



Metro North Hospital and Health Service *Putting people first*



# Metro North Health Literacy Approach

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## Introduction

When we asked consumers, “How could our organisation tackle health literacy?”, consumers consistently described a series of inter-connected experiences that gives them, and those who care for them, confidence to make informed choices and take action to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing.

Consumers suggest that good health literacy experiences require:

- ✓ personalised two-way communication
- ✓ feeling prepared, safe and supported
- ✓ tailoring care to help achieve their goals
- ✓ being able to find and use reliable and relevant resources when needed
- ✓ having choices
- ✓ active participation in treatment decisions.

These experiences are supported by an organisational environment that:

- ✓ invests in a health literate workforce
- ✓ has systems and processes to support partnerships with consumers and shared responsibility for health literacy
- ✓ enables collaboration across health and social services to reduce barriers to health literacy and improve access and navigation.

*When I asked, through my community consultation, how would you like a health service to support your own or a loved one's health literacy journey, many said it needed to start from the beginning – setting a positive and inclusive environment. Ultimately people want to be more informed, empowered, included and supported from the time an appointment is booked for their health need.*

**Metro North Multicultural Coordinator**

## Purpose

This document will facilitate a proactive, coordinated and long-term approach to improve health literacy experiences in Metro North.

This approach applies to Metro North leaders, workforce, students, volunteers, consumers, carers and community partners.

It will also assist the health service in the transition to value-based healthcare, which shifts how we measure success from the volume of care we provide to the outcomes we help people achieve to improve their quality of life.

## Principles

Our approach will be:

- **Equitable** – recognising that each person's health literacy needs are different. Some people experience more barriers than others in accessing healthcare and applying information to improve their health, so our actions will seek to minimise these barriers.
- **Collaborative** – health literacy requires healthcare leaders, workforce, students, volunteers, community partners, consumers and their families/carers to work together on improvements.
- **Outcome oriented** – all actions and improvements aim to enable people to better manage their health and wellbeing.

## Benefits

A consistent approach provides a base for the health workforce to:

- develop a heightened sense of common purpose
- foster staff and consumer involvement in local co-designed solutions
- establish champions to lead and overcome challenges
- increase our ability to translate improvements in one area across the system
- improve efficiency and minimise duplication of effort.

Benefits to consumers, families, carers and community include:

- increased access to healthcare and health information
- increased ability to act upon information
- healthcare that is responsive to a person's choices, needs, values, beliefs and preferences
- better experiences particularly at important touch points with our services
- greater control over health and wellbeing, through interactions with our services regardless of knowledge, skills and literacy.

## The Approach

We will address two elements for health literacy: firstly health literacy experiences for partnerships with consumers and, secondly a supportive organisational environment. These two elements are explained in this approach.

### Health literacy experiences for partnerships

Good health literacy experiences enable consumers to be partners in their healthcare. **Figure 1** shows how consumers can be empowered as partners in their care so they are confident to manage their health and wellbeing.

*I have had pretty good experiences with health professionals helping me manage my illness. However, when it comes to managing my health and wellbeing, I have been left to my own devices to work that out.*

**Metro North consumer**

Figure 1: Health literacy experiences for partnerships

## I am a partner in my healthcare when...





## Supportive organisational environment

A supportive organisational environment makes it easy for the workforce and consumers to access reliable and relevant resources and builds a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility for improvement. A supportive environment seeks to minimise power disparities amongst health professionals and between health professionals and consumers that impose barriers to good health literacy experiences.

Metro North acknowledges that our efforts to improve health literacy are part of a bigger system. **Figure 2** maps the resources available in Metro North's environment. These are grouped into four areas:

**Health information sources** – opportunities for people to seek and receive information about health and healthcare.

**Health service providers** – the diversity of health services in Metro North offering a wide range of health information, resources, support and care.

**Health equity** – resources and services that aim to minimize barriers to health literacy based upon a person's age, sexuality, cultural background, health needs or familiarity with the health system.

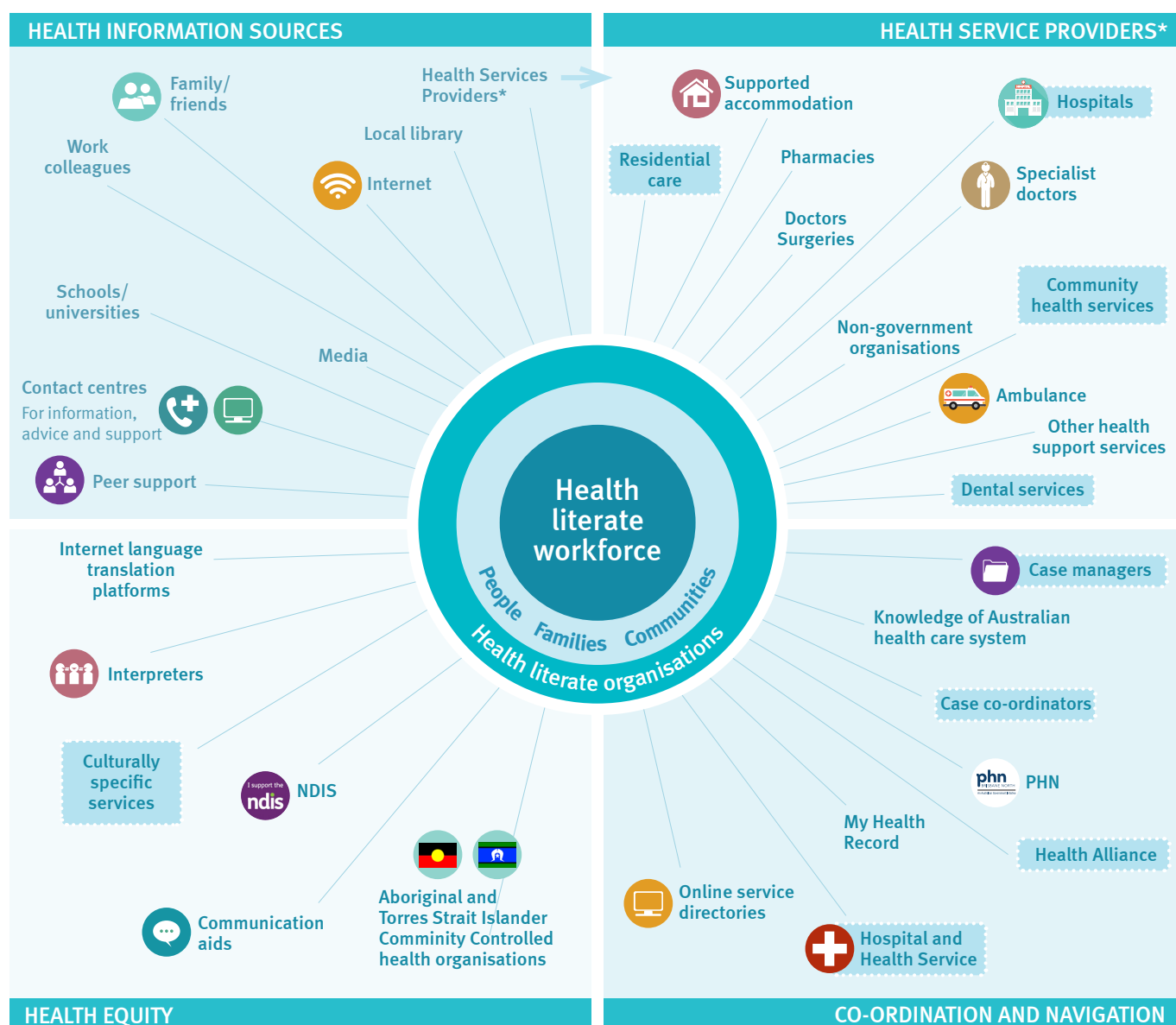
**Navigation and coordination** – the experience of moving between health services can be, for some people, disjointed, inconsistent and poorly coordinated. These services and initiatives make the health system easier to navigate and prevent people falling through the gaps in the system.

Our Approach to improve the organisational environment requires collaboration across services and sectors and dedicated actions in each area identified in **figure 2**.

The environment where the information is shared needs to be supportive and encourage partnerships. Health information needs to be culturally contextualised.

**Metro North community member**

**Figure 2: Supportive organisational environment**



Metro North offers some of these services.

## Priority areas

### Commitment to act, learn and continuously improve by:

- monitoring patient experiences, consumer feedback and other data related to health literacy experiences and consumer partnerships
- enabling services within Metro North to target their actions to improve health literacy to address gaps or issues
- evaluation and research on initiatives implemented.

*I saw the consultant on Monday regarding my surgery. The hospital only rings the day before to let you know the time. Too bad if you work, have kids to arrange care for or have other appointments. The actual appointment was really rushed and I did not really get many answers to my questions. They basically said they did not have much time for me on that day - so why book an appointment if that is the case?*

**Metro North consumer feedback**

### Support people to feel welcome and prepared by:

- enhancing physical navigation and way finding within our services
- enhancing access and navigation across health and social services
- addressing issues that prevent people from feeling welcome and prepared by understanding the experiences of different people, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with disabilities
- improving communication to offer choices and prepare people for appointments, admission to hospital and when transitioning between services or returning home.

### Deliver campaigns enabling consumer and carer involvement by:

- empowering consumers to look after their health and wellbeing and be active participants in treatment and care decisions
- enabling consumers to communicate their needs and preferences, ask questions, seek clarification and follow up on concerns.

### Connect consumers and community with resources to maintain or improve their health by:

- helping people access resources to improve health literacy experiences
- collaborating with other service providers to enable equitable access and navigation through the local service system.

### Support the entire workforce to create positive inter-connected health literacy experiences by:

- investing in workforce health literacy
- supporting the workforce to communicate for positive health literacy experiences
- utilising resources that facilitate consumer partnerships such as motivational interviewing, health coaching, patient activation measures and shared decision-making tools
- creating a network of health literacy champions.

## Conclusion

Health literacy is a shared responsibility. It is a priority for value-based healthcare which focuses upon empowerment, understanding what matters to consumers and delivering high quality care to optimise benefits.

### Value-based healthcare incorporates:

- better patient experiences and outcomes
- more efficient care
- improving health professional experiences in delivering care.

Health literacy intersects with many aspects of healthcare and must be integrated into our core business. This Approach provides a basis for action to give people, and those who care for them, confidence to make informed choices and take action to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing.

# Resources

## Health literacy and shared decision-making

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare [National Statement on Health Literacy](#)

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare [Fact sheet 1: An introduction to improving health literacy in your organisation \(PDF 389 KB\)](#)

Hill, S and Sofra, T. [How could health information be improved? Recommended Actions from the Victorian Consultation on Health Literacy](#). Australian Health Review, 2018, 42 134-139.

Health literacy and shared decision-making

- [Video for patients](#)
- [Video for staff](#)
- [Video on Pete's experience](#)
- [Patient Decision Aids](#), The Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

## Information and communication tools

Tasmania Department of Health – Health Literacy Communication Guide [https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/health\\_literacy/communications\\_and\\_health\\_literacy\\_workplace\\_toolkit](https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/health_literacy/communications_and_health_literacy_workplace_toolkit)

DISCERN is a brief [questionnaire](#) which provides users with a way of assessing the quality of written information on treatment choices for a health problem. <http://www.discern.org.uk/>

Empathy – NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation's [sunflower tool](#). It was created for use with people with cognitive impairment and dementia and has been adapted by others.

## Cultural capability

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability <https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/atsihb/html/working>

The Centre for Ethnicity in Health - Health literacy hub <http://www.ceh.org.au/health-literacy-hub/>

## Consumer involvement processes

[Inclusive engagement toolkit](#)

Partnering with consumers [procedure](#) and [guideline](#)

## Evaluation

Consumer feedback relating to communication, information and involvement

[Patient experience measures](#)

Patient reported experience measures and patient reported outcome measures

- [Video for patients](#)
- [Video for staff](#)