

No one left behind

A summary of the Access and Equity Framework
Implementation Final Report 2021-2024



Ensuring no one gets left behind

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network's Access and Equity Framework 2021-2024 is an ambitious initiative that aims to address health inequities occurring within its 3,200 square-kilometre catchment and beyond.

Tackling inequity is one of NWMPHN's core missions. It is dedicated to improving access to health services for all community members, especially those who need it most and are at greatest risk of poor outcomes.

This approach echoes the internationally recognised Quintuple Aim of Health Care, which also has equity as a key driver.

Work on the Access and Equity Framework began in November 2020. Despite some challenges it has succeeded in focusing the organisation's activities on improving access to services for population cohorts that are historically, economically or culturally disadvantaged.

What guides the Access and Equity Framework?

In building the framework NWMPHN was guided by six principles:

- A human rights-based approach to health
- The non-medical social determinants of health
- A commitment to community participation in identifying and designing services
- Cultural safety and inclusion
- Intersectionality
- Accountability

These principles have been used to inform five priority areas that together comprise an organisation-wide response to tackling health inequity.

1. Show leadership and commitment to equity as a strategic priority
2. Embed equity into everything that we do
3. Use data and evidence to support action
4. Engage with communities – including people with lived experience – and collaborate with service providers and consumers
5. Build the capacity of NWMPHN staff, funded providers and general practices to provide equity focused and culturally responsive services.



How has the Access and Equity Framework influenced NWMPHN's work?

In one sense, the principles and priorities embedded in the framework constitute a fundamental and ongoing process of change. Ideas and decisions across all NWMPHN's activities will forever be influenced by them.

But the framework is about more than just process. It has already shaped some major innovations inside and outside the organisation. Here are a few:



Show leadership and commitment to equity as a strategic priority

Priority Area 1



Care finder – equity in action

The Commonwealth Government's care finder program targets older Australians eligible for aged care services but who require intensive support to interact with My Aged Care, and obtain community supports.

The program is overseen by primary health networks, which commission not-for-profit organisations to deliver services.

In the case of the NWMPHN catchment, the framework informed an equity-based funding methodology, ensuring resources were directed to areas of greatest need. This means that local government areas that had the greatest need for care finder services were apportioned the most funding.

This approach will continue to be reviewed, refined and developed, but it represents a significant step towards embedding equity in the funding allocation process.

Embed equity into everything we do

Priority Area 2



Embedding equity in tender evaluation

NWMPHN uses a tender process for commissioning many of its health care programs. As a result of the framework, it has now added a mandatory equity-focused evaluation question into this.

This initiative requires providers to explain how their services will be available, accessible, and acceptable to populations experiencing the greatest inequities. It thus standardises equity considerations across all procurement activities.



NWMPHN is well placed to continue leading in this area, expanding its focus beyond internal initiatives ...

Use data and evidence to support action

A revised structure for health needs assessments

All primary health networks rely on health needs assessments to determine where and how services need to be delivered.

NWMPHN is recognised as a national leader in the spread and depth of research and analysis needed to create analyses that are robust and fit for purpose. The principles within the framework ensure that all our assessments recognise that the issues the health system needs to address, especially in disadvantaged areas, are multi-faceted and require a holistic, collaborative system approach.

Engage with communities including people with lived experience and partner with collaborators

The culturally responsive assessment tool – adapting to diversity

A NWMPHN-commissioned project assessing the after-hours needs in the region revealed that some people did not receive equitable health

Priority Area 3



care when engaging with all sectors of the health system. To learn more, the organisation commissioned the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and Community-Owned Primary Health Enterprises to investigate the barriers to health care experienced by people who primarily spoke languages other than English.

The result was the culturally responsive assessment tool (or CRAT): a collection of resources and strategies to empower and enable health care providers to improve their capability to respond to the needs of all communities.

The CRAT provided the opportunity to explore practical approaches to health equity, through strengthening understanding between health care providers and the communities they serve.

Build capacity and skills

A refreshed commissioning process

Since 2023, the quintuple aim of health care has been integral to NWMPHN's commissioning process. Guided by the framework, equity considerations are now being embedded into each step of the process by introducing new and updated tools, resources and guidance. The steps are easy to take, and staff and contractors will be supported throughout.

Priority Area 5



Sharing what we've learnt

NWMPHN was one of the first primary health networks to recognise the need for a detailed and consistent access and equity framework to guide its activities.

As the scope for the framework was finalised, the document itself constructed and the principles enshrined, it was then tested in real-world commissioning. There has been interest from our internal teams, other primary health networks and out partners across the region.

In late 2023, the framework's architects held workshops with other units within NWMPHN. This allowed staff to identify opportunities for equity-informed quality improvements across their work areas.

Externally, NWMPHN promoted the importance of the work through forums such as the PHN Cultural Diversity Community of Practice and the Victorian Transcultural Mental Health Reference Group.

Following these, there were larger presentations to the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network, the PHN Commissioning Showcase, and the launch of PHN Multicultural Framework.

The framework has also explicitly guided the work of new reports, including the West Metro Population Health Needs Assessment and the Mental Health – Health Needs Assessment.

What's next?

The Access and Equity Framework 2021 - 2024 was a bold and aspirational project that embedded equity systemically across the organisation. This, in turn, meant that a focus on equity became central for health care providers commissioned by NWMPHN to provide services across the catchment.

Access and equity must be subjects of continuous growth and adjustment. The lessons learned between 2021 and 2024 will inform the development of a new framework for 2025-2028, and thereafter.

Other primary health networks are adopting and adapting the resources developed by NWMPHN, each eager to tackle inequity in their catchments. NWMPHN is delighted to share its findings and assist where needed.



The Governance structure that supported implementation of the Framework and Plan.

Contact

For more information regarding NWMPHN's Access and Equity Framework or the Implementation Final Report 2021-2024 contact:

Michelle Ravesi - Access, Equity and Engagement Lead, NWMPHN

Michelle.Ravesi@nwmpnhn.org.au

