overview
Health 2020 heralds a new future for Perth’s health system. It is a blueprint for clinical and financial reform that will significantly increase the ability of Perth’s health system to respond to the changing health needs of a rapidly growing population and the changing face of clinical practice as it enters the 21st century.

Many thousands of people from across urban and rural Western Australia participated in shaping Health 2020 by making their views known on the future of health services in Perth.

With changes in the demography of Perth, and with changing community expectations about health, the inner city can no longer be considered the focal point for the delivery of health services.

In 20 years time, two out of every three people will live in the outer metropolitan suburbs of Perth. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of people now receive their inpatient treatment in an inner city public hospital. There is compelling evidence that the pattern of capital investment has locked Perth into hospital services largely provided in the inner city.

The use of publicly funded health services is not evenly distributed across Perth, with areas of high use linked with low socioeconomic status following an arc from Mirrabooka and surrounds to Midland in the east through to Armadale in the south-east, and in the areas south of Fremantle, particularly Kwinana.

Rapid advances in new health technology and changes in clinical practice are leading to shorter hospital stays and enabling an increasing number of procedures to be carried out in community settings.

Demand for State funded health services is estimated to increase rapidly over the next ten years, and double by 2015, with most of the growth being in same-day services. This escalating demand, driven largely by a
growing and ageing population, together with advances in medical technologies which expand diagnosis and treatment options, has significant cost implications.

Health 2020 will enable Perth’s health services to respond flexibly to the varied and changing health needs of the population over the next 20 years.

A metropolitan-wide system of integrated health care will be introduced to promote continuity of care across the traditional boundaries of providers and health care facilities. This will be provided through new partnerships of clinicians known as Integrated Clinical Services.

Integrated Clinical Services will provide for the health needs of people in the most appropriate setting, as close to home as possible, and with a smooth transition from entry to exit.

Through Integrated Clinical Services the best standards of care will be disseminated and practised across the metropolitan area. People can expect, wherever they go to receive services, that there will be a system of uniformly high quality where people with the same clinical need will receive the same priority for services.

Opportunities for innovative partnerships between the public, private and non-government sectors that promote clinical integration and enhance the quality and range of services available to public patients will continue to be developed.

Perth’s health system will be redesigned to differentiate levels of complexity so that the right services can be provided in the right settings.

The inner city tertiary hospitals will focus on providing tertiary and quaternary level care for the whole State, together with secondary level care for people who live close by. Royal Perth Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital will provide complementary rather than parallel services wherever possible.

Secondary services will be developed in the middle and outer metropolitan areas so that people who live there can receive secondary health services in a range of settings closer to home. Many secondary services and outpatient services from the inner metropolitan hospitals, including adult, women’s, children’s and rehabilitation services, will be progressively devolved and expanded in population growth areas.

A range of specialist same-day services including outpatient, day medical and day surgical services will be provided in ambulatory care centres in a number of regional centres for communities who most need publicly funded health care.
Teaching of the health workforce will no longer be concentrated in the inner city hospitals but will take place across the range of settings in which health care is provided. Multi-professional research and teaching partnerships will see academic endeavour permeate the health services of the future.

The implementation of these changes will increase the proportion of inpatient services provided in the outer metropolitan areas from the current 75% in the inner city hospitals and 25% in the outer hospitals, to 40% in the inner city hospitals, 35% in the outer hospitals and 25% in the ambulatory care centres, by 2009/10. This target will be met by shifting secondary services currently provided in the inner city as well as by establishing new services to meet the health needs of the growing population.

It is essential that individuals and communities exercise choice over their own health care and exert influence on the future directions of the health system. Health 2020 will increase the accountability of the health system to the public of Western Australia. It will ensure that health services properly reflect the values and health needs of the community and publish health system information so that the public can make informed choices about the quality and outcomes of health care.

Investment in infrastructure will support metropolitan-wide clinical service needs. A targeted three-phase capital investment strategy will parallel the clinical reform agenda.

Clinical reforms go hand in hand with funding reforms. Sustainable funding for health care is required to meet escalating demand, largely driven by population growth, the ageing of the population and advances in medical technologies. Funding reforms will establish a sustainable funding path which takes into account the demand pressures for health care, introduces medium-term purchasing agreements with an appropriate time horizon for implementing reform programs, and aligns clinical and financial responsibility for these reforms through the Integrated Clinical Services.

Health 2020 proposes nine strategic directions that will enable the health system to meet future challenges and capture opportunities. A rolling program of evaluation of the key directions will be introduced to inform progress and ensure continuous improvement.