

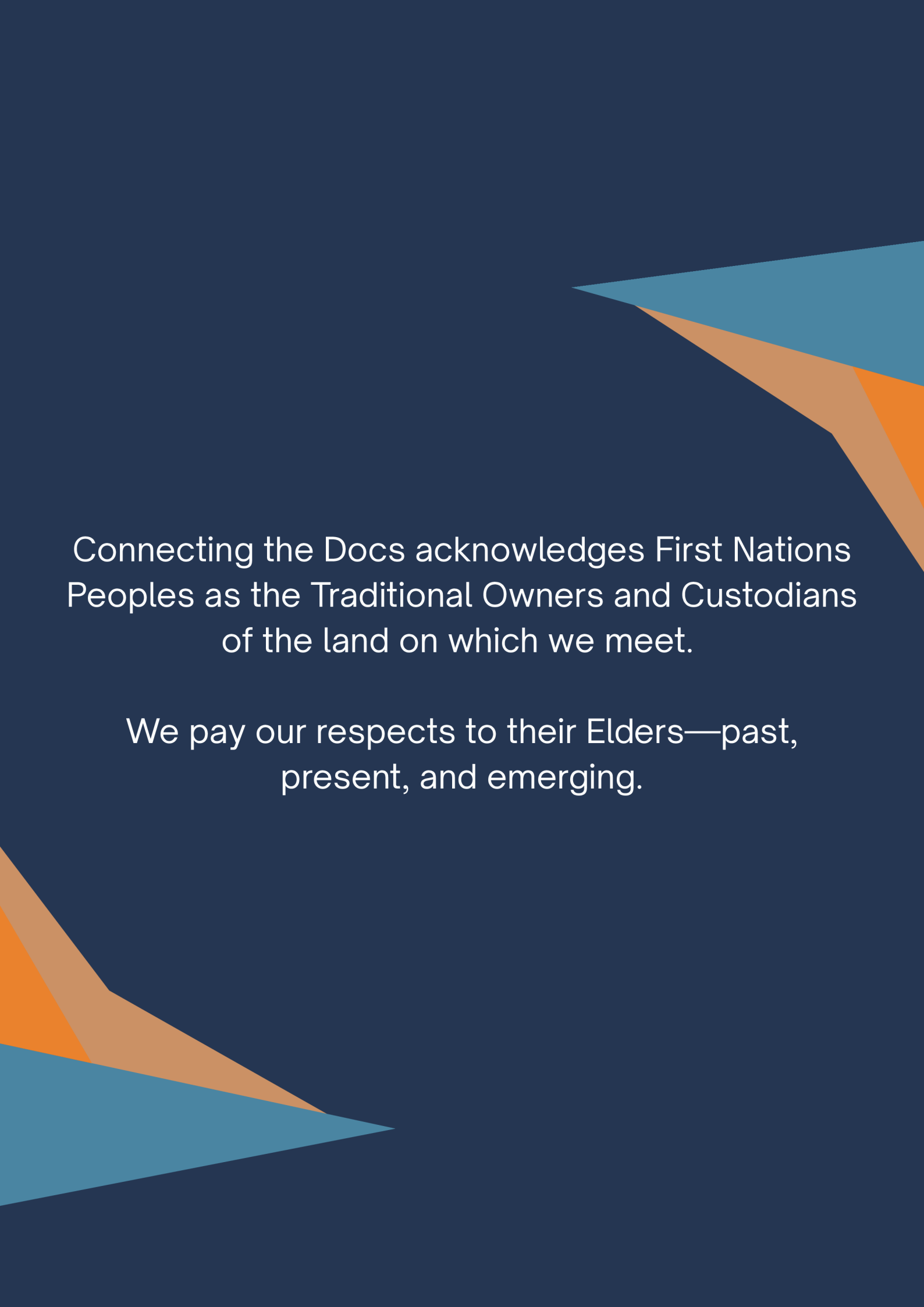


Connecting the Docs



Strategic Plan 2025–2027



The background is a solid dark blue. There are abstract geometric shapes in a medium blue and an orange color. One shape is in the top right corner, pointing towards the center. Another is in the bottom left corner, also pointing towards the center. These shapes appear to be stylized representations of mountains or landforms.

Connecting the Docs acknowledges First Nations
Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians
of the land on which we meet.

We pay our respects to their Elders—past,
present, and emerging.

Connecting the Docs



About Us

Connecting the Docs (CTD) is an innovative partnering program designed to address medical workforce shortages impacting rural and regional hospitals, community health services and primary care clinic providers.

Our Vision

Supporting Doctors to make a difference in rural and regional communities.

Our Purpose

Empowering rural and regional partners to shape the future of Victoria's medical workforce by placing and retaining the right doctors in the right communities at the right time through innovation, collaboration, and purposeful career development.

Our Values

Courage

We boldly connect doctors to the communities that need them most—standing alongside them to navigate challenges, shape long-term careers, and pursue innovative solutions to achieve the best outcomes for both doctors and communities.

Teamwork

Together with our healthcare partners, we match the right doctors to the right communities—creating lasting connections through shared goals and strong collaboration.

Dependable

We follow through on our promise—placing doctors where they're needed most and providing the ongoing support, career pathways, and stability that help them stay and thrive.



Program Phase 1: Implementation & Establishment (2023-2025)



Rural and regional communities spanning across Mildura, Swan Hill, Kerang and Echuca (and surrounds) in the Loddon Mallee region and further afield in the Buloke region, have faced severe workforce shortages which have ongoing effects and impact the ability to grow, build, train and retain medical workforce. There is an increasing need to review and substantially improve the recruitment stage of workforce shortages as, it is not delivering a sufficient number of trained candidates to satisfy regional healthcare demand.

The Connecting the Docs Program developed and implemented an integrated recruitment and retention model with potential for multi-site and multi-year contracts across a blend of secondary, primary and community care services.

Phase One Achievements and Success

Since establishing Connecting the Docs in September 2023, the team have been successful in their original mission and objectives. This was done by:

- The development of a centralised recruitment and retention process whereby key clinical and medical workforce staff work as a team to review and assess all initial applications coming through the system to determine eligibility and allocate to the appropriate training pathway, health services or primary care clinics.
- The development of an online, single point of contact process for initial interviews of candidates which are then available for all health services participating in the program.
- The creation of a shared database of prospective and current doctors to strengthen workforce planning and fit-for-purpose training pathways.
- Identifying and a social media presence, website, and multi-media collateral.
- Expanding the training pathway opportunities through sharing of key rotations and supervision capacity using multi-year contracts from a single employer to support these improved pathways.
- Working collaboratively with all stakeholders to simplify and streamline the processes involved in accessing grants and funding for doctors entering the region, supporting their progression toward fellowship and long-term transition.
- Leveraging each health services current relocation or transition programs to develop robust programs for doctors entering the region and access support to re-settle. The team were successful in case management with doctors, their families and local community groups.



Program Phase 2: Commercialisation and Growth (2025-2027)



With the original vision to ensure that hospitals and health services across the Loddon Mallee region have a sufficient number of doctors and other medical employees to support their community healthcare obligations in the region, the CTD Program has sparked great interest from other regional Health Services across northern, central and eastern Victoria.

As we grow into the next stage of our program, the team aim to:

- Establish a model for partnering with a wider remit of Health Services, supporting more talent and sharing key outcomes with other health partners across regional Victoria. This collaborative approach will support regional Australian healthcare services to learn and improve, resulting in the ability to provide greater reach to the medical workforce wanting to relocate.
- Make the right investment in the program, including but not limited to, further spend on local and international advertising, increasing our networks and marketing our model.
- Invest in the CTD portal and database of doctors in all specialties areas who are looking for opportunities.
- Increase the partnership with Health Services, local communities and councils who can further support the program by offering seamless relocation, accommodation and integration support and assistance.
- Work closely with RWAV for Community Navigator support to the program.



Commercialisation and Growth – Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this commercialisation and growth phase is to manage and grow our centralised and coordinated recruitment and retention program for doctors, expanding this from the Loddon Mallee and Buloke regions to include all of regional Victoria. We will do this by delivering exceptional recruitment and retention for the health services, doctors and their family. Through this, we will look to implement the following strategic objectives.

Program Phase 2: Commercialisation and Growth (2025-2027)



1. Purpose Refinement

- Position the Connecting the Docs program as a leading model in integrating local and international medical doctors into regional Australian healthcare systems, enhancing workforce sustainability and service delivery.
- To expand the program's reach and impact by establishing scalable pathways for international doctors, fostering partnerships, investing in global post advertising and leveraging technology to streamline integration processes.
- Engage more health service across regional Victoria as active partners in the program, securing their investment in both service delivery and the ongoing growth and scalability of the applicant and doctor database.

2. Market Analysis and Opportunity Identification

- Identify and engage key partners—such as health services, educational institutions, and government bodies—to understand their priorities and co-design a scalable, collaborative model that leverages shared strengths for greater impact.
- Analyse similar programs and initiatives to identify gaps and opportunities for differentiation.
- Understand and promote the value proposition for Connecting the Docs.
- Stay informed about immigration policies, medical accreditation processes, and healthcare regulations that may impact program expansion.
- Identify cultural needs of applicants and work with industry partners and the community to accommodate and support a diverse multi-cultural workforce.

3. Program Development and Value Proposition

- Explore and develop tailored pathways for various categories of international medical professionals, such as junior doctors and specialists, addressing their unique needs and challenges coming into the Australian health system
- Implement digital platforms to facilitate application processes, track professional development, and provide ongoing support to participants.
- Strengthen relocation assistance, cultural orientation, and mentorship programs to support smooth transitions and long-term retention, in collaboration with health services and regional attraction initiatives tailored to each community.
- Assess the current team's capabilities and resources to ensure alignment with the program's expansion needs, identifying gaps and opportunities for scaling operational capacity.



Program Phase 2: Commercialisation and Growth (2025-2027)



4. Commercialisation Strategy

- Explore and expand collaborations with educational institutions, recruitment agencies, and healthcare providers to create sustainable partnerships for the program.
- Continue to explore grants and funding from programs within regional Victoria to support with our attraction, recruitment, settlement and networking programs.
- Develop a strong brand identity that communicates the program's reach outside of the current region to better explore wider Victoria.
- Establish and build our current website and social positioning as an outcome of a new or refreshed brand identity.

5. Growth and Scaling

- Identify additional Health Services that are willing and able to benefit from the program, considering healthcare workforce shortages and regional needs.
- Establish feedback mechanisms to assess program effectiveness and make data-driven improvements.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Given our strategic focus on workforce sustainability, regional health equity, and system integration, the key performance indicators (KPIs) for CTD are designed to measure not only operational success but also long-term impact and readiness for growth.

These KPIs provide a structured framework to monitor the effectiveness, efficiency, and alignment of the program with broader healthcare objectives across Regional Victoria.



Program Phase 2: Key Performance Indicators



Key Performance Measure (July 2025 to June 2026)	Target
KPI 1	
Onboard Ten (10) Health Services / ACCHOs / Hospitals / General Practises / Community Health Services to the CTD Program	Two to Three (2-3) per quarter Total Ten to Twelve (10-12)
KPI 2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Review the resourcing of the CTD Team based on the project priorities. · Recruitment and on-boarding of a Community Navigator in collaboration with RWAV 	Advertising, successful appointment and on-boarding of the required roles.
KPI 3	
Targeted Attraction for Expedited Specialist Pathway	Two (2) medical professionals recruited though the pathway
KPI 4	
Continue our collaborative approach with our partners through establishing shared resources for events and recruitment / retention purposes	Two (2) large events and Two (2) small events
<p>In addition to the above KPI's, the Team measures our outcomes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Number of successful placements of local and international medical professionals. · Retention rates within the healthcare system. · Participant evaluation - satisfaction and outcomes. · Financial sustainability and growth metrics with onboarding of new health partners. · Number of new visitors to social media sites. <p>The CTD Team would implement regular assessments to measure program impact and inform strategic adjustments.</p>	

Continued Challenges



Regardless of the phase of the program, there is still a critical workforce shortage particularly with doctors in regional areas, to deliver an appropriate level of health care to regional communities. Significant contributing factors include a complex and uncoordinated recruitment system for doctors in regional areas; and a lack of ongoing professional development support to maximize retention of those doctors once recruited to the region.

At a more detailed level, these issues include:

- A fragmented approach to recruitment with each secondary, primary and community care service operating a separate, standalone approach and duplicating effort.
- The challenge of recruitment in a continually tight fiscal health environment.
- A lack of understanding of the different requirements/needs of the healthcare services and the international doctors resulting from more ad hoc recruitment programs.
- Little or no resources for international doctors seeking to emigrate and work in the regions and a lack of cultural safety and integration, especially in small rural communities.
- A lack of understanding from recruitment companies of the special requirements for doctors and medical staff in the regions as there is no ongoing supports to build sustainability and scale.
- PMCV & specialist training colleges lack understanding around regional constraints and requirements leaving them unable to support recruitment into the regions
- Limited access for doctors and medical staff to community support, suitable accommodation, family settlement and integration support into a regional healthcare system.

Continued Benefits

Our objectives will align to the CTD value proposition/ purpose:

- Creating a financially efficient model with joint marketing, recruitment and case management.
- Aligning and working alongside currently funded government organisations, providing a conduit for direct influence on recruitment and employment.
- Aiming to reduce the reliance on locums and recruitment companies which are costly to individual health services;
- Driving improved recruitment and retention outcomes through the provision of a comprehensive and tailored case management support to both health services and health professionals with a focus on those that do not receive assistance or support under a currently funded program.
- Introducing greater flexibility to move across the region without contract changes resulting in improved retention outcomes for the region as a whole and greater satisfaction for the doctor.
- Providing the region with a fit-for-purpose workforce with appropriate shared data to inform and track anticipated changes in workforce movements.
- Provide improved training experiences and skill development aligned to local healthcare needs to deliver superior healthcare outcomes for the region over time.
- Create a single employer model across multiple sites within a region, with already established Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) in place with our partners.
- To provide every doctor with an easy to navigate and well-supported end to end service with the utmost of care and consideration of their needs keeping in mind their suitability to service and community.

Continued Targeted outcomes from CTD



Ultimately, the target outcome is improved patient health outcomes by increasing a quality medical workforce for health services across regional Victoria. This will be achieved through:

- Eliminating or substantially reducing the shortage of doctors and other medical staff available to secondary, primary and community care services in the Loddon Mallee and wider Victorian regions.
- Cost saving on current recruitment, marketing and other expenses associated with attracting suitable candidates for regional roles.
- Improved satisfaction and attraction to region for doctors leading to longer retention periods and thus leading to improved patient health outcomes.
- Increase of placement of international doctors into suitable health services and, improved support for transition to the Australian healthcare system.
- Ability for doctors to be able to work across secondary and primary care services throughout their careers in a more coordinated and seamless manner.
- Additional support for smaller general practices and health services with the administrative burden of tasks involved with the onboarding of new doctors and integration into communities.
- Improved retention outcomes through regionalised employment models, portability of entitlements, increased security of longer-term contracts (where funding is via fixed term sources), ability to market the sub-region for the career, life and community it offers.
- Build a network of new professionals providing them with collegiate and peer support.

Inclusion and Diversity for CTD

The Connecting the Docs partner organisations welcome all people from diverse backgrounds. Collectively and individually, we strive to create an organisational culture that celebrates diversity in all its forms - diversity in First Nations, ability and disability, gender identity, sexuality, intersex characteristics, age, socio-economic status, education, ethnicities and faith.

We believe everyone has the right to feel safe, welcome and have their life experiences valued.

We are committed to creating and maintaining an environment that embraces, supports, reflects and promotes inclusive and equitable behaviours and practices, and respects individuals and groups of people, by:

- Ensuring all participants are treated fairly and with mutual respect
- Fully utilising and developing the potential of every person
- Promoting inclusive practices to reduce bias and discrimination
- Keeping all policies and procedures consistent with Equal Employment Opportunity principles
- Broadening morale and motivation by increasing our participants and people's confidence in the fairness of our HR practices and access to opportunities

Continued Governance model for CTD



The Connecting the Docs program has been co-designed by our seven (7) regional health services, which includes sub-regional, small rural, community health and ACCHO organisations.

Additionally, we have designed a governance model to oversee and support the development and operations of the program on an ongoing basis. The governance model will continue with the founding members working collaboratively together to ensure success of the program.

Please refer to this document for further information.

The Steering Committee comprises of representation from Directors of Medical Services and Chief Executive Officers of key health services.

The steering committee is responsible for the oversight and effective management of the program, including developing and monitoring key project performance criteria including performance against schedule and budget, along with corporate governance oversight.

Position	Name	Organisaiton and Role
Project Lead/ Program Director	Lauren Byrne	CTD Leadership
Community Navigator	VACANT	Role to be confirmed
Executive Director Medical Services & Chief Medical Officer	Dr Annemarie Newth	Echuca Regional Health- Executive Sponsor and Program Fundholder
Chief Executive Officer	Kellie Byron-Gray	Kerang District Health (Chair)
Chief Executive Officer	Trevor Adem	East Wimmera Healthcare (Founding Member)
Chief Executive Officer	Perlin Simon	Mallee District Aboriginal Service (Founding Member)
Executive Director Medical Services / Chief Medical Officer	Dr Nabrees Sinnalebbe	Mildura Base Public Hospital (Founding Member)
Chief Executive Officer	Penny Wilkinson	Northern District Community Health (Founding Member)
Executive Director Medical Services / Chief Medical Officer	TBC / Interim	Swan Hill District Health and Kerang District Health (Founding Member)



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Strategic Plan 2025-2027	Endorsed	Next Review
Final endorsement	Steering Committee members (September meeting)	Jul 1, 2026