HEALTH

HEALTH

OVERVIEW

Thanks to Queenslander's united efforts, our response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been outstanding.

We demonstrated how Queensland's health system ranks among the best in the world. With the state's population growing and rates of chronic disease increasing, demand for health services is expected to increase significantly. The government is working to ensure Queenslanders will be among the healthiest people in the world by 2026 by providing more equitable access to high-quality healthcare. To achieve this, all service areas across our entire health system aim to provide relevant and timely care in the most appropriate locations possible.

The geographic distribution of Queensland's population creates challenges to providing equitable access to health services for rural and remote communities. In addition to this, pressure in responding to large-scale public health events like COVID-19, requires innovative approaches to deliver improved value, promote partnerships, and support affordability and sustainability.

The health sector's response to these challenges and opportunities is system wide, including how infrastructure is planned, delivered and maintained. Working together to integrate our efforts, we can optimise our health care system to make better use of existing infrastructure, transform how care is delivered and sustainably grow the health system to support all Queenslanders to live healthier lives.

Queensland's healthcare system is in an era of unprecedented technological change. Exciting advances in medical science enable medicine to be tailored to individuals. Technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, and virtual and augmented reality are transforming the way the healthcare system operates, providing targeted services within the community and in the home, taking pressure off existing health facilities. Built infrastructure including hospitals, residential care, health and community centres, and ambulance stations, together with digital technologies will be critical enablers, delivering quality health and community services to Queenslanders. This will need to be supported by enhanced digital literacy for both patients and the health workforce.

Even with innovation and improvement in the models of care, increased service demand ultimately drives a need for infrastructure investment. This may include accommodating growth in services, renewing or repurposing older assets to extend their life, or adapting them to support the delivery of contemporary health services. Smarter infrastructure investment that considers equitable, efficient and effective person-centred care in alternate settings and encourages partnerships across industries, research and other sectors is critical. Co-locating health with other social infrastructure and the maturing of precincts that foster health and knowledge are a few examples of how Queensland can continue to deliver world-leading healthcare and maintain a highly skilled and robust workforce.

Rooftop solar used by Group Linen Services, Chermside (Source: Planet Ark)
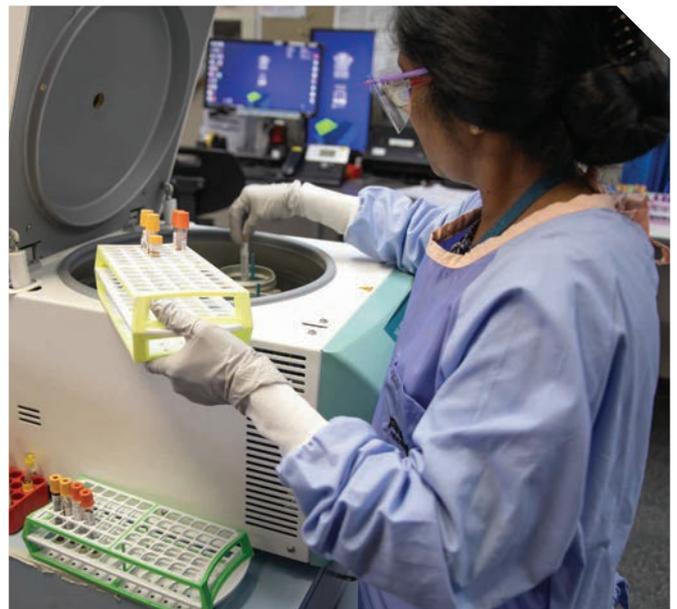
Pathology worker loads samples into centrifuge (Source: Queensland Health)

Current key initiatives

- **Keeping Queensland Healthy**
  Keeping Queenslanders healthy with a record health investment of $22.2 billion in 2021-22.[76]

- **Hospital Building Fund**
  A $2 billion allocation to deliver hospital upgrades and expansions, including the Toowoomba Day Surgery, to purchase additional services from Mater Springfield Hospital, and uplift Queensland Health's base capital program.

- **Partnering for the future: advancing Queensland's community services**
  The government is working with neighbourhood and community centres and other stakeholders across the state to co-design a strategic framework that will improve capacity to meet community needs, increase well-being, impede disadvantage and avoid increasing costs for services.

- **Healthy ageing: A strategy for older Queenslanders**
  Supporting the healthy ageing of older Queenslanders to stay well for longer, adopt person-centred care for older Queenslanders and integrate health and other support services.

- **Virtual Health Strategy**
  Developed to ensure that the right care is provided to all Queenslanders, regardless of their location.

- **The Digital Strategy for Rural and Remote Healthcare**
  Aims to address the inequity in access to, and participation in healthcare services in rural and remote Queensland.

- **Closing the Gap signatory**
  Queensland is a signatory and proud supporter of Closing the Gap to achieve better outcomes for First Nations peoples.

- **Healthy Places, Healthy People Framework**
  Joint initiative between Queensland Health and the Queensland Government Architect to integrate health considerations in infrastructure planning and delivery to support all Queenslanders to live healthier lives.

$30 million
Solar Panel and Energy Efficiency Program, including solar panels at 50 public hospital sites[77]

Health expenditure
grew from
$28.4 billion
in 2008–09 to
$40.0 billion
in 2018–19 (government and non-government)[78]

119 acute public hospitals[79]

The *$1.1 billion* transformation of Herston Quarter will result in a mixed-use community hub that will cater for *world-class health research*, residential, commercial and retail facilities

Roma Hospital (Source: Queensland Health)

TRENDS

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS are projected to INCREASE BY 52 PER CENT from 1.6 million in 2018–19 to 3.1 million in 2031–32[80]

275 PER CENT INCREASE in use of TELEHEALTH EVENTS by Queensland Health from 2017–20 (82,153 in 2017, 226,555 in 2020)[81]
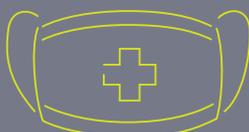
Well-designed neighbourhoods that provide access to mixed-use destinations and services are associated with an average of $14.65 in HEALTH-RELATED BENEFITS PER ADULT ANNUALLY. The health-related economic benefits for investing in healthy built environments are significant at a population level.[82]

◥ CASE STUDY

Queensland Health's Virtual Healthcare Strategy – Virtual Care Hubs

Virtual care provides an opportunity to connect healthcare across multi-disciplinary teams, working with the patient, communicating and easily exchanging information to deliver consistent, safer and quality care that leverages digital technologies.

As seen during the health response to COVID-19, virtual health care, including telehealth, has risen significantly and continues to transform the way services are delivered. An agile and digitally responsive health system frees up hospitals and clinics, supporting some of our most at-risk patients to receive quality care closer to home without entering hospital environments. Growing consumer demand for healthcare requires a new approach to ensure we can deliver the full range of services for all Queenslanders and to ensure the future sustainability of the Queensland health system.

Under the proposed Queensland Health's Virtual Healthcare Strategy, the future strategic direction for virtual healthcare, including telehealth, is to build a system that empowers Queenslanders with virtual and in-person health services that are fully integrated, regardless of their location. This supports our health workforce to deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time, assisted with virtually enabled models of care including the expansion of virtual care hubs.

These hubs will network regional healthcare providers to facilitate the remote delivery, assessment and coordination of clinical services. They will leverage existing virtual care initiatives, including those developed during COVID-19, and grow capabilities with the use of remote monitoring and integrated electronic medical records with primary and specialist care providers. The convenience and holistic approach enables a person's healthcare journey to be enhanced by technology in the community. An example of this growing area servicing rural communities is the collaborative Virtual Integrated Pain Centre, which provides patients in rural and remote Queensland with access to specialist allied health persistent pain services in local facilities.

Metro North Hospital and Health Service is embarking on establishing a coordinated, innovative and sustainable model for a central intake, information and intervention hub to improve patient flow and support coordination and integration. The Clinical Care and Coordination Hub will include a range of co-located virtual health care and coordination services, enabled by interoperable digital systems designed to improve patent flow and maximise synergies across services.

Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine, Townsville (Source: James Cook University)

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◥ CHALLENGES

Keeping pace with shifting consumer needs

There is a growing preference for care and services to adopt more place-based, preventive and collaborative partnership approaches, as well as virtual and digitally-enabled health care options, informed by consumer needs.

Climate change impacts on health infrastructure

Climate change requires infrastructure to be designed and built with increased resilience, to support the community-wide transition to a zero-net emissions economy, as well as waste reduction and sustainability practices. This may challenge the way health infrastructure has traditionally been planned, designed, delivered and operated.
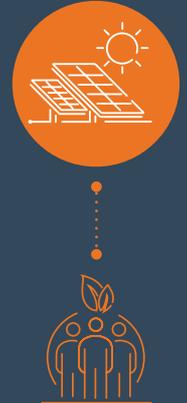
Growing and ageing population and unhealthy environments

Population changes, unhealthy lifestyle choices and modern environments that do not enable healthy living are contributing to increasing rates of obesity and chronic health conditions such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. The rise in chronic health conditions continues to place pressure on our health system and supporting infrastructure.

Health equity for all Queenslanders

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with a disability, socio-economically disadvantaged people and those living in rural communities generally experience poorer health outcomes than the rest of the population. Health infrastructure needs to be designed and supported to close the gap in health outcomes for these people.

Expanding pressure on health budgets

There is pressure to deliver more effectively with finite funding. It is important that the government's investment in health is financially sustainable and makes best use of available resources for the benefit of all Queenslanders, while also considering alternative finance models with private and non-government organisations.

Increased and more complex demand for ambulance services

Existing assets need to be maintained and improved to accommodate current and future service capability requirements. Early and coordinated planning is needed to secure land and facilities in areas of high growth early in new developments.

Improving access to virtual healthcare

Remote and very remote locations often lack the digital capacity to increase bandwidth and suffer from extended ICT outages.[121] Queensland Health's virtual healthcare agenda focuses on the consideration and resolution of connectivity challenges to transform service delivery models.

A responsive and adaptable health system in a world of increasing complexity

Queensland's economic and social prosperity relies on the health of all Queenslanders. While the state's healthcare system ranks among the best in the world, we are not immune to future challenges that may threaten the health of Queenslanders, including pandemics, natural disasters, or other significant disruptions.

◥ OPPORTUNITIES

Providing more jobs and growing our health knowledge economy

The health care and social assistance industry was the largest industry by employment type in the 2016 census.[83] Queensland's future as a leader in health research was shown throughout COVID-19 and continues to evolve through centres of excellence such as the Translational Research Institute in Brisbane, The Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct and the TropiQ – Townsville Tropical Intelligence and Health Precinct. There is growing potential to expand Queensland's capacity in biomedical research and manufacturing, partner with industry, and build our knowledge-based economy.

Health workforce for the future

Working together with strong education, training and research sectors, we can build a health workforce for the future by developing education, training and employment pathways, connected and integrated into a range of settings. For example, the recently announced Satellite Hospitals will provide integrated out-of-hospital community-based care.

Co-locate health, community, disability, and housing services

We can improve access and support for the community by delivering public, private and not-for-profit services in the one location. By maximising the benefits of shared infrastructure and partnerships, we can add value that is not realised when planned separately.

This can include connections with public transport, employment and training opportunities, and shared use of new and existing resources. Examples include community centres that provide a soft entry point for crisis services, through to the planned Meadowbrook Health and Wellbeing Precinct in Logan.

Consumer engagement

The community's desire for fast, reliable access to knowledge is contributing to a role shift from 'passenger' to 'driver' of their own healthcare and greater access to community services. For example, one in 20 Google searches involve a request for health information.[85] Consumer engagement and insight into community needs, backed by data and growth trends, enables informed investment in new neighbourhood, community centres and health services.

Unprecedented and continuous technological change in healthcare

Digitally-enabled models of care are changing our existing infrastructure requirements (including its workforce), providing opportunities to personalise healthcare, overcome Queensland's vast distances and improve efficiencies and health outcomes.

16 Queensland Health facilities covering 50 per cent of all public hospital activity with 'advanced' integrated electronic medical record solutions that link the entire patient care journey electronically, for safer and more efficient care.

Largest digital portfolio in Queensland Government representing nearly 50 per cent of ICT projects reported.

Queensland Health has 54 digital initiatives, costing $711.8 million.[84]

Building infrastructure that supports health and wellbeing

Queensland's *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan* prioritises the building of infrastructure to protect and safeguard the health and wellbeing of our diverse communities. Certain attributes of built environments are proven to support both physical and mental health and wellbeing. Embedding health and wellbeing outcomes and placing an emphasis on disease prevention is an opportunity to lessen the growing burden on our health system and enables thriving communities that promote healthy living.

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PRIORITY ACTIONS

Encourage jobs, growth and productivity

Develop regions, places and precincts

Enhance sustainability and resilience

Adopt smarter approaches

1 Co-location and shared services (QH, DCHDE, DSDATSIP)

Consider options for co-location across community, health and disability services, and government housing services, with private and non-government sectors to improve access and efficiencies. This can include culturally-appropriate integrated care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse communities.

2 Health and knowledge precincts (QH, DTIS, DSDILGP)

Partner with well-established institutions such as hospitals, universities and research organisations to support an environment of knowledge transfer that nurtures the start-up, incubation, and development of innovation-led, high-growth, knowledge-based organisations.

3 Increase hospital beds and services (QH)

Investment in key hospitals in high-growth areas, including the Building Better Hospitals initiative.

4 Meet growing demand for health services (QH)

Encourage a networked health system and a range of demand management initiatives including Satellite Hospitals, which are designed to take pressure off nearby emergency departments and acute service facilities and provide quality care closer to home.

5 Health service resilience and surety of supply (QH)

Build better resilience across the health system to respond to COVID-19, natural disasters, and other impacts such as climate change. This includes improvements to the supply chain such as the Queensland Government Critical Supply Reserve, and digital infrastructure.

6 Partnering with key private sector and non-government providers (QH)

To deliver additional capacity and service through innovative delivery models, including utilising the private sector to manage health service demand pressures. For example, $177 million has been committed to purchase additional services from Mater Health Service.

7 Engage with all levels of government and industry partners (QH, DCHDE, DSDILGP)

Plan for and secure future health and ambulance services, aged care, community and neighbourhood centres, with a coordinated approach such as through Priority Development Area processes, strategic land acquisition in growth areas and co-location strategies.

8 Improve healthcare services in rural and remote areas (QH)

Apply innovative and flexible facility design and construction methods such as modularised buildings that deliver more affordable and faster to build facilities, including for staff accommodation, Primary Health Care Centres, Multi-Purpose Health Services, residential aged care and rural hospitals.

9 Grow our rural and remote digital infrastructure and technology (QH)

Transform rural and remote health services from their current state to being fully digitised to enable the delivery of integrated health services to all Queenslanders regardless of their location to address the unique challenges faced by rural and remote facilities.

10 Achieve the Queensland Government's zero net emissions by 2050 target (QH)

Lead health sector efforts to improving the environmental performance of existing and new health facilities, through the establishment of a new Office of Hospital Sustainability and local responses such as *Green Metro North Sustainability Strategy*.

11 First Nation Health Equity strategies (DSDSATSIP, QH)

Implement strategies and master plans to provide equitable access to culturally compatible community and healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities in local health systems, and health and community infrastructure across Queensland.

12 Mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders (QH)

Continue to provide high quality and accessible mental health, alcohol and other drug services, increased investment in community mental health, suicide prevention, community resilience programs and planning and delivering priority infrastructure projects to improve mental health facilities.

13 Preventive health measures to improve population health (QH)

Lessen the burden of disease through initiatives and infrastructure that can support Queenslanders to make healthy lifestyle choices and enjoy better health.

14 Promote and implement the Healthy Places, Healthy People Framework (QH)

Embed health considerations into infrastructure planning and delivery. This includes smart investment solutions that prioritise healthier living in well-designed places.

15 Queensland Ambulance Service infrastructure planning (QH)

Early planning and investment to meet community needs for services in areas expecting growth and changing demand.

16 Funding and financing strategy for healthcare infrastructure (QH)

Develop a sustainable strategy that involves a range of initiatives aimed at addressing the growing gap between supply and demand for infrastructure funding required to support growth and renewal in the asset base of the health system.

17 The health workforce of the future (QH)

Continue to invest in health education, training and employment pathways through supporting education and training infrastructure to ensure sustainable healthcare capabilities across the state.

18 Community and consumer engagement (QH)

Promote active and meaningful engagement and participation of consumers and their family/carers in their journeys across the health system, through collaboration in the planning, design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of health services for improved health outcomes for all.