

# In this together

## Community Engagement Strategy 2025-2030



The Royal  
Melbourne  
Hospital



# Table of contents

<b>In this together</b>	<b>1</b>
Message from the Chief Executive	4
Community Engagement Strategy Steering Group	5
Partnering with the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative	6
Our Strategy	7
Strategic pillars	8
Pillar 1: Create cultural safety	8
Pillar 2: Build mutual trust	8
Pillar 3: Use an intersectional approach	9
Focus areas for actionable change	10
How will RMH implement and monitor the Strategy?	12
“In this together”...	13
Further recognition	15
References	16



**The Royal Melbourne  
Hospital acknowledges  
the Kulin nations as the  
Traditional Custodians  
of the land on which our  
services are located. We are  
committed to improving  
the health and wellbeing of  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander peoples.**



# Message from the Chief Executive

> I am pleased to present *In this together*: the RMH Community Engagement Strategy 2025-2030.

To deliver our purpose of improving health for everyone, every day, the RMH must continually adapt and change to meet the needs of the community we serve. We want each person who comes through our doors to receive care that is clinically effective, compassionate, and fits their individual circumstances and preferences. This informs our clinical governance framework of safe, timely, effective, and person-centred care.

This strategy focuses on three key pillars. These pillars address cultural safety, build trust, and embrace an intersectional approach. By doing so, the RMH aims to create an environment where every interaction responds to the preferences, needs and values of each individual. This environment represents our values of *People First, Leading with Kindness, and Excellence Together*.

We are committed to delivering care that truly centres around the person. That means not just treating a condition, but supporting the person through their health journey and goals of care.

On behalf of everyone at the RMH, I would like to recognise the hundreds of people who generously participated in the community consultation process, including patients, consumers, carers, community members and staff. We thank you for your time and valuable insights, and for openly sharing your experiences.

I'd also like to thank the Consumer Engagement Strategy Steering Committee, the Mental Health Services lived experience workforce and First Nations Health Unit for their expertise and guidance throughout the development of the Strategy.

Codesign and collaboration has been key to creating this Strategy. I would like to thank the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative, which has been a strong partner across the process. We look forward to building on this partnership into the future.

Lastly, I want to thank the hundreds of patients, consumers, community members and advocates, staff, and volunteers who shared their experiences and insights. Your living experiences have helped to shape this important piece of work.

The experiences and insights shared in this process offer us an invaluable opportunity to develop our partnerships with individuals, communities, and organisations. This Strategy provides clear actions and recommendations to improve equity, access, community ties, and truly drive better health outcomes for all.

**Professor Shelley Dolan**  
Chief Executive

# Community Engagement Strategy

## Steering Group

The RMH Engagement Strategy development has been led by a dedicated Steering Group. The Group has worked to codesign the Strategy from start to finish, together with patients, consumers, carers, community members and RMH staff.

The Steering Group was led by a consumer representative together with the Director of Patient Experience and Community Engagement. The group membership was evenly spread between consumer and community members, team members with mental health lived experience, and staff representing First Nations, Community

Engagement and cultural diversity teams. The Steering Group used codesign principles to guide them in setting the project's aim and purpose, project plan, and consultation processes.

From the beginning it has been clear to us that our community consultations needed to focus on working together with migrant and refugee groups and multi-cultural workers. This approach was key to the consultation process and has become a part of the final Strategy.

“Co-chairing the Community Engagement Steering Committee as individuals committed to equity is a major responsibility; it’s a reflection of Royal Melbourne Hospital’s dedication to health equity, and collaborative efforts with its consumer, and carer communities. The process embraced an intersectional approach ensuring voices not often heard are woven into the fabric of decision making.

While there is work ahead for us all, it’s important the journey continues to be in partnership with our First Nations communities and all those marginalised by systemic barriers.”

**Anasina Gray-Barberio**

Former Steering Group Co-Chair and RMH consumer

**Liz Cashill**

Steering Group Co-Chair and RMH Director of Community Engagement and Patient Experience

# Partnering with the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative

It has been a privilege for RMH to partner with the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative (AMHC) for this important work. AMHC is the national peak body advocating for the health and wellbeing of Australia's diverse communities. It brings together multicultural consumers, carers, health professionals, researchers, and organisations to address health issues at a national level.

The AMHC carried out a community consultation for the RMH. This consultation involved an inclusive community consultation workshop along with interviews with

organisations, consumers and carers. Participants developed genuine connections throughout these activities. Discussions and reflective exercises provided valuable feedback on both successes and on areas to improve at the RMH.

Throughout the process, RMH and other stakeholders were engaged in regular meetings, workshops and feedback sessions. This collaboration ensured a comprehensive and informed approach to decision making.

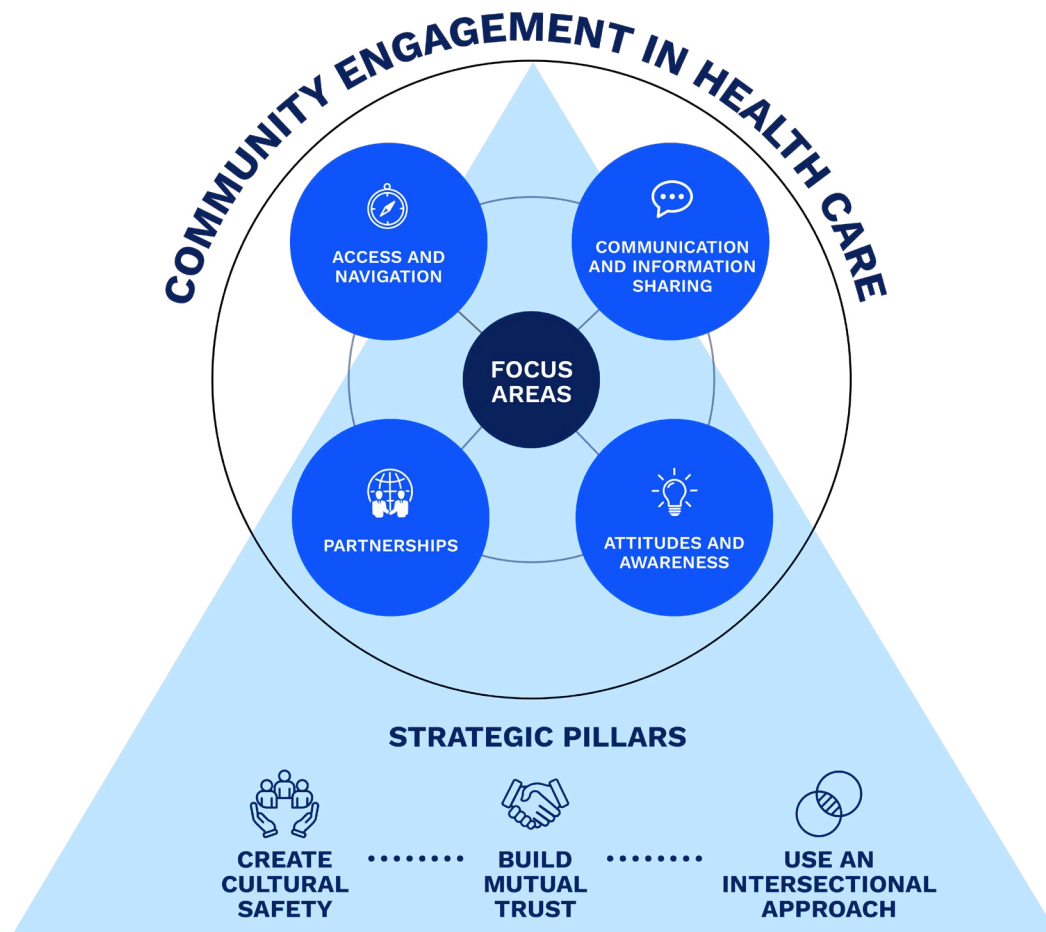
“Our co-design approach with the Royal Melbourne Hospital focuses on advancing culturally responsive healthcare. By actively listening to and integrating the diverse voices of consumers, carers, families, communities, and staff, we are collaboratively building a healthcare environment that is inclusive, respectful, and reflective of our multicultural society. We are committed to creating sustainable, long-term change and are proud of the progress we've made in developing a meaningful engagement strategy, though we recognise there is always more to achieve.”

**Director**

Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative



# Our Strategy



The purpose of this Strategy is to build a strong, inclusive community to ensure fair and equitable healthcare. We aim to do this through meaningful connections and working together to improve health for everyone.

To help us achieve this goal, the RMH needed a Community Engagement Strategy that would enable us to work together to create an inclusive environment. This environment we aim for is kind and fair, where everyone is included equally. This strategy will be based on best practices and will support RMH to engage with intersectional experiences of our patients and community.

National and global guidelines for community engagement<sup>1</sup> gave the RMH a base for setting goals and planning how to consult with the community. We recognise that good engagement is based on principles of being purposeful, inclusive, respectful, open, and collaborative. It focuses on shared goals, easy

access, recognition, and shared power and knowledge.

To build meaningful engagement, we will focus on partnerships and a deep understanding of people's experiences. We will seek to understand people's needs through a social justice and health literacy lens.

More than 350 people have shared what they value most when using RMH services. They told us about their main barriers to getting care, their needs to feel included and safe, and how they want to be involved.

By following the recommendations in the Strategy, the RMH can improve its cultural safety and responsiveness. This will ensure that all patients, consumers and carers get safe, respectful and effective care. The strategy is focused on creating a welcoming space for everyone. It will continue to improve based on feedback and on changing needs.



# Strategic pillars



## Pillar 1 Create cultural safety

To create cultural safety, healthcare professionals and organisations must examine themselves and the impact of their own culture on healthcare service delivery.

Individual healthcare professionals and our health service as a whole must recognise and address factors that may affect quality of care. These include biases, attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, prejudices, structures, and characteristics that affect healthcare.

This involves ongoing self-reflection and self-awareness, where healthcare professionals and healthcare organisations hold themselves accountable for providing culturally safe care. The patient and their communities define what is culturally safe. This is measured as progress towards achieving health equity<sup>2</sup>.

For healthcare professionals and healthcare organisations like the RMH, this means there is a need to:

- practice cultural humility
- remove institutional racism
- take individual and organisational responsibility for removing barriers to cultural safety
- ensure ongoing cultural safety education and training
- create self-determination.



## Pillar 2 Build mutual trust

This strategy is about building mutual trust. Mutual is a key word, as building meaningful partnerships is about relationships, and effective relationships are based on trust. We understand that trust between individuals and healthcare practitioners creates safe interactions. It also leads to greater equity in care, improved access to services, and better overall health and wellbeing<sup>3,4</sup>.

Building trust must happen within a range of contexts and relationships including:

- between the patient, consumer or carers, and health care professional
- between the community and our health service
- between patients, consumers and their family members, caregivers, or supporters.

This is especially important for those who are experiencing mental ill-health. Trust is vital for working well together in all these areas<sup>4</sup>.

One way to build trust is through strong community engagement that leads to clear action<sup>5</sup>. This strategy aims to create a culture of trust through a shared understanding that:

- it's essential to listen to and believe people and value their lived experiences
- we need to empower people to be involved in their care in the way that they choose
- to cocreate healthcare, we must co-design and deliver with consumers, carers, and community to improve outcomes for all.





# Pillar 3

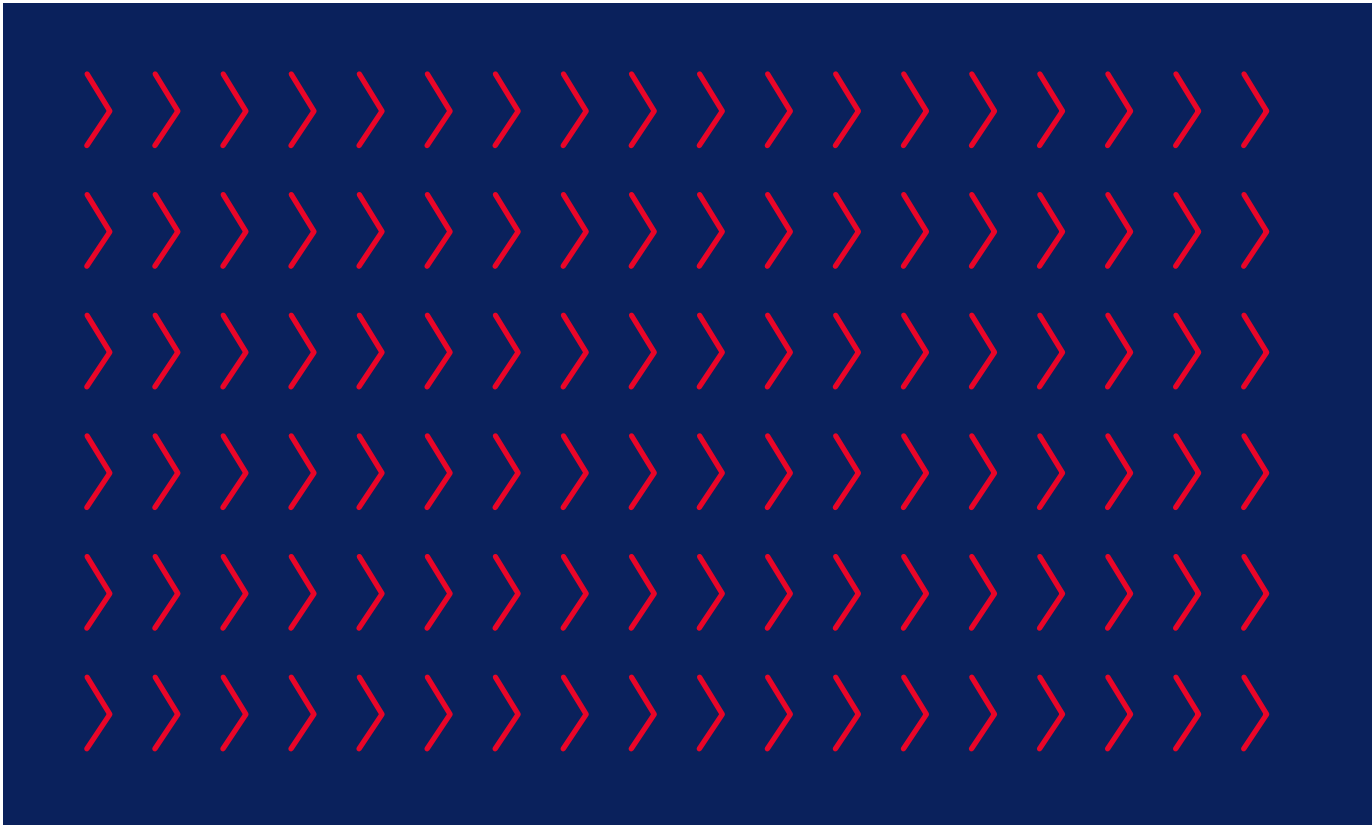
## Use an intersectional approach

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, disability, and gender, as they apply to a given individual or group of people. These overlapping and interdependent systems create unique experiences of discrimination or disadvantage<sup>6,7</sup>.

We acknowledge that people are multidimensional in their identity and background, experiences, and health issues or concerns. The inequities and discrimination a person faces do not happen in isolation. They are the “outcome of intersections of different social locations, power relations and experiences”<sup>7</sup>.

This strategy will build the capability of the RMH and enable us to apply an intersectional approach to service delivery and design. This means we will:

- recognise in our service delivery and our systems that people are multidimensional, and our cultural identities, experiences, values and beliefs all affect our wellbeing
- be curious in our interactions with each other
- recognise the impact of our own positionality and biases on our practice
- create an environment that supports individual choices to share information and experiences.



# Focus areas

## for actionable change

Focus area		Pillars
<b>Communication and information sharing</b>	Provide timely and equitable access for everyone to accurate translated and interpreted information.	<b>1 Cultural Safety</b>
	Provide clear, early information about hospital processes and care in plain language.	<b>2 Trust</b>
	Build staff capacity to communicate safely, listen and respond, and allocate time for consumers, carers and family members to ask questions and to provide meaningful information to them.	<b>1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality</b>
	Clarify patient preferences for values-based care.	<b>1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality</b>
	Use multiple platforms (including digital) to communicate information that patients, consumers and carers can understand and relate to.	<b>2 Trust 3 Intersectionality</b>
	Use multiple platforms for story-telling including sharing good news stories.	<b>2 Trust 3 Intersectionality</b>
<b>Access and navigation</b>	Improve navigation of RMH services before arriving and on arrival at hospital.	<b>1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality</b>
	Improve community awareness of RMH services.	<b>1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality</b>
	Provide adequate and personalised support when people come to RMH.	<b>1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality</b>

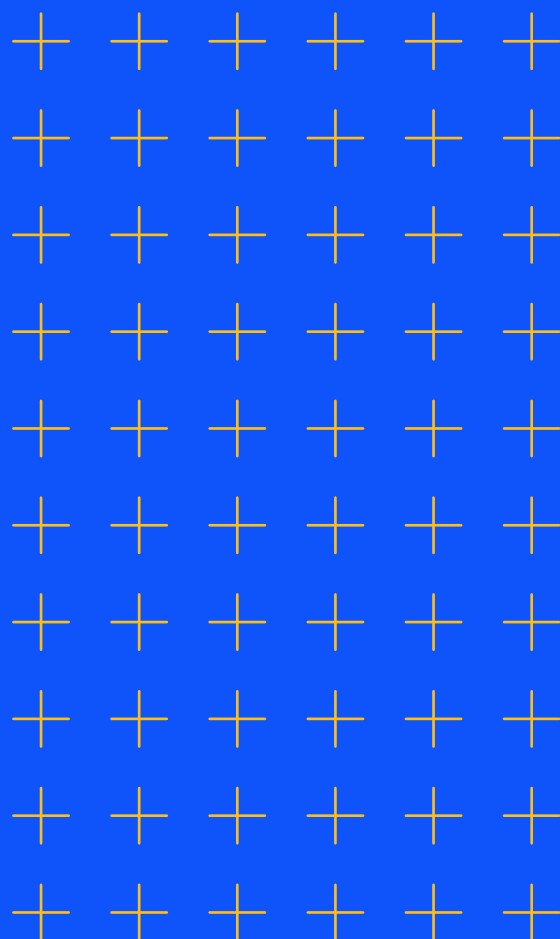
Focus area		Pillars
<b>Partnerships</b>	Commit to meaningful engagement that values diversity and lived experiences.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Recognise and pay consumers and carers for their involvement in their partnership role.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Know the communities we serve and actively participate in health promotion activities.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Build formal, external partnerships with expert services and community groups.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Use codesign processes and activities led by consumers and carers in a consistent way.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
<b>Attitudes and awareness</b>	Provide focused training on person-centered care and building empathy to build trust and inclusion.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Adapt behaviour change model to codesign training in cultural safety and intersectionality.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Learn from each other through collaboration and build on each other's knowledge and strengths.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Understand and uphold the rights of consumers and carers in every interaction with our health service.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Provide training on digital patient applications and platforms.	2 Trust 3 Intersectionality
	Provide information about community referral pathways and support options for clinicians and patients, consumers and carers.	1 Cultural safety 2 Trust 3 Intersectionality

# How will RMH implement and monitor the Strategy?

A plan will be developed to guide the implementation of the Strategy. The plan will address the areas for change that came out of our Strategy consultations. The implementation plan will also list the activities and timelines for each action.

The Strategy will be evaluated through feedback from consumers and carers. This feedback will allow us to assess the effectiveness of the Strategy and whether activities meet the needs of patients, consumers, carers and community members. Staff will also be involved in the evaluation process to provide evidence of organisational change.

The RMH Standard 2 Partnering with Consumers Committee will monitor the Strategy's progress and will report to the RMH Community Advisory Committee.



# **“In this together”...**

## **Consumer, carer community perspectives**

*“It was a lovely surprise to see halal menu in Melbourne.”*

*“A guessing game...need a good idea of what to expect before walking through the doors.”*

*“This is the first time in my life that I have felt part of a community [since attending Waratah Community Mental Health Clinic and linked with peer groups].”*



*“We feel, staff say, ‘we’re overworked and tired, you’re in our way’.”*

*“...that’s the talk in the community around hospitals, that hospitals now are just for the very, very, very sick.”*

*“I had to be my dad’s social worker to make sure information is passed properly.”*



## Staff perspectives



*“We need avenues to share accurate information with communities.”*

*“We need information for clinicians to understand available community services and who coordinates a patient’s care in the community.”*

*“The importance of building relationships with wider community agencies to help improve consumer access to support.”*

*“Thank you for trying to make more community engagement happen.”*







# Further recognition

## **Patients, Consumers, Carers, Community members and staff**

The Royal Melbourne Hospital recognises all people who generously took part in the community consultations, by survey, focus groups or community workshops. We thank you for your time and valuable insights and openly sharing your experiences. We have listened to your perspectives and lived experiences. With this Strategy we commit to making things better.

## **Steering Committee**

We also want to thank the Strategy Steering Committee for their guidance and commitment to a meaningful, impactful outcome that will lead to positive change. We thank the expertise and experiences of our mental health lived experience workforce and participants. You have ensured that this Strategy addresses the finer points of mental health and access to safe and effective mental health support.

## **Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative**

It was a key highlight to work with the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative to cocreate this Strategy. We thank the team at the Collaborative for their rich expertise, networks, and collaboration. We are delighted that a partnership based on reciprocity led to deep collaboration in creating this important piece of work. We both agree this Strategy will create significant positive change.





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