Maridulu **Budyari Gumal**

Working together for good health and wellbeing

SPHERE STRATEGIC PLAN

2026–2031

OUR PARTNERS





























Our Clinical Themes

- Aboriginal Health & Wellbeing
- Age and Ageing
- Cancer
- Cardiac and Vascular Health
- Child UnLimited
- Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolic Disease
- Early Life Determinants of Health
- Maternal and Women's health
- Musculoskeletal health
- Neuroscience, Mental Health & Addiction
- Palliative Care

Our Platforms

- Clinical Trials and Data
- Healthy Populations and Environments
- Implementation Science
- Knowledge Translation
- Innovation and Industry

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:
Maridulu Budyari Gumal (SPHERE) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Strategic Plan

2026–2031

Maridulu Budyari Gumal, the gifted Indigenous name for the Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE), means "working together for good health and wellbeing." This meaning continues to sit at the heart of SPHERE and reflects the partnership's enduring commitment to collaboration, community benefit and improved health outcomes.

This Strategic Plan builds on SPHERE's existing foundations and sets the direction for the next five years. It describes how SPHERE will focus its efforts, strengthen the value it creates with its partners, and support research translation that contributes to better care, greater equity and health system improvement.

This document summarises SPHERE's long-term ambition, role, strategic priorities and cross-cutting commitments. The sections that follow explain the context and rationale underpinning this direction.

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Strategy at a glance



Our VISION

Transforming healthcare through research translated into practice for the benefit of the diverse communities we serve.

Our MISSION

SPHERE enables health services, researchers and communities to work together to translate research into better healthcare and health outcomes at scale.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE

To support healthcare improvement across SPHERE's geographically and culturally diverse health region by embedding research, evidence and community priorities into health system decision-making, implementation and practice.

VALUE PROPOSITION

SPHERE creates value by connecting health system and community priorities with the partnerships, capability, research evidence and collective voice needed to inform policy, influence practice, and strengthen equity, care and health system impact.

Our strategic priorities

01



Shape research translation around health system and community priorities

SPHERE will help identify where research translation can respond to real needs across its diverse geography, populations, care settings and broader community context.

02



Build connected capability and capacity for health service-led research translation

SPHERE will build on its education and fellowship strengths to support clinician-researcher pathways and multidisciplinary translation capability.

03



Enable implementation, sustainment and spread of research-informed improvements

SPHERE will strengthen implementation research, evaluation and shared learning to help evidence-informed solutions move beyond pilots and be adopted, adapted, sustained and spread across settings.

04



Mobilise partnerships to create system-wide value and influence

SPHERE will catalyse local, national and international partnerships and use its collective voice to connect evidence, expertise and opportunities with health system, policy and community priorities.

05



Demonstrate impact in care, equity and health system value

SPHERE will use meaningful measures to show how research translation contributes to improved care, practice change and broader system value.

Cross-cutting commitments

Equity-driven research translation

Equity will shape how priorities are identified, activities are supported and impact is assessed. This includes a specific commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research translation, alongside a broader focus on priority populations across the areas SPHERE serves.

Consumer and community partnership

Consumers and communities will help shape research translation priorities, approaches and measures of value, so that SPHERE's work is informed by lived experience, local need and community priorities.

Why research translation matters

Research translation is essential to ensure that evidence informs care, policy and health system improvements. This requires connection between researchers, health services, policymakers, consumers and communities as well as clear pathways for evidence to be adopted, adapted and used in policy, practice and service improvement.

Research translation remains a central feature of the national health and medical research policy agenda. The National Health and Medical Research Strategy 2026–2036 signals a clear expectation that research should be translated and implemented more deliberately into healthcare policy, practice and system improvement.

This is reinforced in the NHMRC's Research Translation Strategy 2026-2030, which defines research translation as the way in which health and medical research achieves impact with a focus on delivering value for people, health services and the broader health system. Importantly, it recognises that impact can only be realised after research has been adopted, adapted or used to inform decisions.

Together, these strategies place research translation within a broader national agenda for equity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, clinical trials, health services research, public health research, workforce capability and measurable impact. They also highlight the importance of Research Translation Centres (RTCs) as mechanisms for embedding research expertise and translation capability across health services, researchers and communities. This signals a stronger role for RTCs, building on their existing contribution and reinforcing their importance in Australia's research translation landscape.

The NSW Health Research and Innovation Strategy 2025–2030 provides a complementary state-level direction. It positions research and innovation as central to improving the quality, efficiency and sustainability of healthcare, while addressing inequities in access and outcomes. The emphasis on a collaborative ecosystem, place-based strengths, strategic use of assets, a pipeline approach, consumer and community involvement, and research and innovation across healthcare settings aligns strongly with SPHERE's role and future direction.

Collectively these strategies point to a stronger expectation that research and innovation will respond to health system need, be shaped with consumers and communities, include populations experiencing inequities, and lead to measurable improvements in care and health system performance. They also increase the expectation that organisations such as SPHERE will be able to show that their enabling and coordinating role has made a difference.



Our context.
Our collective value.

SPHERE's distinctive context

SPHERE's geographic footprint extends across central, inner west, south-eastern and south-western Sydney, reflecting the combined reach of its health service partners. This includes dense inner-city areas, established suburban communities and outer metropolitan areas extending towards the Southern Highlands.

Across this region, communities differ in their health needs, experiences of care, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and levels of access to services and research participation. These differences also reflect the broader factors that shape health including social, cultural, economic and geographic influences on health, access to care and ability to participate in research.

For SPHERE, this diversity is a distinctive strength. It provides a strong foundation for research translation that is connected to different communities, care settings and health contexts. It also reinforces the importance of shaping priorities with the communities SPHERE serves, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse groups and others experiencing inequities in health outcomes, access to care or participation in research.

This context will influence how SPHERE identifies priorities, forms partnerships, supports research translation and assesses value. Equity-driven and community-informed approaches will help keep this work connected to local needs, lived experience and outcomes that matter across different populations and settings.

SPHERE's role and value

SPHERE brings together partners across the Sydney region, including Local Health Districts, Specialty Health Networks, universities, medical research institutes and other organisations with expertise in health, education, research and innovation. Together, these partners provide the health service reach, research expertise and community connections to support translation across the populations SPHERE serves.

SPHERE's value lies in its ability to bring together and effectively mobilise the collective capability of its partners. SPHERE will create purposeful ways of working to enable its partners to identify and align around shared priorities, draw on their respective strengths, share learning and reduce duplication. In doing so, SPHERE can maximise the value of the collaboration so that the combined expertise, reach and influence of its partners supports research translation that is grounded in real-world health and community needs. It can connect people and organisations that might not otherwise work together, creating opportunities for ideas, evidence and effective approaches to move across organisational and disciplinary boundaries.

SPHERE also provides a collective voice. Drawing on the expertise of its partners and community perspectives, SPHERE can help influence policy, practice and system priorities in areas where research translation can improve care, strengthen equity and support health system value.

Strategic direction and priorities

The strategic priorities provide direction for SPHERE over the next five years. They build on the intent of SPHERE's previous strategy, including its focus on collaboration, capability, translation and impact at scale, while placing greater emphasis on equity, implementation, partnerships, influence and demonstrable contribution to better care and system improvement.

Together, the priorities set out where SPHERE will concentrate its efforts.

1. Shape research translation around shared health system and community priorities

SPHERE will help identify where research translation can respond to real needs across its diverse geography, populations, care settings and broader community context.

2. Build connected capability and capacity for health service-led research translation

SPHERE will build on its education and fellowship strengths to support clinician-researcher pathways and multidisciplinary translation capability.

3. Enable implementation, sustainment and spread of research-informed improvements

SPHERE will strengthen implementation research, evaluation and shared learning to help evidence-informed solutions move beyond pilots and be adopted, adapted, sustained and spread across settings.

4. Mobilise partnerships to create system-wide value and influence

SPHERE will catalyse local, national and international partnerships and use its collective voice to connect evidence, expertise and opportunities with health system, policy and community priorities.

5. Demonstrate impact in care, equity and health system value

SPHERE will use meaningful measures to show how research translation contributes to improved care, practice change and broader system value.

Primary care is recognised as an emerging area for development. This reflects the opportunity to strengthen connections between hospital-based care, primary care and communities, particularly where evidence-informed improvements can support earlier intervention, improved quality of life and care closer to home.

Emerging issues such as intergenerational differences in trust and engagement with health services also point to the importance of approaches that are responsive to changing patterns of access, participation and care.

Other areas may require more focused attention as the strategy is implemented. This may include how evidence is used to inform decisions about cost effectiveness, adoption, implementation and feasibility in health service settings.

The Strategic Plan also recognises that SPHERE's research translation pathways will take different forms. In many areas, impact will be achieved through non-commercial pathways such as changes to practice, models of care, service delivery, policy, guidelines and implementation approaches.

SPHERE will also strengthen connections with industry and other external partners to support the development, adoption and scaling of innovations that can improve care and health outcomes.

Delivering the Strategic Plan

Delivery of the Strategic Plan will be supported by clear governance, purposeful connections across health services, researchers and communities, access to translation capability and support, effective use of data and evidence, and a clear approach to identifying where SPHERE can add the greatest value.

Rolling action plans will guide delivery over the life of the strategy, allowing SPHERE to respond to emerging opportunities, partner priorities and changes in the research translation environment.

Impact and Learning

The increasing emphasis on measurable impact in the national and NSW strategies reinforces the need for SPHERE to show what has changed, how it has contributed and how its enabling role supports value for communities, health services and the broader system.

Over the life of the Strategic Plan, SPHERE will develop an approach to demonstrating progress, contribution and impact. This will consider broad domains including patient and community outcomes, equity, health service value, workforce and translation capability, implementation, sustainment and spread as well as research activity that contributes to the adoption, adaptation or use of evidence in practice.

SPHERE will capture impact through a combination of measures, case studies and examples of change. This will help demonstrate how SPHERE contributes to strengthened capability, improved practice, policy influence, implementation progress and broader system improvement.

This approach will support accountability, learning and continuous improvement. It will help SPHERE understand where it is creating value, where further support is needed, and how its priorities and actions should evolve over time.

- **Patient and community outcomes**
- **Equity**
- **Health service value**
- **Workforce and translation capability**
- **Implementation, sustainment and spread**
- **Research that supports evidence use**

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