

# NSW Patient Survey Program Strategy

2019–2022





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# Background

## The power of patients' voices – strengthening accountability and informing improvement

### About BHI

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) is a board-governed statutory health corporation that produces independent reports and information about the performance of the healthcare system in NSW.

We provide this information to strengthen accountability and support system-wide and local improvement in patients' healthcare experiences and outcomes.

### About the NSW Patient Survey Program

BHI manages the NSW Patient Survey Program on behalf of NSW Health. Every year, this statewide program gives thousands of patients the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences of care in the health system and subsequent outcomes, using evidence-based, validated survey instruments.

The program is a key source of patient-reported measures (PRMs) for the health system. PRMs are critical to the systemic assessment of value in healthcare, as noted in the Australian Health Performance Framework (2017). In 2018, NSW Health developed a strategic framework to guide a more consistent system-wide approach to collecting and using PRMs to support value-based healthcare.

BHI analyses and reports on the results of every survey, providing statistically valid comparative and trend information for consumer, healthcare and policy audiences. Survey results are published and play an important role in holding the healthcare system to account. BHI is also able to use survey results alongside other data sources to provide in-depth analysis and insights for specific population groups, conditions or services.

Survey results enable people to learn what others have said about their experiences with local health services, and how well those services are doing.

The leaders of health services are able to see how they compare with other services and the impact of their improvement efforts over time, so as to inform future priorities.

NSW Health uses key survey results to monitor and manage local health district (LHD) performance, in line with the strategic system priority to improve the patient experience.

### This strategy

This strategy has been designed to ensure the NSW Patient Survey Program develops in ways that maximise its impact to the benefit of patients and deliver unique value for the NSW health system.

# Key facts and figures

BHI asked **270,000 patients** about their experiences in the NSW health system during 2017–18



Some surveys are run at regular intervals while the periods between others vary. Surveys are designed and timed to allow BHI to identify and report on the strengths and areas for improvement in the NSW healthcare system and provide benchmarking information to individual hospitals and LHDs in relation to their services.

BHI also contributes to multiple NSW Health programs by sharing our expertise in patient experience measurement, survey design and development, as well as the survey data for which we are custodian.

## 2018–19 Patient Surveys:



### Adult Admitted Patient Survey

This survey asks for feedback from people who have recently been admitted to a NSW public hospital.



### Emergency Department Patient Survey

This survey asks for feedback from people who have recently attended a public NSW emergency department.



### Admitted Children and Young Patients Survey

This survey asks children aged 0–17 years, or their parents, to rate their experiences of care during a recent admission to a NSW public hospital.



### Maternity Care Survey

The Maternity Care Survey asks women who recently gave birth in a NSW public hospital about the care they received.



### Small and Rural Hospitals Survey

This survey asks for feedback from people who have recently been admitted to one of the smaller NSW public hospitals, typically in rural locations.



### Small Hospital Emergency Care Survey

This survey asks for feedback from people who have recently attended an emergency department in one of the smaller NSW public hospitals, typically in rural locations.



### Outpatient Cancer Clinics Survey

This survey asks for feedback from people about their experiences attending an outpatient cancer clinic in NSW.

# Strategic context

## A changing landscape in NSW

The strong NSW Health policy focus on patient-centred care has resulted in rapid developments in PRMs in recent years. LHDs have increasingly been investing in staff and systems to improve patients' experiences, and there are multiple local initiatives to collect point-of-care feedback. In 2018, NSW Health published a Patient-Reported Measures Framework. A new statewide Health Outcomes and Patient Experience (HOPE) system, designed to gather 'real-time' patient feedback at the point of care, is being developed as part of NSW Health's Leading Better Value Care and Integrated Care programs.

The HOPE system will create a new statewide data asset. It will also contribute to the Registry of Outcomes, Value and Experience (ROVE), a public health registry containing linked administrative data, clinical data and PRMs, which include BHI survey data.

## Broader trends

Technology is accelerating the potential for more sophisticated patient feedback collection, analysis and reporting. Here, and in other jurisdictions, we are seeing a proliferation of feedback mechanisms and the development of online reporting platforms.

Health services expect, and are expected, to understand and rapidly respond to patient feedback. Health systems are increasingly incorporating systematic comparative PRMs in formal performance management and payment mechanisms. These developments create challenges for managers and clinicians seeking to use these data in effective and integrated ways.

At the same time, there is a real risk of growing 'survey fatigue' among consumers. Indeed, in common with similar patient survey programs elsewhere, we see challenges in maintaining survey response rates.

Nevertheless, there remain aspects of patients' experiences and their views on outcomes, about which the health system and health services need to know more, both in relation to specific population groups and parts of patients' journeys, for example their transitions between services.

## Long term directions

With these trends in mind, and taking into account lessons and experiences elsewhere, we might expect the directions over a five or ten year horizon to include:

- agile systems for collection, analysis and reporting to fulfil the principle of 'collect once, use many times'
- greater alignment around sets of consistent core questions for use and re-use at local, state and national level
- greater use and analysis of patient comments, with online comments and replies becoming the norm
- continued need for robust longitudinal and comparative PRMs for the system and healthcare organisations – as well as rapid-cycle feedback at the local and clinical level
- digital collection of feedback becoming standard – though other methods will remain important for some groups
- significant steps forward in the availability and use of linked data to generate key insights on the quality of care and patient outcomes.

## Shaping this three year strategy

This strategy aims to redefine the role and unique contribution of the NSW Patient Survey Program in this contemporary landscape over the next three years. Given the complexity and changing nature of the environment, we expect to review the strategy after one year.

BHI's *Strategic Plan 2019–2022* provides context for this strategy, which has also been informed by internal operational reviews and a scan of developments and challenges in similar programs nationally and internationally.

*BHI aims to maximise our impact on behalf of NSW patients and communities, and enhance our value to the NSW health system*

This strategy has been driven by extensive input from a wide range of stakeholders as part of BHI's strategic plan development, our annual external stakeholder survey and subsequently through targeted follow-up on the patient survey program.

This engagement included directors of clinical governance, patient experience leads and consumer participation managers in LHDs, policy leads in the NSW Ministry of Health, pillar agencies, consumer representatives and others. A strategy advisory group helped shape our thinking.

## Strategic opportunities

Consistent messages emerged from our conversations with stakeholders:

- the value placed on the robustness and reliability of the benchmarks and trends BHI provides
- opportunities to improve the timeliness of reporting
- opportunities to enhance the usefulness and useability of reporting, tailored for specific audiences and in different formats
- confusion about the specific purposes and value of different approaches to gathering patient feedback, particularly in the context of increasing 'real-time' or point-of-care collections.

Stakeholders also expressed strong demand for:

- program enhancements to focus on timely information, priority populations and health system issues
- rigorous focus on information of value – 'less is sometimes more'
- more analysis and insights using linked survey and administrative data
- BHI to leverage its expertise in patient survey design and analysis for the system.

# Delivering distinct and complementary value

The NSW Patient Survey Program plays a role that is distinct from, but complementary to, other patient feedback programs.

The distinctive features of the survey program that set it apart from other initiatives in 2018 include:

- systematically-collected feedback that is representative of the performance of LHDs, hospitals and services, and key patient populations
- statistically-valid benchmarks and trends at the system and hospital level
- reflections on whole episodes of care, including aspects of pre- and post-discharge experiences and outcomes
- collection takes place after the experience of care and independently from it
- production of the patient experience key performance indicators included in LHD performance agreements
- public reporting of results.

The survey program specifically serves system- and service-level purposes, providing data to support accountability and the assessment of performance, and informing the identification of improvement priorities across hospitals and districts. It is not designed to inform clinicians in caring for individual patients nor to drive rapid-cycle local improvement.

The survey program supports improvement efforts by periodically providing robust and reliable data. This allows boards, executives, service managers, consumer representatives and the Ministry of Health and its pillar agencies to monitor trends and benchmark performance across services and over time. These trends and benchmarks support and provide context for real-time or point-of-care collections. They provide an independent gauge of the relative performance and impact of local improvement efforts and inform the focus of ongoing efforts.

Ultimately these distinctive features help the survey program play its part in ensuring patients' voices drive positive change in people's healthcare experiences and outcomes.

# Frequently asked questions

## Why do we need the patient survey program if we have real-time feedback?

The term 'real-time feedback' refers to a number of distinct mechanisms, including the collection of feedback at the point of care or shortly thereafter. This may include:

- the collection of feedback at the point of care while patients are on site
- the provision of patient feedback to care providers on demand (and sometimes in near-real time).

## Statistically-valid benchmarks and trends

The collection of feedback at the point of care, or for example via online comment platforms, plays an important role in informing local improvement activity, especially if results can be made available to clinicians and managers on demand. It is unlikely to generate results that are representative of patient populations, unless or until collected at very high volumes or in a way that targets specific patient groups. This means it cannot always provide statistically-valid benchmarks for hospitals and LHDs.

However, periodic benchmarks and trends derived from the survey program may be valuable in shaping the kind of feedback collected more frequently and routinely at local level, and in gauging the impact of local improvement efforts over time.

## A 'settled view'

Inviting feedback after the fact allows patients to come to a 'settled view' on their experiences and outcomes – acknowledging that while they remain in care, some patients may be reluctant to comment on, for example, their confidence in their doctors or nurses. Moreover, some questions can only be answered after a patient has left hospital or completed an episode of care, for example questions about what happened post-discharge. It is also possible to ask patients

questions about what happened prior to a hospital admission. This intelligence may highlight issues that are amenable to action by the hospital.

## In-depth insights

As currently conceived, most point-of-care data collections ask patients a limited number of questions. Retrospective surveys can include more questions to explore particular aspects of care in more depth. Such in-depth insights are more useful on a periodic basis, so frequent or routine feedback may be less appropriate.

## Why can BHI not give us real-time patient experience data?

The core purpose of the survey program is to provide statistically-valid benchmarks and trends and this means responses need to be collected in sufficient quantity to be representative of patient populations for each hospital. The purpose of the program is not to provide rapid granular data to inform ward-level improvement activity, nor the care trajectory for an individual patient.

There will always be some lag in the availability of results from the survey program. This time is required for sampling to take place so that results are representative, and for patients to submit their feedback after they have left the hospital or health service. Nevertheless, BHI is committed to progressively reducing the lag between data collection and the provision of statistically-valid benchmarks and trend information to the community, healthcare leaders and policy makers.

# Our strategy for 2019–2022

# NSW Patient Survey Program Strategy 2019–2022

## Our vision

### Trusted information. Informed decision. Improved healthcare.

Patients' voices drive positive change in healthcare experiences and outcomes.

BHI is recognised as a NSW centre of expertise in the design, analysis and reporting of patient-reported measures (PRMs).

## Our purpose

### Provide comparative information about patients' experiences and outcomes to strengthen accountability and inform improvement

The NSW Patient Survey Program provides information to the community, healthcare leaders and policy makers that enables fair comparison at hospital and system level, over time and across representative patient populations.

Statistically-valid benchmarks and trends enhance transparency and accountability for the performance of the healthcare system and inform improvement priorities.

## Our strategic priorities for 2019–2022

We aim to maximise our impact on behalf of NSW patients and communities, and enhance our value as a NSW Health pillar organisation.

### Maintain the robust and representative nature of surveys

We will preserve the rigour of our evidence-based and validated survey approaches and ensure results enable fair comparison between hospitals and over time.

### Improve the timeliness of data collection and reporting

We will optimise approaches to data collection, processing and analysis to ensure timely, routine reporting, while exploiting the value of collecting representative, retrospective feedback from patients.

### Make survey results more useful in informing improvement

We will respond to stakeholder needs for concise and useable routine reporting. In our in-depth reporting, we will use advanced analytics and linked data to provide richer insights for specific topics or populations.

### Strengthen engagement, marketing and communications

We will make effective use of engagement, marketing and communication to encourage survey participation, ensure we measure what matters to each of our audiences and promote the use of survey results.

### Ensure effective program governance and management

We will be accountable for effective delivery of the survey program, engaging key stakeholders in shaping its direction and overseeing its value and impact.

### Leverage the value of BHI's data and our expertise in PRMs design and analysis

We aim to make a valued contribution to the effective collection and use of PRMs in the NSW health system to support value-based healthcare, in line with our position as a centre of expertise on patient experience measurement, analysis and reporting and as the data custodian for the survey program.

# NSW Patient Survey Program Strategy 2019–2022

Key strategies			
Survey design	Data collection	Data analysis	Reporting
<b>Maintain the robust and representative nature of surveys</b>			
<p>Review survey length and structure to minimise burden on patients and maximise the value of results.</p> <p>Tailor survey methods to reach priority populations and services.</p>	<p>Optimise data collection methods to sustain or improve survey participation rates.</p>	<p>Maintain rigorous data governance standards.</p>	
<b>Improve the timeliness of data collection and reporting</b>			
	<p>Reduce time lag from episode of care to survey.</p> <p>Minimise data collection periods while maintaining representative sampling.</p>	<p>Automate routine processing.</p> <p>Simplify and standardise approach to sampling and weighting.</p>	<p>Establish a more regular and predictable cycle for timely, routine reporting.</p> <p>Leverage digital technologies for more timely and accessible reporting.</p>
<b>Make survey results more useful in informing improvement</b>			
<p>Review survey content and focus to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>capture pre- and post-discharge experiences and outcomes</li> <li>complement and add value to real-time feedback initiatives</li> <li>tailor modules for different topics and patient groups.</li> </ul> <p>Align survey development with strategic system priorities and stakeholders' information needs.</p>		<p>Standardise survey results to better support fair comparison.</p> <p>Increase the use of survey data in more advanced analytics, including use of linked data, to generate greater insights.</p> <p>Improve analysis and integrated reporting of patients' free-text comments.</p>	<p>Shift the emphasis of routine reporting towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hospital summaries</li> <li>trends over time</li> <li>identifying leading hospitals for performance or speed of improvement.</li> </ul> <p>Use advanced analytics and reporting with linked survey, clinical and administrative data to provide in-depth insights into care and outcomes for specific populations, conditions and services.</p>

## Key strategies

### Strengthen engagement, marketing and communications

- Review survey marketing to improve response rates.
- Design ways to 'close the feedback loop' for survey respondents.
- More actively promote survey results to encourage use and action.
- Support data literacy and capability development to use and act on survey results.
- Engage key stakeholders in task groups to support strategy implementation.

### Ensure effective program governance and management

- The BHI Board provides oversight for the program, ensuring it: contributes to the overall aims and strategic directions of BHI; delivers value for money and operates within budget; and aligns with our functions as determined by the NSW Minister for Health.
- A new NSW Patient Survey Program Strategy Committee will advise the chief executive on program planning and prioritisation in line with this strategy. Membership will include senior representatives from the Ministry of Health, local health district (LHD) executives, pillars and consumer representatives.

### Leverage the value of BHI's data and its expertise in PRMs design, analysis and reporting

- Advise colleagues in the NSW health system on PRMs design, question selection, survey development and analysis.
- Respond to requests for bespoke surveys, oversampling or other expert analytic support in relation to strategic system needs, subject to appropriate planning and prioritisation and the availability of resources.
- As data custodian for NSW Patient Survey Program data, actively promote and enable secondary use of the data to support research and analytics that contribute to improving patients' experiences and outcomes.

# Implementing the strategy

The NSW Patient Survey Program is large and complex. At any given time there are multiple surveys in the field and in development. Implementing the changes signposted in this strategy requires careful planning and management so as to ensure the program continues to deliver value.

We will convene a new NSW Patient Survey Program Strategy Committee to advise the chief executive on program planning and prioritisation in line with this document.

In 2018, BHI has already responded with a number of early initiatives:

- developing core sets of patient-reported experience measures (PREMs) questions for inpatient, outpatient and emergency department patient surveys for inclusion in the Health Outcomes and Patient Experience (HOPE) program and use in 2019
- developing standardisation methods for inpatient and emergency department survey results for use in 2019
- developing more meaningful adult admitted patient experience key performance indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks for use by the Ministry of Health in LHD service agreements in 2018–19
- introducing short form reports for timely, routine reporting of survey results at NSW level.





## About the Bureau of Health Information

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) is a board-governed organisation that provides independent information about the performance of the NSW healthcare system.

BHI was established in 2009 and supports the accountability of the healthcare system by providing regular and detailed information to the community, government and healthcare professionals. This in turn supports quality improvement by highlighting how well the healthcare system is functioning and where there are opportunities to improve.

BHI manages the NSW Patient Survey Program, gathering information from patients about their experiences and outcomes of care in public hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

BHI publishes a range of reports and information products, including interactive tools, that provide objective, accurate and meaningful information about how the health system is performing.

BHI's work relies on the efforts of a wide range of healthcare, data and policy experts. All of our assessment efforts leverage the work of hospital coders, analysts, technicians and healthcare providers who gather, codify and supply data. Our public reporting of performance information is enabled and enhanced by the infrastructure, expertise and stewardship provided by colleagues from NSW Health and its pillar organisations.

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