

Translating research into practice

2014-2018

Family Planning NSW Research Plan



family
planning nsw
Reproductive & Sexual Health



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About Family Planning NSW

Family Planning NSW is the state's leading provider of reproductive and sexual health services. We are experts on contraception, pregnancy options, sexually transmissible infections (STIs), sexuality and sexual function, menstruation, menopause, common gynaecological and vaginal problems, cervical screening, breast awareness and men's sexual health.

We have five fixed clinics in NSW (Ashfield, Fairfield, Penrith, Newcastle and Dubbo) and use innovative partnerships to deliver services in other key locations across the state with more than 28,000 client visits annually. We provide information and health promotion activities, as well as education and training for doctors, nurses, teachers and other health, education and welfare professionals.

As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, we recognise that everybody in every family should have access to high quality clinical services and information, and we provide a safe place for people to talk about their most intimate and personal issues.

Our services are targeted to marginalised communities, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, refugees, people with disability, young people, people from rural and remote communities and same sex attracted people.

Family Planning NSW is working to assist poor and disadvantaged communities in the Asia Pacific region to access comprehensive reproductive and sexual health services. We collaborate with organisations at national and international levels to strengthen the ability of local health providers to deliver high quality family planning service.

Our work is evidence informed and shaped by our research through the Family Planning NSW Sydney Centre for Reproductive Health Research, our published clinical practice handbooks on reproductive and sexual health, our nationally recognised data and evaluation unit and validated through our own extensive clinical and education practice.

A message from the CEO



Since the launch of Family Planning NSW's research division in 1990, research has played a vital role in increasing the body of evidence in relation to reproductive and sexual health practice.

The following Family Planning NSW Research Plan 2014 – 2018 outlines our research strategy to achieve our vision - to be a leader in reproductive and sexual health research that translates into better health for all people through demonstrable improvements in clinical practice, education, training and health promotion.

In achieving this we will continue to strive for excellence in clinical and population health research and in the evaluation of our own services with work grounded in strategic collaborations and formal project management. Our evidence-based approach is applied at all stages of our work, from assessment of need to project evaluation.

The following Research Plan outlines how we will focus on two key areas; providing leadership in setting reproductive and sexual

health research priorities; and increasing our research funding and building our research capacity.

Like the rest of our services our research efforts are targeted to marginalised communities including people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds; young people; those people living with a disability and people who are same-sex attracted.

We have a track record of achievements, and we are uniquely placed to support and conduct evidence-based research on family planning and adolescent reproductive and sexual health in a range of settings in low-income countries and to develop suitable programmes to implement research findings. An important part of our strategy is to attract new funding from governments, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, industry, academic and research institutions and not-for profit funders to enable us to broaden our research efforts.



Support from our partners continues to be paramount if we are to develop a global research response to address unmet need for family planning and generate research interventions designed to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies.

I would like to acknowledge our outstanding research team. With their continued dedication and hard work Family Planning NSW will continue to support research projects through participation in multi-centre clinical trials by pharmaceutical companies and through funding from relevant national and international research bodies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Brassil'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and 'B'.

Ann Brassil

Chief Executive Officer

BSc (Psych) Hons MA (Hons) Clin Psych MBA FAICD

Family Planning NSW: a proud research history

The Family Planning NSW Sydney Centre for Reproductive Health Research was established in 1990 to bring a strong Australian perspective to the study of reproductive and sexual health and to ensure that information and clinical services provided by Family Planning NSW were not only evidence-based but were capable of adapting to the challenges and changes in reproductive and sexual health practice in Australia and internationally.

Since the centre's inception, Family Planning NSW has been involved in more than 100 research studies including investigations of new contraceptive methods such as patches, implants and vaginal rings as well as new pill formulations. Family Planning NSW has also contributed to the understanding of gynaecological problems such as heavy menstrual bleeding and female sexual function during menopause.

We have participated in many international multi-centre studies, collaborated with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Population Council and conducted clinical studies in partnership with pharmaceutical companies, Australian universities and other research institutions.

The Family Planning NSW Ethics Committee was established in May 2000 to provide an independent review mechanism for all research proposals. The committee is a Human Research Ethics Committees registered with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and guided by rigorous standards, including those articulated in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). Today, the Family Planning NSW Ethics Committee also receives research proposal applications for ethical review from external researchers.

As the premier provider of integrated primary and secondary reproductive and sexual health services in NSW, Family Planning NSW ensures services are targeted to community needs, that interventions have a positive impact on reproductive and sexual health outcomes in targeted communities and that funding bodies, including governments, support the organisation to increase its reach and effectiveness.

In 2006, Family Planning NSW established a data and evaluation unit to assist in the monitoring and evaluation of services to ensure

the effectiveness of Family Planning NSW service delivery. The Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, with its skills and competencies in biostatistics, epidemiology, data management and data linkage, plays a key role in gathering, analysing and disseminating reproductive and sexual health data for use by governments, professional colleges, health practitioners and the community. The data are used to inform planning for service delivery, establishing benchmarks of best practice and informing government about key issues in reproductive and sexual health. The Unit also has a research management role, including providing support to the Family Planning NSW Ethics Committee and guiding Family Planning NSW staff in the development of research proposals. Robust data and information systems are in place to provide performance and management reports to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of interventions and to enable outcomes to be monitored.

Family Planning NSW has a proud and strong history of achievement in research and research translation. Our aim is to build on these strengths to ensure we remain a leader in evidence-based reproductive and sexual health practice.

Introduction



Since its research beginnings in 1990, Family Planning NSW has worked collaboratively with communities, government and non-government organisations, clinicians, universities, research institutes and industry to develop a research program of national relevance.

We focus on translating research findings into clinical practice and guiding medical professionals, government and other decision-making bodies on best practice reproductive and sexual health service delivery.

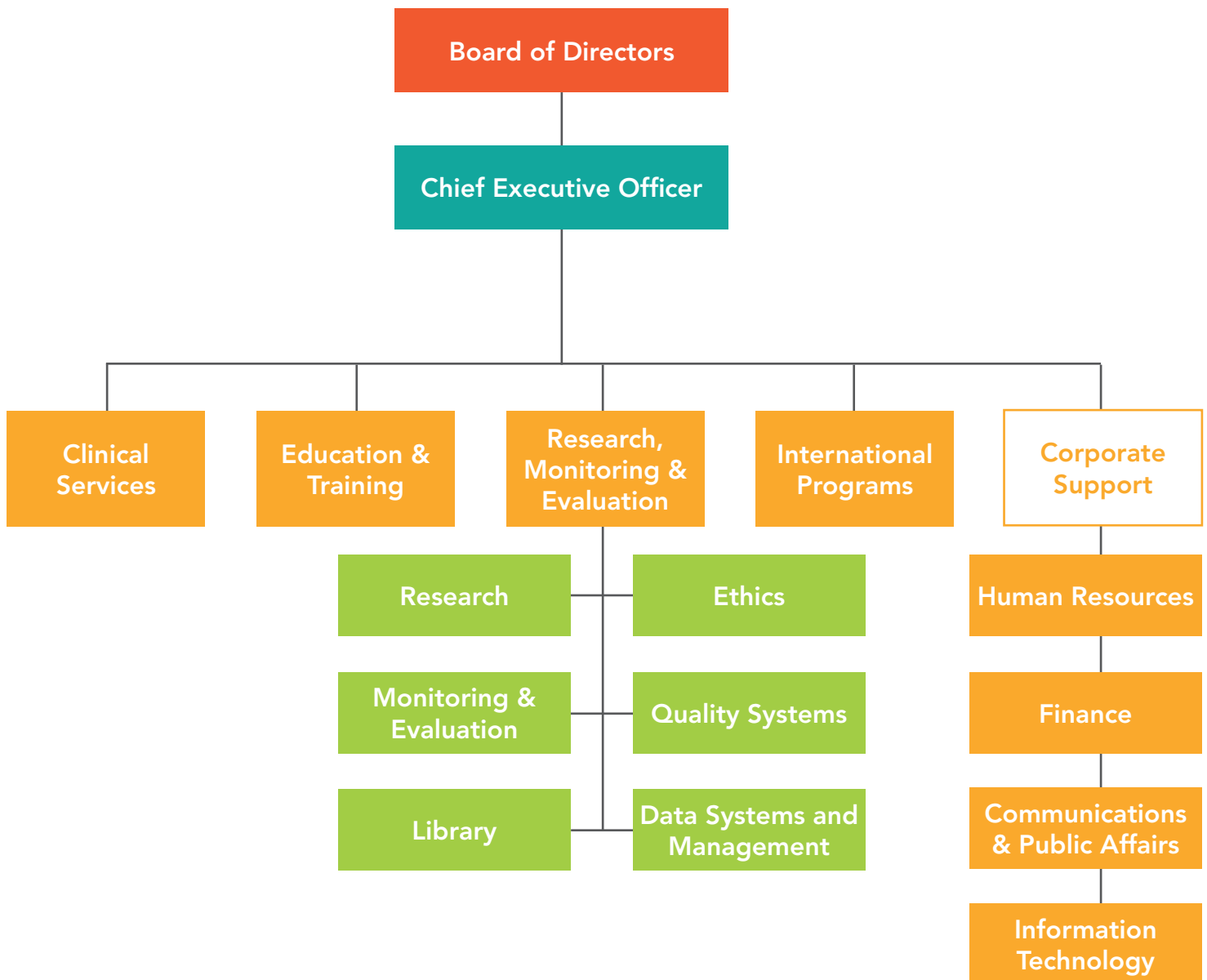
We strive for excellence in clinical and population health research and in the evaluation of our own services. Our work is grounded in strategic collaborations and formal project management. Our evidence-based approach is applied at all stages of our work, from assessment of need to project evaluation.

We collaborate on research projects of national and international significance, establishing links with universities, health services, the corporate sector,

and state and national research bodies. These collaborative partnerships have opened the door to:

- new opportunities for research into reproductive and sexual health issues including long acting contraceptives, heavy menstrual bleeding, menopause, sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and sexual health behaviour
- train doctors, nurses and other health professionals in reproductive and sexual health
- conduct reproductive and sexual health needs assessments for marginalised communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, young people and people from rural and remote communities
- comprehensively review the reproductive and sexual data available in NSW and Australia in order to describe the health of NSW and Australian communities, determine areas where improved data collection would refine our understanding and assist in the identification of areas of research, policy review, health care, health promotion and education

Organisational Chart



In 2009, Family Planning NSW commissioned the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney to conduct a review of Family Planning NSW's research operations. The review found that while Family Planning NSW's research enterprise is small in scale, it is efficient and productive and has made important contributions to knowledge and clinical practice in reproductive and sexual health, within Family Planning NSW and beyond.

The review also concluded that Family Planning NSW is uniquely placed to carry out translational research and noted that there are few organisations in Australia undertaking substantial research on reproductive and sexual health on issues aligning with Family Planning NSW's research agenda. Moreover, as a leading clinical service, the review noted that Family Planning NSW is uniquely placed to develop a viable, expanded research capacity.

The Context

As a leader in reproductive and sexual health services, our clinical practice and other programs are underpinned by research that is both strategic and relevant to the needs of the community. In particular we target our research efforts to support communities including:

- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- ▶ people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
- ▶ young people
- ▶ people with disability
- ▶ same-sex attracted people

Research in reproductive and sexual health in the Australian policy environment is severely limited by the lack of an overarching strategy. While a significant, ongoing program of research is underway, it tends to be driven by the pharmaceutical industry and is primarily focused on clinical trials of new products or delivery mechanisms. One of the limitations of clinical

trials is the focus on idealised, very healthy, trial populations which actively exclude marginalised and disadvantaged people and people with complex health problems who nevertheless require contraception and other reproductive and sexual health services.

Family Planning NSW has an emerging national as well as state role in the delivery of leadership and advocacy for reproductive and sexual health research.

Our practice experience tells us there is a need for population-based research that informs 'real life' issues such as contraceptive choices and the factors that influence acceptability and risky behaviours. There is also a need for a national system for monitoring reproductive and sexual health through routinely collected population-based data on contraceptive use, termination of pregnancy and infertility. This information is essential for the planning and evaluation of policy and programs.

The Family Planning NSW Research Plan 2014-2018 aligns with key government strategies, including:

- ▶ *The New South Wales Health Strategy 2011-2015*¹ to promote the generation and use of high quality, relevant research to improve policy and program effectiveness which leads to better population health and reduces health inequities in NSW.
- ▶ *The New South Wales Health Framework for Women's Health 2013*² to deliver services and foster environments in NSW in which women can meet their physical, social and economic potential, by increasing opportunities for women to be healthy at every stage in their lives and preventing avoidable detrimental health outcomes such as chronic disease. The purpose of this framework is to identify health needs particular to women (whether biological or social), to deliver appropriate healthcare and health-promoting services, and to monitor interventions on groups of women at most risk of poor health.
- ▶ *The New South Wales Health and Medical Research Strategic Review 2012*³ to establish a global reputation for NSW as a resilient, innovative centre of excellence of health and medical research that strongly supports a high quality health system.
- ▶ *The National Health and Medical Research Council Strategic Plan 2013-2015*⁴ to create new knowledge through supporting discovery research, accelerating research translation, building Australia's future capability for research and translation, setting high standards in ethics in health care and research and working with partners – state and territories, health bodies, health industries and community and consumer groups.
- ▶ *The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) Research Strategy*⁵ to improve the quality and effectiveness of Australian aid in developing countries.

Research funding context for a non-government organisation



As a non-government organisation, Family Planning NSW is constrained in its ability to attract grants in its own right from major funding bodies, including the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC). Accordingly, we partner with universities and research institutions to access these funds. The increased emphasis on multidisciplinary collaborative and partnership research does, however, work in Family Planning NSW's favour, given our outstanding clinical work, and our solid record of research collaboration and research translation.

To broaden our research efforts, we will strive to attract new funding, including from governments, Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), industry and not-for profit funders to broaden our research agenda and to conduct rigorous research and evaluation of clinical services, training and education, health promotion and international programs.

Family Planning NSW will continue to support research projects through participation in multi-centre clinical trials by pharmaceutical companies and through funding from relevant national and international research bodies.

OUR RESEARCH VISION

To be a leader in reproductive and sexual health research that translates into better health for all people through demonstrable improvements in clinical practice, education, training and health promotion.

In pursuing our research vision, we will:

- ▶ **provide leadership in setting reproductive and sexual health research priorities**
- ▶ **increase our research funding and build our research capacity**

We will retain our focus on the needs of specific communities and groups including:

- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- ▶ people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds
- ▶ young people
- ▶ people with disabilities
- ▶ same-sex attracted people

Key Focus Area 1

Provide leadership in setting reproductive and sexual health research priorities

Principles which guide our research priorities:

- ▶ our research assists in answering questions that arise in the course of our clinical, training and information service provision
- ▶ our research fills a significant gap in knowledge, policy, clinical practice (or individual behaviour) relating to reproductive and sexual health
- ▶ our research translates into changes in policy, clinical practice (or individual behaviour), within Family Planning NSW and beyond
- ▶ our research addresses current and emerging health system issues
- ▶ our research provides strategic value to Family Planning NSW's role as the leading reproductive and sexual health service in NSW.

In line with these principles, our research priorities for 2014-18 will strategically focus on:

- ▶ contraception and fertility management research
- ▶ reproductive and sexual health research and evaluation at a population level
- ▶ research on the impact of our reproductive and sexual health services and programs

These priorities are not intended to exclude other areas from the research agenda. Family Planning NSW will remain open to emerging issues, and opportunities in Australia and internationally for reproductive and sexual health research that align with our principles

KEY FOCUS AREA 1:

Provide leadership in setting reproductive and sexual health research priorities

Goal 1.1 PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN FERTILITY MANAGEMENT AND CONTRACEPTION RESEARCH

Strategies

- 1.1.1 Provide national leadership to develop, in conjunction with other Family Planning Organisations, a national clinical trial network
- 1.1.2 Strengthen Family Planning NSW's clinical trial infrastructure and training, and ensure clinical trial succession planning
- 1.1.3 Explore new strategies to recruit clinical trial participants and engage clinical staff
- 1.1.4 Explore new opportunities for participation in research relating to fertility management and contraception

Goal 1.2 PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH

Strategies

- 1.2.1 Strengthen our partnerships with governments and align with NSW and national reproductive and sexual health priorities
- 1.2.2 Provide national leadership to partner and develop, in conjunction with other Family Planning Organisations, a national health services research network
- 1.2.3 Lead the development of high quality population research in fertility management and contraception relevant to policy and practice
- 1.2.4 Provide national leadership to partner and develop, in conjunction with Family Planning Organisations, a national minimum dataset for monitoring Family Planning Organisation services
- 1.2.5 Partner with external organisations to advocate for population monitoring of key reproductive and sexual health indicators

Goal 1.3 PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN EVALUATING HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY PROGRAMS

Strategies

- 1.3.1 Integrate monitoring and evaluation into planning for all health service delivery programs across the organisation and with external partners
- 1.3.2 Undertake rigorous evaluation of Family Planning NSW policies and programs to ensure implementation of research evidence and adherence to best practice

Key Focus Area 2

Increase our research funding and build our research capacity

Strengthening our internal research capacity including:

- ▶ funding
- ▶ partnerships
- ▶ workforce
- ▶ infrastructure
- ▶ governance and communication.

KEY FOCUS AREA 2:

Increase our research funding and build our research capacity

Goal 2.1 EXPAND OUR RESEARCH FUNDING

Strategies

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 2.1.1 | Explore new research funding opportunities and increase the number of tender and grant submissions |
| 2.1.2 | Increase funded and unfunded collaborative projects |
| 2.1.3 | Establish a seeding grant program to support researchers to generate new evidence through collaboration among practitioners, clinicians, policy makers, health service managers, communities and academics |
| 2.1.4 | Expand funding opportunities through collaborations with universities and other leading clinical and research organisations and institutions |

Goal 2.2 BUILD COLLABORATIONS WITH RESEARCH PARTNERS

Strategies

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|-------|--|
| 2.2.1 | Establish national and international research collaborations that build capacity and support implementation of research, plan and foster translation, innovation and build research capacity |
| 2.2.2 | Provide national leadership in the development of a Family Planning health services research network |
| 2.2.3 | Explore opportunities to work in collaboration with population health research units , universities and other leading clinical, community and research organisations to expand research infrastructure |
| 2.2.4 | Explore opportunities to work with universities and other relevant organisations to support the establishment of multi-disciplinary collaborations which could include a Reproductive and Sexual Health Cooperative Research Centre and/or collaborative multidisciplinary centre(s) for research excellence |

Goal 2.3 DEVELOP OUR RESEARCH WORKFORCE

Strategies

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|-------|---|
| 2.3.1 | Strengthen the current research base by appointing staff with expertise in quantitative and qualitative research |
| 2.3.2 | Establish a visiting local and international researchers' program, targeted at early to mid-career researchers, which establishes and or enhances collaborative research projects |
| 2.3.3 | Explore opportunities to collaborate with universities to provide financial incentives through scholarship programs to attract high quality postgraduate students to undertake doctoral research at Family Planning NSW |
| 2.3.4 | Establish research internships for Honours or Masters level students to work on Family Planning NSW research and evaluation projects |
| 2.3.5 | Establish research in practice seminars / webinars aimed at Family Planning NSW staff to promote Family Planning NSW research excellence across the organisation |
| 2.3.6 | Explore opportunities to promote Family Planning NSW research excellence external to the organisation using mixed media and other promotional opportunities |
| 2.3.7 | Provide research and evaluation training for researchers and facilitate access to research support |
| 2.3.8 | Establish research and evaluation mentoring programs supported by Research, Monitoring, Evaluation staff across Family Planning NSW |
| 2.3.9 | Establish a six monthly research e-newsletter to market research outputs and opportunities at Family Planning NSW utilising new research networks and alumni of Family Planning NSW training and education |

Goal 2.4 IMPROVE OUR RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

Strategies

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|-------|---|
| 2.4.1 | Strengthen research infrastructure at Family Planning NSW through human resources, information technology and financial service processes |
| 2.4.2 | Develop core expertise in tender and grant writing |
| 2.4.3 | Strengthen Family Planning NSW monitoring, evaluation and population health research infrastructure to support organisational change |

Goal 2.5 STRENGTHEN OUR RESEARCH GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATION

Strategies

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|-------|---|
| 2.5.1 | Formalise external research leaders' strategic expertise through establishment of a Research Advisory Committee |
| 2.5.2 | Improve research ethics and governance data collection, management and analysis capabilities |
| 2.5.3 | Include research-related key performance measures within the Family Planning NSW Performance Management Framework |
| 2.5.4 | Strengthen strategies for the communication of research findings to the broader community |



References

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