

Preventive Health Framework

Last updated 21 February 2023



CONTENTS

What is prevention?	4
Why have a framework?	4
Key considerations	5
The PHN's approach to preventive health care	7
Preventive health principles	8
Preventive health framework.....	9
Governance.....	9
Conclusion	9
Definitions	10
References	11

The Primary Health Network acknowledges
the traditional custodians of the lands
we walk, reside and work upon.

We pay our respects to First Nations people and value
the continued connection to culture, country, waterways
and contributions made to the life of our vast region.



**FIRST NATIONS
HEALTH**

Preventive health in the PHN

WHAT IS PREVENTION?

Australia's National Preventive Health Strategy¹ states that, "in the context of health, prevention includes taking measures to keep people healthy and well and to avoid the onset of illness, disease or injury." The goal of prevention is to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of the entire population, while simultaneously reducing health disparities between priority population groups and the general population.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines prevention as "approaches and activities aimed at reducing the likelihood that a disease or disorder will affect an individual, interrupting or slowing the progress of the disorder or reducing disability."²

The PHN has adopted these definitions of prevention.



WHY HAVE A FRAMEWORK?

The Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network's (hereafter 'the PHN') 2023-2028 Strategic Plan has three priority areas: Innovative Models of Care, Workforce, and Excellence in Capability, Delivery and Culture. Within these priority areas are three focus areas: First Nations Health, Digital Technology, and Partnerships.

The Preventive Health Framework contributes to all of these strategic areas, but particularly underpins innovative models of care and workforce.

The PHN's framework for preventive health is focused on people and their health. A key outcome expected is to inspire healthier people and communities by leveraging established systems and associated projects. This will be achieved through focus on, and delivery of the priorities associated with the strategic plan. This framework will also support increased understanding of how primary health care clinicians (allied health, general practitioners, nurses, pharmacy) contribute to a persons' wellbeing and how to access appropriate care in a timely way.

Since inception (2015), the PHN has leveraged its established regional partnerships to ensure a preventive health approach and outcomes focus is established for the communities it serves. The PHN also commissions services, and conducts activity focused on prevention in primary health care including quality improvement in the preventive health space.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Health promotion is closely linked to preventive health; both focused on keeping people healthy. As defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), “Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. It moves beyond a wide range of social and environmental interventions.”³ A preventive health care approach aims to minimise the burden of disease and associated risk factors. This is understood as specific, population based and individual based interventions for primordial, primary, and secondary (early detection) prevention.⁴ Preventive health measures can be applied at a systemic population-based level, at an individual and/or community level, and across all stages of a disease spectrum, to prevent further decline over time. Two of the biggest success stories in preventive health in Australia have been reductions in road deaths, and reduced tobacco smoking rates.

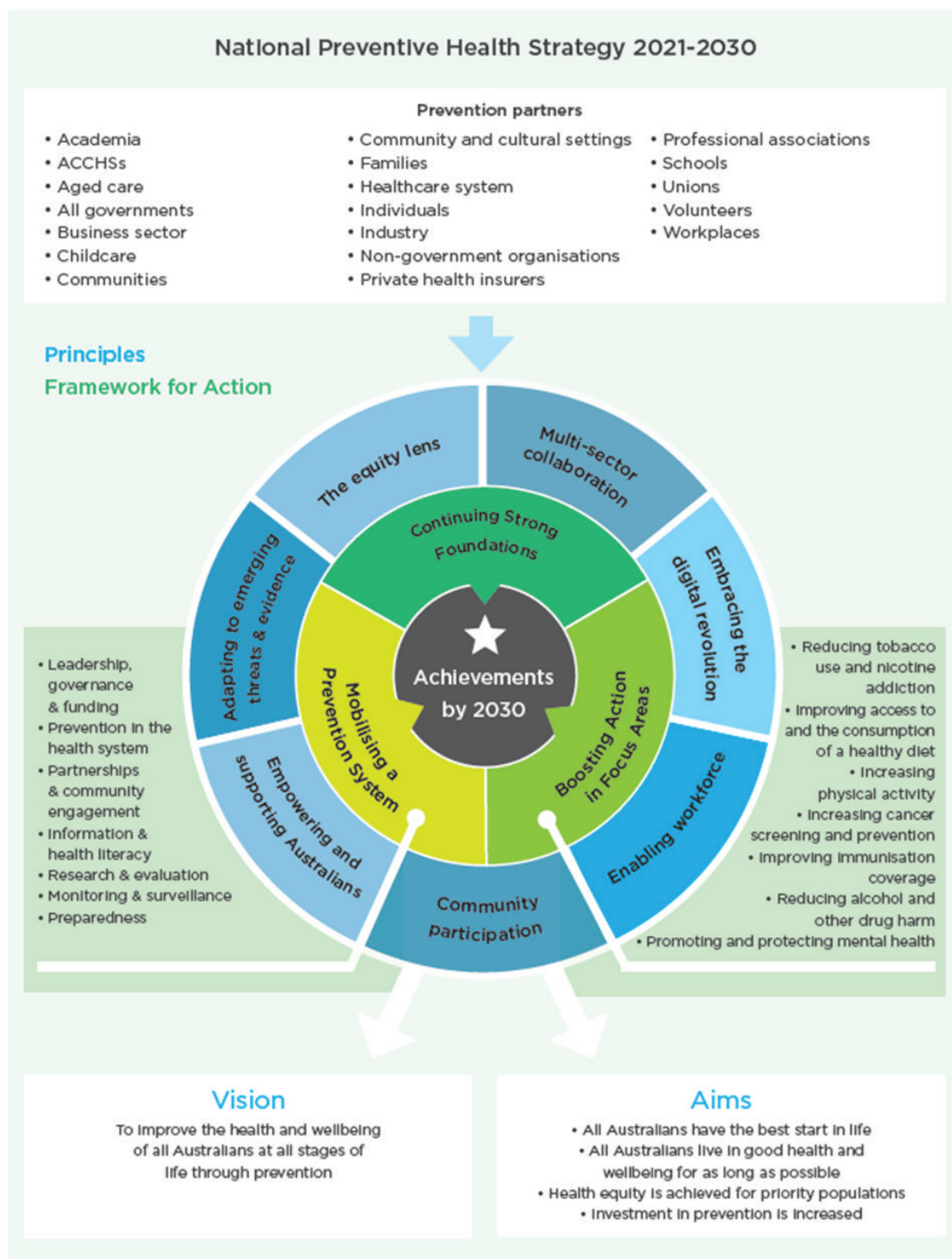
Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability worldwide, impacting significantly on health costs. Key risk factors associated with chronic disease include poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco smoking,

excessive alcohol consumption, high body mass and high blood pressure. These risk factors are largely preventable and can be reduced or eliminated through behavioural changes or managed with medical treatments.

The Quadruple Aim⁵ must be considered in the context of a preventive health framework. The components of the Quadruple Aim are enhanced patient experience, improved population health, reduced cost, and improved work life balance for health care providers (clinicians and staff).

Preventive health is a focus for the Australian government, supported by the release of the [National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030](#) in late 2021. This framework supports a long-term approach to prevention in Australia. It addresses the increasing burden of disease, reducing health inequity and increasing preparedness for emerging health threats. Seven key system enablers and seven key focus areas are identified to create long term sustainable change (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



Other relevant Commonwealth publications include (but are not limited to) the [‘National Obesity Strategy 2022-2032’](#) which contains a strong preventive health focus, and the [‘Future focused primary health care: Australia’s Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan 2022-2032’](#). The latter document focuses on the integration of primary health care with hospitals and other parts of the health system, aged care, disability care and social care systems. Its objectives include addressing access, closing the gap, keeping people well, continuity of care, integration, having a future focus, and safety and quality.

All of these objectives contribute to encouraging a preventive approach to health: building capacity and capability in people, and improved access to care within the system.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners provides targeted support to general practitioners in delivering preventive health care through their [Red](#) (guidelines) and [Green](#) (implementation) Books; the PHN encourages use of these resources through its primary care support function.

THE PHN'S APPROACH TO PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE

Preventive health care is achieved through an interdisciplinary approach to holistic care for each person and each community, whether they are healthy or significantly unwell. Prevention is a foundational component already built into the work the PHN undertakes (primordial, primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention approaches).

Along with having a people-first focus, the PHN is also strongly invested in supporting primary health care professionals to implement an interdisciplinary approach to preventive health care across the region through commissioning, educational opportunities, pilot projects, and resource development. The PHN leverages its partnerships with other organisations to ensure collaboration and a cohesive approach.

The PHN's 2022-2025 Needs Assessment identifies many needs relevant to preventive health; however, the following broad areas of identified need are specifically relevant to this framework:

- NxPH1 Low levels of health literacy
- NxPH2 Poor self-assessed health status
- NxPH4 Socioeconomic disadvantage
- NxPH6 Poorer health outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse populations
- NxPH26 Lack of prevention and early intervention services
- NxIH1 Poorer health outcomes for First Nations people.

The Commonwealth also supports a preventive health approach through the allocated Activity Work Plans (AWPs) for each PHN region and within each specific funding stream. For example, prevention is considered as a part of low intensity service development and delivery in primary mental health and is specifically mentioned in the Rural Health Access Strategy.

The PHN is currently supporting numerous preventive health activities across the region. Following are a limited number of examples.

- HNECC region, Healthy Weight Community Grants
- HNECC region, First Nations Aftercare Program
- Armidale NSW, Care Navigation Project for the Ezidi Community
- Central Coast NSW, Veteran Care Navigation Pilot
- HNECC region, Indigenous Mental Health, Care Coordination, Peer Navigation and Suicide Postvention Services
- HNECC region, Domestic Family Violence 'Healthy and Safe' Pilot.



PREVENTIVE HEALTH PRINCIPLES

The PHN has taken on the guiding principles listed in Australia's [National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030](#). These principles underpin support of a preventive health care approach within the Hunter, New England and Central Coast regions:

- 1. Multi-sector collaboration**
Multi-sector collaboration underpins recognition of the wider determinants of health. Collaboration includes being coordinated, transparent and monitored to support an integrated and evidence-based approach.
- 2. Enabling the workforce**
Multidisciplinary health care and ensuring top of scope practice for all health professionals will ensure that the workforce is available, educated, and capable of providing evidence-based, culturally safe, and responsive care.
- 3. Community participation**
Having a community and consumer involvement in dealing with complex prevention challenges is key in developing solutions that deal with the root causes. Place-based and co-designed approaches are led by communities and provide an understanding of local needs.
- 4. Empowering and supporting Australians**
Promotion of self-determination and self-care for the Australian public needs to be informed by evidence and be free from vested and commercial interest. It must focus on appropriate and targeted information, health promotion, and the structural and environmental factors that impact on individual autonomy.
- 5. Adapting to emerging threats and evidence**
Review of new science and the impact of emerging threats to health needs to occur continuously to ensure prevention efforts are appropriate to the current situation. Knowledge translation is key to prioritisation of effort.
- 6. The equity lens**
Promotion of equitable access to health care that is culturally safe and tailored to diverse community needs is key. A broad perspective on the external barriers that impact on health is important to address this area.
- 7. Embracing the digital revolution**
Focusing on a hybrid model of care within prevention is key, acknowledging that different aspects of prevention have different needs, and some may work best when digital technology is coupled with face-to-face interactions or when digital is used on its own. There is a focus on digital inclusion especially for priority populations, to ensure that technological advancements do not inadvertently deepen the equity divide in Australia.



PREVENTIVE HEALTH FRAMEWORK

The PHN has adopted the following framework which applies four levels of prevention. In the Australian context, it is noted that the first two categories (Level 1 and Level 2) are closely aligned; as outlined below, Level 1 prevention is system focused and Level 2 prevention is disease focused.

1. Level 1 prevention considers environmental, economic, social, behavioural, cultural patterns of living that are known to increase the future risk of disease. It looks at how these can be changed at a systemic level.

Level 1 prevention example: Discourage children from adopting a harmful lifestyle, through individual and mass education.

2. Level 2 prevention aims to prevent the onset of specific diseases by reducing known risk factors. This can include trying to alter behaviours or exposures that can lead to disease, or by enhancing resistance to the effects of exposure to a disease (vaccines).

Level 2 prevention example: Healthy eating campaigns.

3. Level 3 prevention includes putting in place procedures to detect negative physical changes and through this, begin to control whether a disease progresses or not. Screening procedures are often the first step, and this can then lead to early intervention to treat a disease.

Level 3 prevention example: Screening for cancer.

4. Level 4 prevention seeks to soften the impact of a disease or life stage on a person's function, longevity, and quality of life. The impact of a disease or stage of life can be moderated by changing behaviours and managing any associated risks.

Level 4 prevention example: Encouraging a change in behaviour in managing the disease and/or life stage (diabetes and weight management; older people and increasing frailty).



GOVERNANCE

The Preventive Health Framework is supported by an internal working group focused on priority setting and subsequent delivery.

Regarding monitoring, the framework and associated priorities will be reviewed by the appropriate Board sub-committee to ensure that it is adequately supporting the strategic plan, particularly in the areas of innovative models of care and workforce.

CONCLUSION

Adoption of this framework within all activity that the PHN undertakes (commissioning, projects, supporting activities including practice support and education workshops etc.) and allocating a prevention level raises awareness and promotes a prevention lens. This approach will assist the PHN to embrace future opportunities, enabling a reduction in health inequity and improved outcomes for the communities being served.

For the purposes of this framework and from a PHN perspective, the following definitions are noted.

DEFINITIONS	
Preventive health care	A preventive health care approach aims to minimise the burden of disease and associated risk factors. This is understood as specific, population based and individual based interventions for primary and secondary (early detection) prevention. ⁶ Preventive health measures can be applied at a systemic population-based level, at an individual and/or community level, and across all stages of a disease spectrum, to prevent further decline over time. Two of the biggest success stories in preventive health in Australia have been reductions in road deaths, and reduced tobacco smoking rates.
Health promotion	Closely linked to preventive health care; both focus on keeping people healthy. As defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), “Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. It moves beyond a wide range of social and environmental interventions.” ⁷
Health literacy	As defined by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), “Health literacy is about how people understand information about health and health care, and how they apply that information to their lives, use it to make decisions and act on it. Health literacy is important because it shapes people’s health and the safety and quality of health care.” ⁸ The ACSQHC separates health literacy into two components: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual health literacy is the skills, knowledge, motivation, and capacity of a person to access, understand, appraise, and apply information to make effective decisions about health and health care and take appropriate action. 2. The health literacy environment is the infrastructure, policies, processes, materials, people, and relationships that make up the health system and have an impact on the way in which people access, understand, appraise, and apply health-related information and services
Health awareness	Closely linked to health literacy. Defined as a general understanding and knowledge about health, healthcare and its services, health needs, diseases, and preventive measures. This framework uses the term ‘health literacy’ for the same components covered by health awareness.
Early intervention (in the primordial space)	In the context of this framework, to identify appropriate communication methods, and provide effective early education and support mechanisms to avoid and/or reduce the incidence of poor health outcomes at a systems level.
Systems-based approach	Systems thinking in the context of health encourages looking at the wider health system to identify fundamental and interconnecting causes of complex issues. This approach looks for cause and effect and enables relational thinking about an issue. A systems-based approach is most often place-based and codesigned by communities. ⁹

REFERENCES

- 1 Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Health) 2021. National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-30
- 2 World Health Organization, 2004. Global forum on chronic disease prevention and control (4th, Ottawa, Canada). Geneva: WHO.
- 3 World Health Organisation. Weblink: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/about/how-we-work/programmes/health-promotion>
- 4 World Health Organisation. <http://www.emro.who.int/about-who/public-health-functions/health-promotion-disease-prevention.html>
- 5 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australia's health 2016. Australia's health series no. 15. Cat. no. AUS 199. Canberra: AIHW.
- 6 World Health Organisation. <http://www.emro.who.int/about-who/public-health-functions/health-promotion-disease-prevention.html>
- 7 World Health Organisation. <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/about/how-we-work/programmes/health-promotion>
- 8 ACSQHC. <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/migrated/Health-Literacy-Taking-action-to-improve-safety-and-quality.pdf>
- 9 The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre. <https://preventioncentre.org.au/work/systems-thinking/>

phn
HUNTER NEW ENGLAND
AND CENTRAL COAST
An Australian Government Initiative

**PRIMARY
HEALTH
NETWORK**