



Significant challenges

# Inpatient mental health care



## Ward 5A redevelopment

A significant improvement to WA's only inpatient mental health ward for children and adolescents is being planned. Ward 5A provides voluntary and involuntary treatment and support for children and teenagers up to 16 years of age who are experiencing complex and acute mental health issues.

Our multi-disciplinary team provides essential care with compassion and respect, working to keep our patients safe, build trust, help the young person and their family make choices and become empowered about their treatment, and collaborate with them on their recovery plan. We have developed a contemporary model of care with oversight from an external consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist, and engagement from stakeholders, including consumers and families (see page 64).

The existing physical environment is better suited to low-acuity care and does not provide adequate therapeutic space to deliver the contemporary model of care and safely manage young people accessing the service.

The State Government has committed \$21.881 million to improving the ward environment so young people and their families feel safe and supported in our service. Other changes include restructuring the Allied Health team and increasing in the number of FTE clinical nurse specialists. This ensures more senior, experienced staff are available to support patients, and we now have a senior mental health nurse on call to manage patient safety after hours.

Further work has been done to strengthen risk identification, escalation pathways and handover procedures. The daily group and activity program has also been strengthened.

# Demand for child development services



## Early intervention a key focus

Early intervention and diagnosis of child development concerns remains a key focus for CAHS.

The metropolitan CDS provides assessment, early intervention and treatment services to children with developmental delay or difficulty that affects function, participation and/or parent and child relationships.

Since 2013–14 the demand for CDS services has increased 72 per cent, with the number of accepted referrals rising from 22,446 to 38,718 in that period.

From 2024–25 the State Government will invest an additional \$30.4 million in expanding the CDS so we can provide services to more children.

# Workforce attraction and retention



## Ensuring the required skills mix

Our capacity to sustainably deliver services continues to be affected by increasing demand, patient acuity and resource availability.

Talent management at CAHS, like most healthcare organisations, remains a significant challenge, particularly the attraction and retention of a skilled workforce and speciality groups. These include mental health professionals, neurophysiologists, clinical perfusionists, orthotists, social workers and clinical psychologists.

Ensuring we have the required skills mix is key to meeting current and future organisational needs.

Demographic shifts, such as an ageing workforce, generational changes, remote working arrangements and changing employee preferences, intensifies our search for talent.

There is an acute shortage of paediatric trainees across Australia.

CAHS has engaged with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer WA and other health service providers in junior medical officer (JMO) workforce planning.

In response to JMO feedback, we have streamlined our approach to recruitment, including offering longer contracts and increasing part-time employment opportunities, term allocation, providing professional development leave and supporting overtime claims.

In 2023 CAHS began offering JMOs the option to roll over their existing contract to avoid the need to reapply for their positions. Pleasingly, most eligible JMOs requested the roll-over which has stabilised our JMO workforce.

The overarching importance of creating a culture where our people feel safe, included, respected and valued cannot be understated as a major factor in a person's decision to work for us (see pages 66–69).



The launch of the CAHS Learning Academy (see page 67) to support employee development will help ensure our workforce is fit for the future and our staff know their career progression and development is a priority.

Diversity, inclusion and cultural awareness is also a key focus to ensure our people understand the diverse backgrounds of our patients and can provide culturally appropriate care. To ensure effective paediatric care, we are investing in cultural competence and diversity training.

We are working with the Department of Health and other health service providers to develop a strategic approach to address fatigue, burn-out and aggression against our staff.

# Sustainability

## Reduction targets risk

As a paediatric health service, we are not only concerned with the health and wellbeing of children and young people today, but also for those children and young people of our future.

The World Health Organization has described climate change as the greatest threat to human health this century and climate sensitive health risks are shown to disproportionately affect many in the CAHS patient cohort.

This includes children, Indigenous populations and those with underlying health conditions.

### The climate change impacts will have flow-on effects for CAHS, with potential:

- increases in patient demand for services
- workforce capacity issues
- supply chain interruption
- damage to infrastructure.

CAHS has identified climate change as an organisational strategic risk.

It has also endorsed the CAHS Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027 to meet the requirements of the WA Climate Policy and draft climate change legislation currently before parliament (see pages 76–78).

Adaptation planning and action to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions requires urgent action. However, without further government investment, there is a risk that the State 2030 emissions reduction targets will not be met.

# Infrastructure and digital health



## Ageing community facilities

Community-based services enable children, young people and families to access our care close to home.

CAHS operates from 165 community facilities, of which 150 are leased and 15 are owned.

As demand grows for our community services, we are looking at ways to address current limitations of our existing sites, so that we can expand services and accommodate additional staff.

We are working with property managers and building owners to address issues in a timely manner within the existing budget, while also looking at opportunities to refurbish and upgrade community facilities owned by CAHS.

CAHS continues to address building and structural issues, accessibility concerns related to the *Disability Discrimination Act*, fire safety and occupational health and safety issues.

## Digital health

ICT infrastructure is essential to enabling CAHS to operate effectively and efficiently.

CAHS has collaborated with Health Support Services (HSS) to develop an ICT Asset Management Plan which covers ICT assets including end-user computing, and network and server infrastructure.

We are working with HSS to operationalise this plan.

Additionally, CAHS Digital Health Services is looking to modernise the existing CAHS server platform and audio-visual services.

## Cyber security

The protection of CAHS staff and patient information is a priority. CAHS continues to implement policies in line with WA Government policy, including the Essential Eight, with a key focus on increasing our maturity across all areas.

CAHS completed a thorough and independent audit of its cyber security capability in 2023–24 to enable a program of improvement.

The audit showed CAHS is well prepared to prevent cyber attacks but recommended opportunities to further increase protection.

One of our cyber security priorities is reducing avoidable risks and human error.

CAHS has security systems which are designed to safeguard its users by preventing suspicious and known malicious emails reaching its mailboxes.

We also provide ongoing staff education, through monthly cyber security emails, to update them on the latest in security risks, such as recognising suspicious emails.