



Making Queenslanders **Australia's healthiest people**

Advancing Health Action



Message from the Premier and the Minister for Health

Our hospitals and health services have undergone dramatic changes during the past three years.

In 2005, we began a \$10 billion Health Action Plan that's laid the foundation for a better public health system with unprecedented new funding, widespread reform, new technologies and a flood of new doctors and nurses.

Halfway into the plan, we now have an extra 5200 nurses, 1600 doctors and 1900 radiographers, physios, speech therapists, dieticians and other allied health workers.

They're now treating and helping 15,500 Queenslanders every single day — 1700 more than three years ago.

Right now, we're also building and rebuilding hospitals throughout the State.

We've made great strides and the five-year action plan will build on those gains over the next two years.

But we can do more to build a world-class health system, and tackle some serious challenges now and into the future.

Health experts agree our increasingly unhealthy lifestyles would threaten to cripple any system in the world.

We all have a responsibility to ourselves, our family and friends to do all that we can to stay healthy.

Did you know...

- If we continue with poor diets and limited exercise, this generation of children will be the first to die younger than their parents.
- Serious preventable conditions like type 2 diabetes, emphysema, and kidney failure cost the Queensland economy an estimated \$6 billion every year.
- In Queensland, 6 out of 10 men and 4 out of 10 women are considered overweight or obese.

The situation will only get worse if left unchecked.

The good news is that by working together we can do something about it.

The future wellbeing and wealth of our State relies on healthy people, healthy communities and a healthy workforce. Health care will always be there when we need it but our health system is under pressure from too many serious preventable illnesses.

Our system is also contending with a growing and ageing population, high birth rates, increasing cases of mental illness and an unacceptable gap in Indigenous life expectancy.

This is why prevention, early action and new forms of treatment are so important.

That means shaping a strong system that steps in before you need to be admitted to hospital and provides health care closer to your home.

In *Advancing Health Action*, our Government has outlined five key challenges we need to tackle if Queenslanders are to become the healthiest in Australia. We'll be talking with you about how, together, we intend to reach our targets.

The Queensland Government will target five key challenges to advance health action.

1. CHALLENGE – Expanding our health services to meet the needs of a growing population

Queensland is the fastest growing state, with population growth nearly double the national average.

Hospital admissions are also expected to double over the next 13 years, to about 2.7 million annually.

Also, Queensland is Australia's most decentralised state.

Nowhere in the world will you find an organisation that provides the range and quality of free health services across the most widely dispersed population than in Queensland.

This year Queensland has a health infrastructure program of more than \$1 billion funding more than 100 projects – the largest in Australia.

But it's not just about bricks and mortar, we also need to grow our health services and adopt new, smarter ways of looking after you.

Target

Reduce public hospital waiting times.



2. CHALLENGE – Stemming the devastating tide of preventable disease

Chronic diseases are serious, largely preventable illnesses requiring lifelong specialist care. Most, such as heart and lung disease and some cancers, can be attributed to unhealthy lifestyles.

Compared to other states, Queensland has the highest percentage of men who smoke (29%), are overweight or obese (60%) and who don't undertake regular physical activity (68%).

Similarly, one in five Queensland women smoke and over 70 per cent do not exercise regularly.

Queensland men and women are also ranked second and third worst in the country for drinking alcohol at risky levels.

One in four Queenslanders aged 25 years and over either have type 2 (preventable) diabetes or pre-diabetes, and children as young as five now have type 2 diabetes. Only a decade ago, this was solely considered an adult condition.

Each year, 4300 Queenslanders die prematurely from preventable diseases.

Target

Cut obesity, heavy drinking, smoking and unsafe sun exposure.



3. CHALLENGE – Giving mothers and babies the best start

Queensland has a baby boom with 60,000 babies born every year.

Most babies are born in public hospitals and the health of Queensland children is high by international standards.

However, Queensland has the highest infant mortality rate in the country with five deaths per 1000 live births, exceeding the national average by 0.6 per cent.

Tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease, and Queensland children have significantly higher rates of tooth decay than the national average.

And there are significant gaps in birth outcomes for Indigenous babies and in access to services for families in rural and remote communities.

Target

Provide access to quality, best practice maternity and early childhood services for Queensland mothers no matter where they live.



4. CHALLENGE – Improving mental health care

Mental illness is a growing problem.

Currently, 940,000 Queenslanders – or more than 22 per cent of the population – are living with a mental illness.

One in four of these cases were alcohol or drug-inflicted.

Queenslanders also have a rate of suicide of 11 deaths per 100,000 people, higher than the national average of 10.

Our mental health services are stretched.

Target

Provide accessible public health services to all Queenslanders living with a severe mental illness.



5. CHALLENGE – Reducing the gap for rural communities and for all Indigenous Queenslanders

Country Queenslanders have poorer health than people in our major towns and cities.

The gap in life expectancy between people who live in remote areas and those who live in major cities is around 5.6 years. This is partly due to unhealthy and risky lifestyles, but also a failure to access health care when required.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live on average 18.7 years less for males (average life expectancy 58.9 years) and 20.2 years less for females (average life expectancy 62.6 years) than non-Indigenous Queenslanders.

The global shortage of health professionals is making it increasingly difficult to sustain medical services in country areas.

Target

Close the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous, and rural and remote Queenslanders.



For more information

Queensland Health – www.health.qld.gov.au

Diabetes Australia Queensland – www.diabetesqld.org.au

Heart Foundation – www.heartfoundation.org.au