



Executive Summary



About the Child and Adolescent Health Service

The Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) is Western Australia's (WA) only dedicated health service provider for infants, children and young people.

CAHS is made up four service areas: **Neonatology**, **Community Health**, **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**, and **Perth Children's Hospital (PCH)**.

CAHS offers a range of services that support children from birth to young adulthood – from caring for them when they are sick, to helping them to have their best health possible. Our services are delivered at PCH and King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH), and at more than 170 community clinics throughout the metropolitan area in schools and homes. This ensures that many aspects of the care that we provide are accessible close to where children and families live.

CAHS is proud to support a diverse WA community. Our workforce, and many of the children and young people to whom we provide care, come from different backgrounds and parts of WA.

We respect, value and embrace this diversity, and see it as a key strength for our health service. As we look to the future, we will continue to work towards building a better and more united CAHS for children, young people and the WA community.

Neonatology

Neonatology provides statewide specialised neonatal services to meet the needs of newborn babies and infants who need specialist treatment in the first months of life. Neonatology operates neonatal intensive care units at PCH and KEMH, and the Newborn Emergency Transport Service, a mobile intensive care unit.



Community Health

Community Health provides a comprehensive range of community-based early identification and intervention services to children, young people and their families across the Perth metropolitan area.



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CAMHS provides specialist public mental health community services across the Perth metropolitan area, and statewide inpatient and specialised services for children and adolescents with moderate to severe and complex mental health conditions.



Perth Children's Hospital

PCH is WA's only dedicated paediatric hospital. It provides medical care to children and adolescents who are 15 years old or under. The hospital provides inpatient, ambulatory and outpatient services, and is WA's only paediatric trauma centre.



The year at a glance



Neonatology

3,014

neonatal hospital admissions

13

days average length of stay

1,020

neonatal emergency transports

338

pre-term infants received a total of

1,053

litres of donor milk



Community Health

114,953

child health assessments

26,049

school entry health assessments (2022)

35,154

unique children received services from the Child Development Service

133,487

immunisations (2022)



CAMHS

125,251

service contacts with **4,676** young people seen

2,362

mental health Emergency Department presentations

439

inpatient unit separations

Crisis Connect

9,537

calls responded to with an average of **15** calls per day

2,333

mental health assessments in the Emergency Department or via telehealth

1,424

follow up calls after a mental health assessment



PCH

70,131

Emergency Department attendances

34,247

hospital admissions

15,669

surgeries performed

313,663

outpatient appointments for **65,977** patients

Why we exist

We serve all children and young people across WA so they can achieve their best health and wellbeing, now and into the future.

The way we work

We have established four guiding principles that we apply to everything we do and every decision we make. They are central to how we implement our strategic plan and underpin our eight strategic priority areas.

Child first

We place children, young people, and their families first and foremost in everything we do. We adopt a person-centred approach where we partner with children, young people, and their families to provide care and support that is tailored to their needs, preferences and values.

Safety and quality

We do not compromise the safety and quality of the care we provide. We provide care that is culturally, psychologically and physically safe, and of high quality. We are committed to ensuring that all children and young people receive the best care possible.

Professionalism

We always hold ourselves to the highest possible standards. We take ownership of our performance and work hard to continuously improve how we do things at CAHS. We do this by holding ourselves to account, being transparent, listening and acting on consumer feedback, and providing open and honest feedback to each other.

Sustainability

We strive to use our resources responsibly. We use all our resources wisely and are committed to embedding financially and environmentally sustainable work practices for the benefit of future generations.



Strategic priorities and values

CAHS Strategic Plan 2023–2025

The [CAHS Strategic Plan 2023–2025](#) was released in November 2022. It includes eight priority areas of equal importance.

We will focus on eight priorities:



Person-centred care

We will meaningfully engage and partner with children, young people, and their families. We will place them at the centre of every decision and provide care that is based on their needs and preferences.



Inclusivity, diversity and equity

We will respect, embrace and champion the diversity of our community. We will uphold equal opportunity and we will not tolerate racism or discrimination. Our care will be culturally safe and inclusive for people who are Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+ or who have disability, and we will work towards equal health outcomes.



Organisational culture

We will continue to shape our culture so we live our values, realise our aspirations, and create a workplace where our people feel safe, included, respected, and valued.



High performance

We will continuously improve how we work by setting clearer expectations, strengthening our clinical governance, and better using data, benchmarking and performance reporting.



Prevention and early intervention

We will lead and deliver integrated, multi-disciplinary, and cross-sector initiatives that target prevention and early intervention for all children and young people, and particularly in Aboriginal health and mental health.



Workforce capability, capacity and development

We will plan for and grow a sustainable workforce whose skills and experiences are harnessed in the best possible way, and create an environment where our people can sustain a balanced work and personal life.



Contemporary models of care

We will plan and implement models of care that are informed by children, young people, and their families, and are grounded in leading practice, research, evidence, and data.



External partnerships

We will develop and maintain mutually beneficial external partnerships to collectively achieve better health outcomes for children and young people.

Accountability

Our values

Our values are the promises we make to our consumers, our colleagues, our partners, and the broader community. They define who we are, what we stand for and how we behave.

Our values are:

Accountability

Respect

Compassion

Equity

Excellence

Collaboration

We take responsibility for our actions and do what we say we will

CAHS is committed to a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

Consumer feedback is a valuable component of the quality improvement cycle. The effective management of consumer and carer complaints is an important mechanism for obtaining this feedback. We consider and respond to individual complaints and explore themes and trends to target service improvements to address issues that are most important to our consumers.

Engaging with consumers has led to some key improvements to our services this period, which focus on enhancing the child and family experience, and person-centred care. We also incorporate consumer feedback into staff education and training across the service areas.

Improved coordination of care

Coordination of care for families of children with complex care needs is critical to facilitate access and continuity of care, particularly those requiring care across multiple specialities, and families travelling from regional areas.

The following improvements have been achieved in response to consumer feedback:

- Referral of a family from a regional location to the Connect Care Program for Kids to assist with the coordination of care for a child with complex needs.
- Identification of central points of contact across a range of specialties to effectively respond to questions and concerns families may have about their child's clinical care and treatment.
- Appointment of a Clinical Nurse Specialist as a point of contact for all patients with histiocytic disorders.

Improved communication

Communication between families and clinicians is critical in providing safe care to infants, children and young people. CAHS has focused on strategies to enhance communication between staff and families in response to feedback from consumers:

- Development and implementation of Creating a Service Based Culture training program which aims to strengthen the capacity of staff to communicate and partner with consumers. The program was designed in collaboration with the Consumer Engagement team, Consumer Advisory Council, Youth Advisory Council, Emergency Department and Health Information and Administration Service and has now been incorporated into our regular training calendar.
- Ongoing education and training about recognising and responding to parental concern about clinical deterioration.

Respect

We value others and treat others as we wish to be treated

Everyone is welcome at CAHS, where diversity is valued and respected.

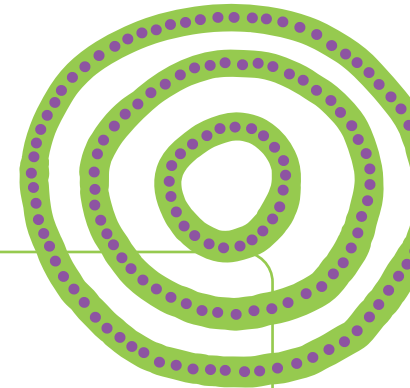
One of CAHS' strategic priorities is a commitment to ensuring that the care we deliver is inclusive, supportive and welcoming, and minimises the potential for discrimination.

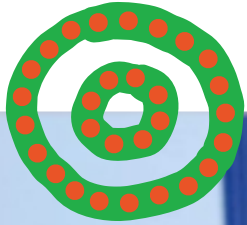
CAHS recognises more work is required to achieve the breadth of inclusivity, diversity and equity that will deliver excellence and equity in health care for all. See [page 58](#) for more information.



Some key initiatives in the past 12 months are:

- Launch of our first Reconciliation Action Plan ([see page 52](#)).
- Formation of the Multicultural Action Committee ([see page 212](#)).
- A schedule of events to acknowledge and promote diversity and inclusion, including Harmony Week.
- Introduction of volunteer badges showing languages spoken other than English.
- More inclusive recruitment and retention practices, and delivered grand rounds and training sessions about working with consumers and carers from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The first CAHS Pride Awareness Network, made up of LGBTIQ+ staff and allies across CAHS services.
- A new LGBTIQ+ intranet hub with information, training and resources for staff.
- New welcoming signage at PCH that includes “welcome” in various multicultural languages (pictured), and flags that represent the various LGBTIQ+ communities.
- New email signature blocks for staff that include the statement “Everyone is welcome at CAHS, where diversity is valued and respected”, LGBTIQ+ flag colours and pronouns.
- Hosting of the Freedom Centre to deliver an online staff “lunch and learn”.
- Consumer-led welcoming audit on CAMHS sites undertaken by the CAMHS Lived Experience Group.
- Roll-out of pronoun badges.
- Staff celebrations for Wear It Purple Day in August 2022.
- Celebration of International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.





Compassion

We treat others with empathy and kindness

CAHS staff care for children and families at their most vulnerable, and we strive to deliver better outcomes and experiences for every person we serve.

This compliment was posted on the Care Opinion page in June 2023 (see [page 77](#) for more examples)

“

To the amazing nurses, doctors and staff at PCH - from the bottom of my heart - thank you!

Recently my almost 3 month old baby was admitted to PCH for three days with Influenza A. Having a sick newborn is never easy but the care, professionalism and empathy provided by the wonderful staff at PCH was simply incredible.

From the fast triage in the Emergency Department, to the number of tests performed to ensure correct diagnosis and careful monitoring of my baby's vitals, the care provided was brilliant. When it was determined that my baby needed to be admitted, a room was found suitable to accommodate a breastfeeding parent.

After discharge, we received a follow-up phone call and a prescription was emailed to our local pharmacy - ensuring our baby received the important medicine he needed in a timely and efficient way.

I can only imagine how difficult it is dealing with sick babies and children and worried parents on a daily basis. This is especially true in this difficult winter season with the flu having such a devastating impact. However the staff at PCH carry themselves with such grace, good humour and expertise.

I sincerely hope we don't find our family back at PCH soon, but if we do there is great comfort in knowing we will receive world class care.

”

Equity

We are inclusive, respect diversity and aim to overcome disadvantage

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly reduced contact with Community Health immunisation programs, which led to lower National Immunisation Program vaccine uptake.

As part of a dedicated child vaccination catch-up project, a mobile team worked to engage with harder-to-reach consumers in Perth metropolitan areas with low vaccination uptake. The project team offered catch-up vaccinations via home and school visits, and through collaboration with internal and external immunisation providers.

Aboriginal children are a key target cohort for the mobile team, as delayed vaccination is more common among this group. Timely immunisation is considered a key requirement in closing the gap in vaccination rates between Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal children.

There has also been a continued focus on addressing vaccine hesitancy and improving COVID-19 vaccination uptake in ethnolinguistically diverse populations. The PCH Refugee Health Service team has completed an audit that demonstrates baseline low levels of COVID-19 vaccination for both five to 12 year and 12 to 18 year cohorts. This data highlights the importance of embedding immunisation provision in our models of care, and synergies between hospital and the community refugee health team.

COVID-19 vaccination education was undertaken using interpreters and printed translated information. Families accessed vaccination through the Stan Perron Immunisation Centre at PCH, or in the community by the Community Health team in primary care or vaccination centres.

The PCH Refugee Health Service team successfully increased overall COVID-19 vaccination levels to above the WA median vaccination rate within one month of clinical interaction during the audit period.



Excellence

We take pride in what we do, strive to learn and ensure exceptional service every time

Commencing clinical services in October 2022, the Rare Care Centre (the Centre) aims to improve the lives of the 63,000 children and adolescents and their families living with rare and undiagnosed diseases (RUD) in WA.

The Centre works to identify the unmet needs of patients and their families, helps them find the right care and coordinate that care to reduce the burden on children, parents and carers. The Centre brings key sectors together to form one team that families can access, including genetic counselling, Aboriginal health, primary care, mental health and wellbeing, school education, tertiary care, welfare, care coordination, National Disability Insurance Scheme, and the Department of Communities.

In the first year, the Centre has prioritised integrating new and existing digital technologies to create a unique patient summary called the Rare Disease Visual Summary. The summary conveys key information about the child's rare disease in an easy-to-understand format and reduces the need for the family to continually repeat the information. The summary is for use by medical teams, education staff, community therapists and in-home support providers.

Other key achievements by the Centre include the provision of wellbeing education and support for families, reduced hospital attendances through coordinated outpatient appointments and supporting care closer to home though connecting families to local general practitioners.

The Centre has an ongoing commitment to increased understanding of, and sharing knowledge about, rare and undiagnosed diseases. This commitment has been supported through the establishment of a global nursing network for rare diseases and upskilling of general practitioners with early diagnosis and referral pathway resources, and disease management.

Click [here](#) to view the Rare Care Centre Impact report 2022-2023



Collaboration

We work together with others to learn and continuously improve our service

In March 2023 we launched our Neurodiversity Care Program.

This is part of a series of new initiatives to help children with autism and other neurodiverse conditions have a more positive experience in the PCH Emergency Department (ED).

This program was initiated in collaboration with a parent who had used consumer feedback mechanisms to share her experience of attending the ED with her child who has autism. The ED team met with the parent and child to workshop strategies to specifically improve the care of neurodiverse children.

CAHS also consulted with Autism WA and the CAHS Youth Advisory Council to develop the program, which recognises that the ED environment can add extra stress for neurodiverse children, young people and families.

The Keeping Kids in No Distress (Occupational Therapy) and Social Work teams collaborated with ED staff to develop a program which includes neurodiversity care plans, social stories and sensory tools. A questionnaire for parents or carers informs clinical staff how best to communicate with and care for their child and respect their individual needs and comfort.

Families receive wallet-sized cards that they can show at triage to indicate that a care plan exists to support the child's journey through the ED. The triage nurse can immediately instigate the care plan and give families the tools or environment they need to keep their child comfortable and safe.

There is a new range of sensory equipment available to help children regulate their behaviour, such as weighted blankets, fidget toys, noise cancelling headphones and wiggly cushions.



Our people

More than 6,500 people choose to work for CAHS across Neonatology, Community Health, CAMHS and PCH.

CAHS aims to provide an open and inclusive workplace culture where diversity is valued and the cultural backgrounds and uniqueness of all employees, volunteers, patients, families and visitors are respected. We respect, embrace and champion the diversity of our workforce and the community we serve.



6,533

Headcount/people



103

Aboriginal employees



4,646.5

Full Time Equivalent (FTE)



73

Employees with a disability



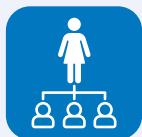
3,059

Part-time employees



813

Employees from a cultural and linguistically diverse background



31

Women in leadership



521

Employees younger than 30



Volunteers

CAHS is fortunate to have a dedicated team of more than 400 volunteers, who provide approximately 750 hours each week in support of our health service.

In 2022-23 our volunteers provided 32,500 hours of support which equates to \$1.3 million in value.

This diverse group range in age from 18 to 92 and have been volunteering at PCH (and formerly Princess Margaret Hospital) for up to 42 years. More than 100 of our volunteers speak a language other than English, with over 40 languages represented.

The volunteers play a critical role in helping families navigate the hospital system with as much ease and as little stress as possible, as well as providing support for our clinical staff. The PCH volunteers are based in the Emergency Department, wards, theatres, Friendship Room, outpatients and main reception. They drive the shuttle buses from the carpark to PCH, and serve at some Community Health sites and at Neonatology at KEMH. Volunteers also accompany therapy dogs, such as Winston (pictured) to provide comfort to our patients.

CAHS is grateful for the time the volunteers give for the benefit of patients, clients and families across our health service.



Friendship Room

The Friendship Room at PCH opened in November 2022. It is open 24 hours per day and is staffed by volunteers 12 hours a day every weekday, and for eight hours every Saturday and Sunday.

Volunteers provide compassionate support along with tea, coffee and biscuits to families waiting for their child's surgery.

A big thank you to the CAHS Infrastructure team for delivering on this important project for PCH families.

“

I wanted to send my appreciation for the new friendship room that has been set up at theatre for parents. It is long overdue and an amazing space to wait and sit privately. We have needed this since our son has been born, with me working in Charlie's and wanting a private space so thank you to the nurses who I believe have pushed for this service. It is warmly welcomed!!

”





Message from the Board Chair

Dr Rosanna Capolingua AM
Child and Adolescent Health Service



“ I am humbled by the needs and circumstances of our patients, clients and families, and am inspired by the teams across CAHS that respond to those needs. ”

We produce an annual report every year and it is a time to reflect on the service we have provided to the children and young people of WA, and consider how we are always striving to respond to the diverse needs of those in our care. We operate in a COVID “normal” environment, which includes heightened infection control, ongoing need for more staff sick leave hours, and ongoing shortages in work force. At the same time we pursue our cultural transformation and our drive for continuous improvement.

The Board of CAHS is immensely proud of the many episodes of healthcare service that our staff deliver every day. There are exceptional stories of life saving and life changing clinical and surgical interventions, and the every minute stories of compassion and understanding that occur within the virtual and solid walls of CAHS services across Perth Children’s Hospital (PCH) and Neonatology, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Community Health. We do this together with our staff, volunteers and key partners. I am humbled by the needs and circumstances of our patients, clients and families, and am inspired by the teams across CAHS that respond to those needs.

The CAHS Board works closely with the newly appointed Chief Executive and the refreshed Executive team. Together, we are committed to CAHS being a safe, trusted, and professional leader in child and adolescent health and wellbeing. To do this we must partner with our young people and families in order to best meet their needs.

We hold the unique position as the state’s only dedicated paediatric hospital and health service. Across early intervention through our community services in the postnatal period, child health checks, school-based community health nurses and immunisation, to our community mental health services touching so many young people with suboptimal mental health, we have a great responsibility to be able to respond and support families in the crucial years of child growth and development. All these intersections with children and young people make a difference to their health and wellbeing in the immediate time and through into their adult life.

PCH is the tertiary and quaternary paediatric hospital in the state and provides acute care for the most complex of conditions and ongoing care

for the many who have lifelong needs that require monitoring, treatment, support and intervention. The multidisciplinary excellence that delivers that care quite rightly comes with huge responsibility and accountability. This cannot be achieved without the CAHS staff and volunteers who are tireless in their commitment to those in our care. I am deeply grateful to them, and workforce always remains a priority.

The Board has focused on our nursing colleagues and ensuring they feel valued and heard. Our medical workforce needs to be viewed not just as “what do we need today”, but also looking into how we continue to build CAHS as a centre of excellence into the future by bringing back our brightest and best to serve the children of Western Australia. This includes our allied health professions who are integral to the wellbeing of young people.

We as a Board insist on hearing the voices of our children and young people and that of their carers and families. This applies not just to the clinical care experience and outcome, but also to the interactions with our people, the provision of food and facility, communication and convenience.



Wait times, how people are spoken to, unconscious bias, cancellations, accessibility to meals, complaints and across the spectrum of experiences for those in our care, we strive to do better. Every Board meeting agenda starts with a “consumer moment”, and the Consumer Advisory and Youth Advisory Council meeting minutes with or without the Chairs of those valued Councils joining the Board. We thank the CAC and YAC for their amazing work and contribution to making us do things better.

Our services and programs involve families in service design and seek their views in a multitude of ways. This is something we will continue to build on so that we are always, truly partnering with children and families.

We communicate openly with families when the care we provide fails to meet the high standards we set for ourselves and that the community expect from us. It is critical that we continue to learn from every opportunity. The Board continues its focus on quality and safety and our culture of continuous improvement. We have extended the scope of our Clinical Advisory Group so that we have open communication with clinical staff across our health service.

The inquest into the tragic death of a young person who had accessed care through CAMHS took place in May and I acknowledge how immeasurably challenging this is for the family. I also thank them for the respectful way that they have passionately advocated for system change while grieving the loss of their daughter.



Demands on our mental health services, like those across Australia and internationally, have increased in both volume and acuity. This has been intensified by a shortage of skilled and experienced staff, again, in line with other jurisdictions and within the adult sector.

We will work with the Department of Health and Mental Health Commission and bring to life our role in the recommendations from the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents. Our focus is on the provision of safe, high quality and contemporary mental health services. We continue to innovate our services to respond to the needs of the community.

Our staff are integral and every day demonstrate their incredible dedication and commitment to caring across a spectrum of mental health needs in the community and at PCH.

Following the Coronial Inquest into the death of Aishwarya Aswath in August last year, the Deputy State Coroner released the findings in February 2023. Our health service has remained focused on implementing and evaluating the recommendations from the three separate inquiries and the significant changes across CAHS continue as Aishwarya’s enduring legacy.

The CAHS Strategic Plan 2023–2025, was launched in November 2022. It sets us on a path of renewal and growth with eight strategic priority areas clearly defined. It makes some brave calls about how we can do things better and sets the direction for our health service over the next three years with very clear re-articulation that our focus is on the experience and clinical outcomes for children, young people and families.

The Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to being a safe, trusted, and professional leader in child and adolescent health and wellbeing, which truly partners with children and young people to best meet their needs.

Our values remain central to all of our work, together with the four guiding principles outlined in the Strategic Plan: child first, safety and quality, professionalism and sustainability.

While I reflect on the past year I can see the steps we have taken to improve the way we holistically provide care, and improve the way we partner with children and families. We are striving to be supportive of our diverse communities, and call out unconscious bias that can affect the way those in our care can engage with us and adversely affect their clinical outcomes. Bias can occur to our Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, to children with a disability, those who are neurodivergent and those with mental health needs. You can see that these are often the most vulnerable.

We are striving to better wrap our services around each child that we care for, but particularly those most in need. I want to acknowledge our Refugee Health Service and the outstanding essential care they provide for the complex needs of these children.

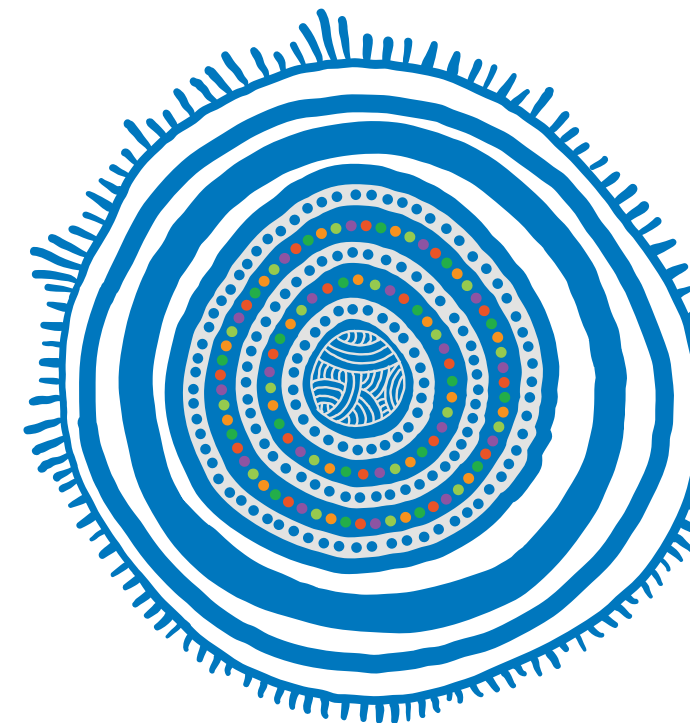
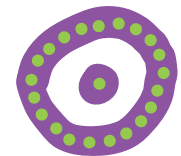
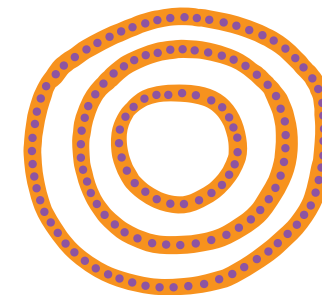
There is still much to do. As Chair of CAHS and on behalf of the Board, my commitment is that we will continue to challenge, reflect, learn, respond and plan for the future in a framework of excellence with our patients, clients and families, together.

We are also committed to actively developing and maintaining mutually beneficial external partnerships, advocating for the health and wellbeing of children and young people in WA.

I am humbled by the progress we have made together as CAHS, and tremendously inspired by the work ahead of us as we move forward on our path of renewal, excellence and continued growth.

Dr Rosanna Capolingua AM

Board Chair
Child and Adolescent Health Service





Message from the Chief Executive

Valerie Jovanovic
Child and Adolescent Health Service



“ I am committed to encouraging collaboration and supporting our health service to grow stronger, together. ”

It gives me great pleasure to present the Child and Adolescent Health Service 2022-23 Annual Report.

When I reflect on the past year through the celebrations within this report, I am humbled and proud to be leading this flagship paediatric health service. I am so grateful to every member of the CAHS team who continue to put the wellbeing of children and families at the heart of everything they do.

We respect the enormous responsibility that comes with being the state's only dedicated paediatric health service, and have continued our efforts to improve the way we provide care, the way we partner with children and families, and nurture our diverse communities.

Our culture heavily influences the wellbeing of our staff and the performance of our service. I am deeply passionate and committed to living our values, realising our aspirations and creating a workplace where our people feel safe, included respected and valued.

There is great strength in our collective efforts and our shared commitments, and I am committed to encouraging collaboration and supporting our health service to grow stronger, together.

I look forward to releasing the CAHS Operational Plan, which will bring to life the eight strategic priorities set out in our Strategic Plan. It will provide a clear path for strengthening our foundations and delivering on our purpose of serving all children and young people across WA so they can achieve their best health and wellbeing.

Providing children and young people with the highest standards of care requires efforts far beyond the scope of our health service. I would like to acknowledge our many external partners, and valuable contributions of our volunteer workforce in supporting our clinicians to deliver the very best care and for making a meaningful difference to the lives of children and families who access our services.

We truly understand the importance in always listening to the children and families we care for, and have continued to strengthen this focus over the past 12 months. We actively seek to involve families and hear their views to help us evolve our services to better meet their needs.

I look forward to the future with confidence as we work together to deliver on our commitment to being a safe, trusted, and professional leader in child and adolescent health and wellbeing, which truly partners with children and young people to best meet their needs.

Valerie Jovanovic

Chief Executive
Child and Adolescent Health Service

