ISLHD Research Strategy 2024-2027

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Foreword from the Chief Executive

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) is committed to supporting high quality research and the translation of findings into everyday clinical practice. By building our research capacity we are working as a district to improve the quality of care that we provide and the health outcomes for the Illawarra Shoalhaven region.

After successful implementation of the ISLHD Research and Implementation Plan 2021-2024, I am pleased to lead our district into our next plan, that will see us develop new partnerships and collaborate across functions to embed research. The Research Strategy 2024-2027 aligns with the ISLHD Strategic Delivery Plan -2028 and sets our vision on the next horizon for developing research within the ISLHD. This strategy builds upon the successes achieved in our prior plan and aims to move the district towards a strong research culture that supports our established research clinicians, early and mid-career researchers, aspiring clinicians and, of course, the patients that will benefit from receiving high value, cutting edge care.

This plan details how we can leverage our existing strengths and partnerships, as well as how we can develop novel strategies to grow research across the ISLHD. The ISLHD is optimally positioned to lead regional, rural and remote initiatives and to partner with industry and academia to establish its reputation as a regional research hub that solves problems unique to the region. I look forward to supporting the district in new and exciting endeavours to grow our capacity for research.

I am very pleased to see the substantial improvements made in research across the district, and to lead the district into the next phase of developing our research maturity. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of this plan - it will help to strengthen our research culture, attract and retain staff who are committed to innovation and ensure that our patients receive world -class, innovative health care.

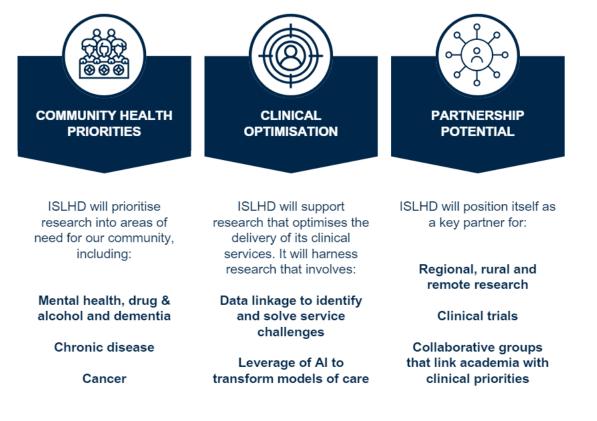**Margot Mains**

ISLHD Chief Executive

ISLHD will be a hub for regional, rural and remote research into areas of priority for our community. We will use research to optimise our services, harness digital and AI tools and meet the future needs of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions.

Collaboration

ISLHD recognises the need to transform its service delivery to meet the current and future health needs of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions. To embed research into both its clinical services and corporate areas, it will harness both internal and external collaborations.

An internal shift that embraces capabilities beyond clinical areas will be needed. Capabilities in data collection and analytics, finance, project management, improvement, clinical and corporate governance and policy will be leveraged across the lifecycle of priority research projects, through executive level sponsorship.

ISLHD is excited to collaborate externally with industry and academia to promote research into our priority areas whilst brokering external partnerships with the community and philanthropy.

As a leader in regional, rural and remote health care, ISLHD will foster relationships that provide better access to treatments and services, through clinical trials and development of virtual and telehealth models of care, for its culturally and geographically dispersed community. Positioned 1.5 hours south of the Sydney CBD, and with collaborative relationships with neighbouring LHDs, ISLHD is an ideal gateway for industry and academic partners seeking to innovate healthcare with regional, rural and remote populations.

Strategic Priorities

ISLHD will provide executive support to research that improves community health, optimises clinical services and partners with industry, academia and other LHDs. By prioritising targeted areas of research, the district will achieve the objectives of this plan to become a hub for regional, rural and remote research.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PRIORITIES

ISLHD will prioritise research into areas of need for our community, including:

Mental health, drug & alcohol and dementia

Chronic disease

Cancer

CLINICAL OPTIMISATION

ISLHD will support research that optimises the delivery of its clinical services. It will harness research that involves:

Data linkage to identify and solve service challenges

Leverage of AI to transform models of care

PARTNERSHIP POTENTIAL

ISLHD will position itself as a key partner for:

Regional, rural and remote research

Clinical trials

Collaborative groups that link academia with clinical priorities

Action Plan

1 | Govern research activity

d.   Develop governance systems and processes so that the ISLHD Research, Data & Environmental Sustainability Committee has oversight of research activity, the delivery of this plan and the performance of the research institute.

e.   Ensure that projects using emerging technologies, such as AI tools, and capabilities have executive oversight and direction.

2 | Embed research into service delivery

a.   Provide executive director level sponsorship to priority projects so that resources in data analytics, improvement, project management and policy can be used to drive outcomes.

b.   Use existing quality improvement projects in priority areas to create pilot data that will attract funding and enable research activity growth.

c.   Monitor research impacts to patients, policy and practice change, workforce and cost savings.

3 | Use data analytics and AI to research new delivery models

a.   Enable clinical and population data to be used for research by building analytics capabilities.

b.   Use predictive analytics to shape service delivery models that can be proven effective through research methodologies.

c.   Partner with AI experts to solve clinical and delivery challenges.

d.   Simplify local data linkage and access policies and procedures in alignment with legislated mandates.

4 | Create partnerships that advance priority research

a.   Collaborate with institutes to leverage funding opportunities, access specialised skillsets and grow research capabilities across ISLHD.

b.   Develop avenues for community involvement in research.

c.   Leverage existing relationships with industry that provide access to clinical trials in our priority research areas.

5 | Engage the workforce in research

a.   Attract staff with a strong research track record to increase research activity and mentor junior staff.

b.   Develop adjunct and fellowship positions to create time for research.

c.   Communicate redefined outcomes for research including impacts to patients, broadened treatment options, policy and practice change and cost savings.

Outcome Measures

ISLHD will measure the benefits realised by research by setting baselines and then monitoring:

- Project specific outcomes, for example: hospital avoidance, decreased re-admissions.

- Policy and practice changes arising from research, including increases in non-admitted services delivered virtually.

- Cost savings from implementing and scaling up innovations.

- Accessibility of novel therapies to patients, for example through clinical trials.

- Year-on-year growth of clinical trials numbers, participants and funding.

- Optimisation of clinical services, achieved through application of research methodologies.

- Success achieved in applications to external grant schemes, co-designed with partners and consumers.

- Streamlined data access pathways, efficient analytics and data linkage.

- Formalised governance structures to support research activity.

- Number of translational research publications in peer reviewed journals.

- Achievement of research ethics and governance KPIs.

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