

# Our health services support people to be healthy, thriving members of NSW.



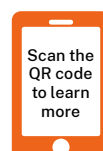
NSW Health's policies, plans and services recognise, respect and embrace the cultural and linguistic diversity of our people.

NSW is one of the most culturally diverse states in the world.

At the last Census in 2021, 8.1 million people called NSW home. More than half of the state's population were either born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas.

More than 2.2 million people in NSW speak a language other than English at home. This is higher than any other State in Australia.

The [NSW Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities](#) and the [NSW Refugee Health Plan](#) affirm our commitments and provide essential guidance to the NSW Health system to improve healthcare for people from multicultural and refugee backgrounds.



◀ Visit our [website](#)



## Multicultural and refugee health services

Our local and statewide multicultural health services aim to support equitable access to health care services that are culturally responsive, safe and high quality.

Statewide specialist multicultural and refugee health services increase the capacity of the health system as well as providing clinical services to target populations, in particular vulnerable populations from multicultural and refugee backgrounds.

Statewide services have diverse responsibilities, which include providing:

- Training for health staff
- Service development and service delivery
- System-wide communications and media campaigns
- Health promotion initiatives
- Policy and advocacy support

Statewide services are hosted by local health districts across NSW.



## NSW Health Care Interpreter Services

Patients, their families and carers who do not speak English as a first language or who are Deaf have the right to free, confidential and professional interpreters when they use public health services in NSW.

Accurate communication is essential to providing health care that is safe and high quality. NSW Health provides interpreting services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, onsite or by telephone in over 120 languages, including Auslan. Our interpreters and translators provide critical clinical support services for patients and staff.

NSW Health has a unique model of providing interpreting services through five NSW Health Care Interpreter Services (HCIS). The HCIS are hosted by local health districts and employ a permanent staff of highly skilled professionally certified interpreters.



## Multilingual health information

Multilingual health information is available for patients, carers and communities who speak and read a language other than English. Translated NSW Health information is made available on the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS) website.

The MHCS also provides advice on multilingual health communication and engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

◀ The Service has developed specific resources for refugee communities, which are available on their website and include:

- Developing health resources for people from refugee backgrounds: Best practice guide for NSW Health staff.
- NSW Health Care System Information Booklet in multiple languages.
- Testimonial videos from health and community workers engaging closely with refugee communities.



## Events

Statewide events acknowledge, promote and celebrate cultural diversity across NSW Health services.

They include Multicultural Health Week, the Multicultural Health Communication Awards and Refugee Week.

## Multicultural Health Week 2023



**Celebrate Culture Through Movement:  
Every Move Counts**

# Multicultural Health



◀ The NSW Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities 2019-2023 affirms the commitment of NSW Health to the principles of the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000: All individuals in NSW should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of, and participate in, relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the NSW Government.* A summary of the plan is available in multiple languages online.

Local multicultural health services, together with statewide specialist multicultural and refugee health services play a critical role in building the capacity of the health system.

Some statewide services focus on specific populations, whilst others focus on health conditions or areas of need, for example:

The **Transcultural Mental Health Centre** works with mental health services and with multicultural, ethno-specific and community agencies to reduce stigma related to mental illness and enhance mental health literacy and knowledge about pathways to care.

It operates Australia's first Transcultural Mental Health Line, staffed by registered bilingual mental health professionals who can provide mental health support in up to 30 languages.

The **Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service** works with culturally diverse communities and with health services to improve health and wellbeing in relation to HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. The service implements health promotion, community development and media initiatives, as well as offering individual assistance to people living with HIV.

The Service recognises that community participation and cultural input are central to better health for people from CALD backgrounds.

Other NSW Health organisations also play a key role, for example the Cancer Institute NSW runs specialist programs to identify and address the needs of multicultural communities and improve cancer outcomes. They provide information and resources in 43 languages on cancer prevention, screening, treatment, and clinical trials.



## Multicultural Policies and Services Program reporting

The NSW Ministry of Health's Health and Social Policy Branch provides leadership and guidance around statewide multicultural and refugee health policy.

It also advises and reports on policies, programs and initiatives which support the health of people from multicultural backgrounds.

◀ The 2020-22 NSW Health MPSP Report outlines NSW Health activities from 2020 to 2022.

Singling out initiatives across a system as large and complex as NSW Health is challenging and only gives a partial view of the work being undertaken. However, this report highlights some of the essential work across the system.



# NSW Health Care Interpreter Services

NSW Health has been providing professional health care interpreting services for more than 45 years.

In any healthcare situation where communication is essential, NSW Health policy is that health practitioners must engage health care interpreters for patients who are not fluent in English, including people who are Deaf.

Health care interpreters and translators provide a critical clinical support service, which is essential to ensure accessible, safe and high quality health care services for linguistically diverse communities in NSW.

NSW Health is the largest employer of professional interpreters and translators in NSW. NSW Health has a unique model of providing interpreting services through five NSW Health Care Interpreter Services (HCIS). HCIS are hosted by local health districts and employ a permanent staff of highly skilled professionally accredited interpreters.



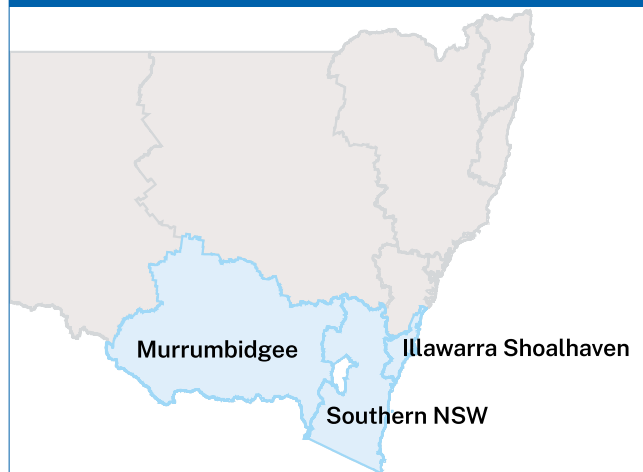
**Five HCIS provide full coverage across NSW, including regional and remote areas:**

## Hunter New England Local Health District (LHD) Health Care Interpreter Service



Coverage: Hunter New England LHD, Central Coast LHD, Mid North Coast LHD, Northern NSW LHD, Far West LHD and Western LHD

## Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Health Care Interpreter Service



Coverage: Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD, Murrumbidgee LHD and Southern NSW LHD

**Sydney  
Local Health District  
Sydney Health Care Interpreter Service**



Coverage: Sydney LHD, South Eastern Sydney LHD, St Vincent's (Darlinghurst), Sydney Children's Hospital (Randwick) and Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network

**South Western Sydney  
Local Health District  
Health Language Services**



Coverage: South Western Sydney LHD

**Western Sydney  
Local Health District  
Health Care Interpreter Service**



Coverage: Western Sydney LHD, Northern Sydney LHD, Nepean Blue Mountains LHD, the Children's Hospital (Westmead) and St Joseph's Hospital

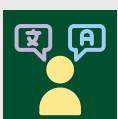
There are more than 200 languages spoken in NSW today. The 2021 census shows that over 360,000 people in our State don't speak English well or at all.

When linguistically diverse patients access public health care services, NSW HCIS provide life enhancing, and at times life-saving, communication supports.



Scan the QR code to learn more

◀ For more information and contacts to **NSW Health Care Interpreting Services**



## Engaging translators

If a health practitioner requires written translation of documents for a patient's care, they contact their local HCIS for assistance. Only professional translators should provide translations of health material.

The following Translation Services/Units are available in NSW Health:

- [Multicultural Health Communication Service](#)
- [Hunter New England LHD](#)
- [Sydney LHD](#)
- [South Western Sydney LHD](#)
- [Western Sydney LHD](#)

# Refugee Health



Since 2015, more than 35,000 people from refugee backgrounds have settled in NSW. This is approximately one third of all refugees who have resettled in Australia.

People from refugee backgrounds, including people who are seeking asylum, contribute significantly to Australia's social, cultural, and economic life. As well as their strengths, people from refugee backgrounds also have unique needs and challenges in keeping healthy. Meeting these needs is critical because when people are healthy, they are better able to work, study, engage, contribute and have a sense of inclusion and belonging.

◀ The NSW Refugee Health Plan 2022-2027 guides NSW Health's provision of healthcare to people from refugee backgrounds. It commits NSW Health

to providing culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and strengths-based specialised health services to support people to be healthy, thriving members of NSW. An overview of the plan is available in multiple languages [online](#).

Many of NSW Health's refugee health services form a 'gateway' to appropriate healthcare, conducting assessments and directing people to the right services for ongoing routine healthcare or to specialised services such as the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) and the Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees (MH-CLSR) program.



## NSW Health's commitment to refugee health

NSW was one of the first jurisdictions in the world to acknowledge the special health needs of people from refugee backgrounds with the establishment of STARTTS in 1988 and the [NSW Refugee Health Service](#) in 1999.

Since then, NSW Health's commitment to providing access to health services for people from refugee backgrounds has grown significantly. NSW Health currently invests more than \$20 million annually into specialised services to ensure the right supports are in place to help newly arrived refugees rebuild their lives in NSW. This investment includes:

- [NSW Refugee Health Nurse Program](#): undertakes health assessments for newly arrived refugees

and has assisted more than 20,000 people across NSW since 2012.

- [MH-CLSR program](#): aims to help refugees and asylum seekers with, or at risk of mental health conditions, to recover and live in the community with as little ongoing help as possible.

It is part of a suite of community-based psychosocial support programs called the NSW Mental Health Community Living Programs. The MH-CLSR program was established in 2019 and is run in locations where primary and secondary settlement of refugees is concentrated.

- Multidisciplinary teams in metropolitan and regional NSW to assist people with complex health needs, and support access to the NDIS and My Aged Care
- Specialist paediatric clinics in hospitals
- GP and nurse-led health clinics for asylum seekers living in the community.



## Refugee Health Flexible Fund

◀ NSW Health invested in its first [Refugee Health Flexible Fund](#) in 2020 which has supported [15 projects](#) to respond to priorities set out in the [NSW Refugee Health Plan](#). The projects address local and statewide needs, including in regional NSW. The Fund enhances collaboration across NSW Health and with partners and communities.

- ◀ For example, the Agency for Clinical Innovation produced the online resource [Delivering healthcare to refugee communities in regional NSW](#).

This innovative website provides information and guidance on the elements required to establish a new refugee health service. It will support future settlement in regional NSW.

# Resources



STARTTS: Refugee Transitions magazine



## Demographic data and reports

- AIHW: web report on [\*Health of refugees and humanitarian entrants in Australia\*](#)
- BHI Insights Reports: [\*Experiences of linguistically diverse patients in hospital\*](#) & [\*Patients' experiences of virtual care in 2022\*](#)
- Cancer Institute NSW: [\*Multicultural demographic data summaries\*](#) for services and policy makers across NSW Health.



## Guides, Newsletters and Project websites

- Agency for Clinical Innovation: [\*Delivering healthcare to refugee communities in regional NSW\*](#)
- Australian Association of Social Work (AASW), RHS and STARTTS: [\*Guide for Social Workers – Working with people from refugee backgrounds\*](#)
- Cancer Institute NSW: [\*Multicultural Program Update\*](#)
- HNELHD Multicultural and Refugee Health Service: [\*LanguageMatters\*](#)
- NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service: [\*Translated Health Resources for Refugee Communities\*](#) and [\*Best practice guide for NSW Health Staff\*](#)
- NSW Refugee Health Service (RHS): [\*Refugee eNews\*](#) and [\*NSW Refugee Health Seminar Series\*](#)
- STARTTS: [\*Refugee Transitions\*](#) magazine, [\*Research Symposia\*](#), free on-demand [\*webinars\*](#), and [\*Hints for Healing\*](#) web resource



## Training

The Health Education and Training Institute provides online courses and videos for NSW Health staff, including:

- [\*Culturally Responsive Health Care\*](#)
- [\*Meeting the Healthcare Needs of Refugees\*](#)
- [\*How to work with health care interpreters video series\*](#)

The NSW Refugee Health Service provides specialised training and support for health staff in hospitals, community health centres and other health services. In most cases training is provided for free to health service staff. Training opportunities are also regularly advertised in RHS' Refugee Health [\*eNews\*](#).

STARTTS provides targeted training on topics relating to refugee health, with a focus on trauma-informed and culturally responsive care. STARTTS trains thousands of workers, volunteers and students every year to feel more confident working with people who have experience torture and refugee trauma. Training is free for NSW Health staff.

Statewide services, HCIS and Multicultural Health Services in local health districts and specialty health networks also provide training and consultancy services to health staff and services in their geographical areas.

NSW Health staff should contact their [\*local multicultural health contact\*](#) to find out more.



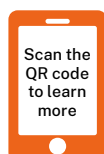
## Notes

Produced by the Community Care and Priority Populations Unit,  
Health and Social Policy Branch, NSW Ministry of Health

For more information visit: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/multicultural](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/multicultural)

Or contact: [MOH-Multicultural@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:MOH-Multicultural@health.nsw.gov.au)

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▶ Online access to this booklet which includes hyperlinks to resources