinary training to improve clinical care, strengthen workplace relationships, and build staff confidence and morale.
- 4) Improve succession planning for clinicians, whether in administrative or specialist clinical roles, to enhance staff career progression, encourage staff retention, and ensure long-term sustainability.
- 5) Develop and promote innovative and comprehensive education programs for nursing, medical and allied health staff for the ongoing delivery of best-practice care, and to strengthen the training and recruitment of the next generation of clinicians.
- 6) Promotion of staff wellbeing strategies in order to align with the goals of the MDOK program and ANZCA’s Long Lives, Healthy Workplaces initiative to build a happy and resilient workforce.

Focus Area Six: Our Research, Innovation and Commercialisation

- 1) Prioritise research as an agenda item at Department meetings to promote staff involvement.
- 2) Promote research initiatives in the field of anaesthesia and pain management by incentivising participation, developing adaptable working schedules, and increasing administrative assistance and mentorship for staff involved in research.
- 3) Encourage staff to actively participate in the Sydney Local Health District Innovation Week and the Pitch.

- 4) Promote collaboration with the Institute of Academic Surgery, the Institute of Academic Medicine, and other research groups within Sydney Health Partners for undertaking integrated research activities.

Focus Area Seven: Our Sustainable Future

- 1) Prioritising efforts to increase recycling, reduce waste, and minimise the unnecessary use and waste of anaesthetic gases to reduce the carbon footprint of the provision of high quality anaesthetic services.
- 2) Work with ICT to improve digital care and reduce the need for patients to travel to hospital, and our reliance on physical forms of documentation.
- 3) Develop models of care that reduce lengths of stay for patients and reduce unnecessary interventions and therapies, to reduce overall health care expenditure.
- 4) Collaborate with Pharmacy for the education of staff on the responsible prescription and management of medications to reduce pharmaceutical waste and expense.
- 5) Undertaking regular review of the anaesthesia and pain medicine revenue streams and expenditures to ensure compliance with the District's financial objectives.

1. Our Communities, Partnerships and Local Environment

Sydney Local Health District (the District) is centrally located in the Sydney Metropolitan area. It provides healthcare to almost 700,000 residents, and this is projected to reach 819,540 by 2036 (an increase of 17%). Over a third of services are provided for people living outside of our District, reflecting the specialized nature of our tertiary and quaternary healthcare services. Table 1 provides the projected Sydney Local Health District population by LGA from 2021-2036.

Table 1: Projected Sydney Local Health District population by Local Government Area, 2021-2036.

	2021	2026	2031	2036	CAGR 2021/36	Growth rate 2021-2036
Ashfield (A)	47,135	48,111	49,387	50,509	0.5%	7.2%
Burwood (A)	41,256	47,306	53,517	59,258	2.4%	43.6%
Canada Bay (A)	96,823	101,906	105,208	111,941	1.0%	15.6%
Canterbury (C)	163,552	170,814	181,414	190,297	1.0%	16.4%
Leichhardt (A)	61,643	62,402	63,946	67,445	0.6%	9.4%
Marrickville (A)	91,152	92,452	94,741	97,915	0.5%	7.4%
Strathfield (A)	47,763	53,973	56,356	60,212	1.6%	26.1%
Sydney (C) (SLHD)	148,457	155,769	168,567	181,963	1.4%	22.6%
Total SLHD	697,781	732,733	773,137	819,540	1.1%	17.4%
Other NSW*	7,473,777	7,887,199	8,377,363	8,832,961	1.1%	18.2%

Source: Department of Planning and Environment (DPE). Population Projections High Scenario 2022.

<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography/Population-Projections/Explore-the-data>. Accessed April 2023.

The District population is aging with 9.5% of our residents aged over 70. This is projected to increase to 13.3% by 2036, a total of 42,976 extra older persons. There are 4,000 people living in residential aged care facilities and 10,000 residents living with dementia. Each year around 7,790 babies are born in our District. There are over 100,000 children living in our District and 11% of residents are unpaid carers.

There are more than 7000 Aboriginal people (1.1%) living in the District. Redfern remains one of the most recognised and significant urban Aboriginal communities in Australia. Our District is rich in cultural and social diversity with significant numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and special humanitarian entrants. 34% of our residents were born in a non-English speaking country, and 47,150 people speak little or no English. The most common non-English languages are Chinese, Arabic, Greek, Korean and Italian. A feature of the District's social diversity is the prominent local lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) community, and many of our suburbs have the highest proportions of same-sex couples of any in Australia.

Sydney Local Health District is characterised by socio-economic diversity, with pockets of both extreme advantage and disadvantage. People who are most disadvantaged experience a lower life expectancy than the general community. Our District has a large homeless population, with many residents with insecure housing, and the largest proportion of boarding houses in NSW (463

Houses). Homelessness is related to poor health outcomes and people who have experienced homelessness are more likely to report having a mental health problem.

The increase in our aging population presents significant challenges in providing adequate care for individuals with complex health needs, functional decline, and co-morbidities. Furthermore, there are notable disparities in healthcare access due to social determinants of health, discrimination, language barriers, poorer health literacy, and other cultural and social factors. We recognise that some populations, including Aboriginal and multicultural populations, experience unique needs and challenges. The Clinical Stream is committed to partnering with the Aboriginal and CALD teams within the District to develop models of communication for the perioperative and chronic pain management areas specific to the needs of these diverse communities. With the provision of targeted education, increasing community awareness, and developing culturally safe and inclusive models of care we will improve the opportunity for equality in healthcare and health outcomes for all.

Strategic partnerships with Primary Health Network and community-based healthcare providers will allow the Stream to adequately respond to growing demand, particularly for chronic pain management among aging and disabled consumers, as well as those needing end-of-life care. By implementing proactive measures and early intervention strategies with our partners we aim to effectively manage symptom control and reduce the likelihood of hospital admission for chronic pain conditions.

Key Priorities for Our Community, Partnerships and Local Environment

The key priorities for the Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream's strategies in enhancing healthcare within the community include promoting public awareness of the important role of anaesthesia in health care, developing an integrated healthcare system, improving pain education and opioid stewardship, improving awareness and accessibility to chronic pain services, and addressing challenges through awareness campaigns.

- Improve collaboration with Primary Health Network and external healthcare providers to develop an integrated healthcare process where clients can undergo their pre-operative assessments more efficiently and without unnecessarily attending hospital.
- Partner with Pharmacy and Primary Health Network to enhance pain education in the community and meet the objectives for responsible opioid stewardship.
- Raise awareness in the District and community of the significant impacts and challenges faced by patients living with chronic pain to promote enhanced dialogue and resourcing for improving their care.
- Work with the District Aboriginal Health Unit and the SLHD Population Health to ensure our services are delivered in a culturally sensitive way and in a culturally safe environment.
- Promote the discipline anaesthesia through education of the general public of the role anaesthetists play in their care, and promote the achievements of our anaesthesia community.

2. Our Patients, Families, Carers and Consumers

The Clinical Stream recognises the significance of continuously improving the services offered to patients, families, carers, and consumers. Through the prioritisation of strategic initiatives, the Clinical Stream strives to elevate the overall experience and outcomes for all stakeholders involved. We are dedicated to implementing digital alternatives for confirmation of appointments, communication, and check-in at outpatient clinics as a means to enhance efficiency and streamline administrative procedures. This transition from conventional paper-based administration to a digital process not only improves operational efficiency but also aligns with our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint. By embracing technology, our objective is to provide patients with a seamless and convenient experience, and one that can easily be adapted to meet the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse consumers.

Patients can provide significant input in helping shape and improve the quality of care provided. The Clinical Stream places a strong emphasis on gathering patient feedback for continuous improvement. As part of this commitment, the Clinical Stream is implementing the ACI Patient Reported Measures Program at Pain Clinics and Preadmission Units. This program serves as a valuable platform for patients to provide direct and timely feedback regarding their health-related experiences and outcomes. Through analysis of the feedback received, we aim to identify areas for improvement and drive initiatives that will enhance the overall patient experience and their outcomes.

Pain management plays a vital role in healthcare, particularly for patients experiencing chronic pain or entering end-of-life care. It is our mission to enhance the quality of life for consumers affected by chronic pain conditions. We also encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between pain management specialists and palliative care physicians. Our mission includes providing convenient access to pain management services that are geographically closer to patients' residences, ensuring those that are receiving end-of-care can do so within the comfort and familiarity of their own surroundings if they wish.

We recognize that some populations, including First Nations and multicultural populations, present with unique needs and challenges. With a strong focus on cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, our objective is to ensure fair and equal access to healthcare services for individuals regardless of their background. We strive to establish a healthcare environment that comprehends, respects, and promptly addresses the distinctive circumstances and perspectives of each community. This approach will foster more comprehensive and customized care, leading to improved health outcomes and well-being of our diverse patient population.

With the increasing demand for complex surgical services across the District, coupled with the rising incidence of chronic pain conditions in the elderly, and the escalating rates of cancer, it is imperative to develop a strong integration between chronic pain services, pharmacies, allied health professionals, and external healthcare providers. This collaborative effort aims to build a robust and efficient model of care that ensures the timely delivery of essential pain management services to those in need to improve their quality of life.

The Stream's outpatient clinics are well positioned to improve the health literacy of a significant proportion of the more disadvantaged members of our community. Both the Preadmission Unit and the Chronic Pain Clinics service a large number of patients, for many of whom it is their first significant interaction with healthcare in their life. A proactive approach to provide information in their native language can enhance patients' understanding of their healthcare journey and improve compliance with recommendations. Moreover, offering comprehensive education and information prior to surgical procedures empowers patients, enabling them to make informed decisions and actively participate in their own care.

Key Priorities for Our Patients, Families, Carers and Consumers

Through the implementation of digital processes, gathering patient feedback, developing innovative pain management models, and creating tailored care for diverse communities, the Clinical Stream aims to improve the overall experience and outcomes, while promoting inclusivity, efficiency, and excellence in healthcare delivery.

- Leveraging technology to enhance value by introducing digital check-in and electronic communication to outpatient clinics to streamline administration processes, enhance patient-centred care and improve the overall outpatient experience.
- Implement the ACI Patient Reported Measures Program at Pain Clinics and Preadmission Units to provide patients with the opportunity to provide direct and timely feedback regarding their health-related experiences and outcomes.
- Enhance our partnership with Palliative Care to develop innovative pain management models that offer safe, standardised and best practice care to enhance the quality of end-of-life care for consumers.
- Implement a Triple AAA Care approach for consumers with chronic pain, which includes enhancing clinician Awareness of pain through education, improving Accessibility to specialised multidisciplinary care, and developing Affordable and equitable pain treatment options and services.

3. Our Services

Anaesthesia

The Anaesthetics Departments at Canterbury, Concord, and RPA Hospitals provide comprehensive perioperative care to their patients, providing services beyond just the traditional operating theatre environment, including Endoscopy, Interventional Radiology, Cardiac Catheter Laboratories, as well as attending the Emergency Department and providing advance life support assistance when required throughout the hospital. The Anaesthetics Departments also provide critical support and input into many of the specialised programs provided by the District: ECMO retrieval, structural heart program, advanced gastrointestinal surgery, liver and uterine transplantation, burns, high risk obstetrics, interventional neuroradiology, and sarcoma surgery. Sydney Local Health District is experiencing a significant increase in the demand for anaesthetic services, driven primarily by escalating surgical and interventional activity, but also by the increasing role for anaesthetists outside of clinical anaesthesia. As the volume of procedures requiring specialised anaesthetics expertise continues to grow, so will the crucial role of anaesthesia in the management and provision of optimal care for patients within the District's hospitals.

Pain Services

The Pain Services within the District encompass both acute and chronic pain management. The Acute Pain Service provides integrated care to surgical patients throughout their hospital stay, mainly for postoperative pain, but also for non-surgical acute pain such as trauma and pain due to acute medical illness. For patients requiring long-term cancer and non-cancer pain management, the service manages two chronic pain outpatient clinics, located at RPAH and CRGH. Additionally, Concord Pain Clinic collaborates with the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare (NCVH) and the Burns Clinic, offering specialised support within these domains. The pain clinics play a pivotal role in supporting various activities, including the provision of preoperative reviews to facilitate proactive pain management and optimisation prior to surgery. Furthermore, the clinics offers a post-discharge subacute pain clinic to provide ongoing specialist care and opioid stewardship, helping patients transition back to their daily activities. Finally, both RPAH and CRGH undertake a variety of interventional pain procedures such as radiofrequency nerve ablations and insertion of spinal cord stimulators.

Key Issues for Our Services

The current issues and gaps in Anaesthetics and Pain Management in the District can be categorized into four broad categories.

1. Changing models of care

The increasing complexity of interventional procedures has led to a surge in demand for anaesthetics services outside of operating theatres. This model of care is posing significant challenges for Anaesthetics Departments in both medical and nursing staffing. Many interventional procedures, such as those carried out in Radiology, Cardiology, Endoscopy and Bronchoscopy, often require the assistance of the anaesthetics team, including an anaesthetist and anaesthetics nurse or technician. These procedures, although minimally invasive, are often unpleasant, complex

and prolonged, necessitating specialised anaesthesia care beyond simple conscious sedation.

2. Chronic Pain Clinic Access

High demand for chronic pain services is a challenge for the timely management of chronic pain that adversely affects a patient's quality of life. Delays in providing care may contribute to a deterioration in the physical symptoms, and may also impose a considerable psychological and financial burden on patients, which can impact on their level of function and the successful treatment of their pain.

3. Management of Chronic Opioid Therapy

While a variety of analgesic and interventional strategies are available to treat chronic pain, opioid therapy remains a common modality for managing moderate to severe pain in the community. Chronic pain clinics can assist with reviewing and managing and patients on long term opioid therapy to reduce the risk of opioid-related complications.

4. Support for primary care and networked services

With chronic pain management consultations in high demand and the availability of resources to provide prompt and effective medical care to these patients limited, partnerships that would enable the increased support of community-based chronic pain healthcare remain underdeveloped. The lack of such initiatives results in patients travelling substantial distances or enduring prolonged waiting periods for consultation appointments.

Key Priorities for Our Services

The Clinical Stream aims to promote increased training and recruitment of anaesthetists to meet the anaesthetic service needs required by the District for its expanding patient care activities. It will also work with surgical and interventional services to develop models of care to enhance efficiency. The Clinical Stream will aim to develop strong partnerships with other healthcare networks to establish community-based pain management models and actively promote embedded and comprehensive Opioid Analgesic Stewardship.

- Increase anaesthetics staffing and support for non-surgical disciplines (Endoscopy, Interventional Radiology, Interventional Neuroradiology, Cardiology, and Bronchoscopy) to facilitate safe and efficient procedural interventions of increasing complexity for patients across the District.
- Establish a new Hub-and-Spoke Model of Care at RPAH and CRGH to centralise chronic pain management for patients with palliative and end-of-life care needs.
- Implement a comprehensive Opioid Analgesic Stewardship Program in collaboration with other stakeholders to ensure that clinicians and consumers understand the implications of opioid analgesic prescribing for acute and chronic non-cancer pain, and the need for safe and responsible prescribing.
- Collaborate with the District Aboriginal Health Unit and the District Population Health team, and Primary Health Network to develop a culturally responsive pain management service to ensure we are catering to the needs of our Aboriginal and multicultural communities.

4. Our Facilities and Digital Health

The Anaesthetics and Pain Management Stream is dedicated to providing the highest quality services to our clients. Our facilities are well equipped with advanced technology to ensure that we meet the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) requirements for accreditation for training, and enabling our pain management clinics to provide a comprehensive service to our local and regional communities.

To accommodate the increasing number of interventions occurring outside the operating theatre, such as complex cardiology, radiology, and endoscopic procedures, we undertake ongoing review and redevelopment of these clinical areas to enable high complexity patients to have these procedures undertaken safely.

The increasing demand for virtual care has led to the identification of the need for additional resources that will enable us to transition toward a more sustainable service model. Given the expansion in operating theatre activities and the impact of a backlog in elective surgery due to the COVID pandemic, an increasing demand has been placed on our preadmission clinics. With existing resources performing at maximum capacity, there is a need for a comprehensive redesign project to critically evaluate and update the current infrastructure and service delivery model. This strategic initiative will ensure preadmission units are adequately equipped to manage growing demand for appointments, by leveraging technology to maintain our commitment to providing high-quality patient care.

The preadmission units and pain clinics across the District continue to utilise paper-based administrative processes, with referrals predominantly being received in non-digital format. This process creates substantial challenges in ensuring the integrity of documentation and causes issues associated with manual filing and storage. These limitations are a major driver for adoption and utilisation of digital health technology in outpatient clinics within the Clinical Stream.

With increasing digital literacy in the community there is the opportunity to improve efficiency and streamline the preadmission and admission process for patients. Many patients prefer the flexibility of communicating by message rather than making or receiving a phone call. Moreover, many patients live remotely or have physical or social impediments that mean they cannot easily attend a clinical or administrative appointment in person. Utilising the digital options for communicating and liaising with patients will improve their experience and satisfaction with our service.

Key Priorities for Our Facilities and Digital Health

- Implement an eMR-based anaesthesia record and preanaesthetic assessment form, and improve the efficient and safe delivery of care by our pain service through the implementation of an Acute Pain Service “APS” eMR template.
- Active involvement in all facility redevelopment activities to ensure that anaesthetic services are appropriately equipped and resourced with the most advanced technology to support an increasing range of surgical and interventional procedures being provided to an increasingly complex range of patients.
- Partner with ICT to increase the use and scope of telehealth in Preadmission Clinics and Pain Clinics to reduce the need for face-to-face consultations and patient hospital attendance, particularly for remote and rural patients.

5. Our Staff and Education

The Anaesthetic Departments are the largest single medical department of any specialty service in Sydney Local Health District, with over 230 medical staff. Supporting them to provide intraoperative and intraprocedural anaesthesia care are over 140 anaesthetics assistants. The medical staff undertake the role of perioperative physicians to support patients on their health journey. This commences with preoperative screening or a preoperative assessment undertaken in one of the District's preadmission clinics. In preadmission clinics, anaesthetists work with clinic nurses, specialist clinical nurse consultants, and surgical teams to ensure patients are safely and adequately prepared for their procedure. Postoperatively, many patients receive ongoing anaesthesia care through review by the acute pain services to ensure their pain is optimally managed. The acute pain service consists of a medical and nursing team providing a seven day a week, 24 hour per day consultative service. The provision of high quality 21st century anaesthesia care is critically dependent on the collegiate and constructive teamwork of medical, nursing and technician staff.

The Pain Management Service epitomises a multidisciplinary team framework. A small number of specialist pain physicians work with clinical nurse consultants, physiotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and occupational therapists to deliver holistic and comprehensive treatment to patients with chronic pain. The responsibilities of this diverse team encompass conducting comprehensive patient assessments, developing tailored treatment and rehabilitation plans, performing procedural interventions such as injections or nerve blocks, prescribing appropriate medications, and actively monitoring patients' progress.

The contribution of administrative staff support to the Streams outpatient activities is essential in ensuring efficient and patient-centered care. Preadmission clinics are one of the largest outpatient services provided by Sydney Local Health District, while the chronic pain outpatient clinics presents unique scheduling and organizational challenges due to the complexity of patients treated. It is the proficient and highly organised administrative staff that enable these clinics to run efficiently.

A key priority for the Stream is to ensure the ongoing recruitment and retention of the staff that are needed provide the high-quality services listed above by investing in training and education. All three district hospitals are accredited with ANZCA for anaesthesia training, and all consistently achieve high levels of success with their trainees passing barrier exams. There are exam preparation courses organised by the hospitals for the trainees to attend, and formal ANZCA trial examination evenings supported by the Departments.

Both Concord and RPAH are accredited for specialist Pain Management training by the Faculty of Pain Medicine at ANZCA. The educational activities of the Pain Management Service provided for clinicians and staff are meticulously designed with the aim of affording health practitioners with high-quality, evidence-based, and contextually relevant education. A central element of our education strategy are the monthly case presentation sessions. These sessions serve as a forum for clinicians to share their cases within multidisciplinary groups, promoting an environment of shared learning and collective growth from each other's experiences.

There is an increasing emphasis across the District on delivering high quality simulation training both for individual clinicians and in a multidisciplinary environment. The Clinical Stream continues to advocate for further investment and development of simulation facilities and training. Finally, the support of training for anaesthetics nurses and technicians, allied health and medical students is a key priority for the Anaesthesia and Pain Management clinicians to ensure high clinical standards are maintained, and so that staff have an enjoyable, collegiate and stimulating working environment.

Key Priorities for Our Staff and Education

The Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream is committed to a comprehensive strategy for workforce development, recruitment, staff skills enhancement, and providing opportunities for career progression within the Anaesthetics and Pain Management Departments. Our priority is to ensure a robust alignment between the specific service requirements and the pool of skilled professionals within our workforce.

- Support the implementation of the National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021-2031 through collaboration with planning and education to create a more flexible and responsive workforce.
- Continue to prioritise a culturally safe, equitable and inclusive working environment to ensure optimal recruitment and retention of a highly skilled workforce that meets the needs of our consumers.
- Establish a formalised structure of simulation activities that includes intra- and interdisciplinary training to improve clinical care, strengthen workplace relationships, and build staff confidence and morale.
- Improve succession planning for clinicians, whether in administrative or specialist clinical roles, to enhance staff career progression, encourage staff retention, and ensure long-term sustainability.
- Develop and promote innovative and comprehensive education programs for nursing, medical and allied health staff for the ongoing delivery of best-practice care, and to strengthen the training and recruitment of the next generation of clinicians.
- Promotion of Staff Wellbeing strategies in order to align with the goals of the MDOK program and ANZCA's Long Lives, Healthy Workplaces initiative to build a happy and resilient workforce.

6. Our Research, Innovation and Commercialisation

The Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream is committed to advancing anaesthesia and pain management research through both internal and external intra- and interdisciplinary collaborations led by specialist clinicians. Our research scope spans biomedical and translational research with a strong emphasis on clinical research. The Clinical Stream has expanded its involvement in clinical trials with the commencement of newly funded research nursing support. Future directions include strengthening research culture, recruitment of postdoctoral fellows, and enhancing participation in research activities through collaborations with the Institute of Academic Surgery and the Institute of Academic Medicine, and other health partners both locally and nationally.

Key Priorities for Our Research, Innovation and Commercialisation

One of the key strategies to encourage research and innovation is to facilitate clinical staff participation by reducing barriers: assisting with ethics and grant applications, developing a research framework that allows for varying levels of involvement in research activities, and providing expertise, mentorship and support for the development of research initiatives. This platform provides an environment for healthcare professionals to troubleshoot problems, exchange ideas, learn about the opportunities for research involvement, and establish collaborative networks.

- Prioritise research as an agenda item at Department meetings to promote staff involvement.
- Promote research initiatives in the field of anaesthesia and pain management by incentivising participation, developing adaptable working schedules, and increasing administrative assistance and mentorship for staff involved in research.
- Encourage staff to actively participate in the Sydney Local Health District Innovation Week and the Pitch.
- Promote collaboration with the Institute of Academic Surgery, the Institute of Academic Medicine, and other research groups within Sydney Health Partners for undertaking integrated research activities.

7. Our Sustainable Future

Climate change is a public health emergency and the biggest threat to our health in the 21st Century. In Australia, health care contributes 7% of total greenhouse gas emissions, and the operating theatres contribute up to 70% of hospital waste. The Anaesthetics and Pain Management Clinical Stream is a major contributor to environmental sustainability projects within the District. The Clinical Stream has initiated a paper recycling program within RPAH operating theatres as part of its commitment to environmental sustainability. Other initiatives aim to reduce the carbon footprint of anaesthesia by minimising anaesthetic gas use and decreasing clinical and anaesthetic gas waste, as well as participating in the NSW Health Anaesthetic Net Zero program.

Furthermore, the Clinical Stream is devoted to improving healthcare access and outcomes without increasing our carbon footprint. This objective is pursued through the development of digital initiatives that promote efficient and environmentally friendly practices. These efforts shape healthcare's future, setting new sustainability standards, ensuring quality patient care, and contributing to a healthier community and planet.

Financial sustainability is also a crucial focus for the Clinical Stream. Regular comprehensive reviews of revenue generation and expenditure are conducted as part of this commitment. Emphasis is also placed on effective staffing strategies including recruitment, retention, and training of top-tier health professionals to maintain ongoing excellence in our clinical performance.

Key Priorities for Our Sustainable Future

- Prioritising efforts to increase recycling, reduce waste, and minimise the unnecessary use and waste of anaesthetic gases to reduce the carbon footprint of the provision of high quality anaesthetic services.
- Work with ICT to improve digital care and reduce the need for patients to travel to hospital, and our reliance on physical forms of documentation.
- Develop models of care that reduce lengths of stay for patients and reduce unnecessary interventions and therapies, to reduce overall health care expenditure.
- Collaborate with Pharmacy for the education of staff on the responsible prescription and management of medications to reduce pharmaceutical waste and expense.
- Undertaking regular review of the anaesthesia and pain medicine revenue streams and expenditures to ensure compliance with the District's fiscal objectives.