

easternhealth

Renowned for *research* and for  
translating research evidence and  
innovation into enhanced patient care

GREAT CARE,  
EVERYWHERE,  
EVERY TIME

# Research Plan 2019 - 2023

## Clinical Research

Aged Care  
Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling  
Allied Health  
Anaesthetics  
Cancer services and oncology  
Cardiology  
Emergency services  
Endocrinology  
Gastroenterology  
Haematology  
Infection prevention and control  
Intensive care services  
Mental Health and Dementia  
Neurology  
Paediatrics  
Palliative Care and end of life  
Renal  
Surgery  
Women's Health

## Health Services Research

Enables providers and patients to make  
better decisions. Health Services  
Research also can be used to design  
healthcare benefits and inform policy.

Working together with our research partners:  
Monash University, Deakin University, La Trobe University



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## Foreword

It is with pleasure that we present the Eastern Health Research Plan 2019 – 2023.

This Research Plan represents Eastern Health’s commitment to grow our research focus, expertise and output so that we ensure “great care, everywhere, every time” (Eastern Health Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022).

For the first time, Eastern Health’s Strategic Plan 2017– 2022 has identified research as one of its four strategic directions alongside healthcare excellence, learning and teaching, and a values-based safe workplace. This is consistent with our mission: “Together we care, learn, discover and innovate”. This prioritisation of research reflects Eastern Health’s growing maturity and positions us to leverage our current research strengths at a national and international level.

The world and the work of research are changing.

With the introduction of the electronic medical record our environment is becoming increasingly data rich; we need to excel at interrogating this newly available information and finding answers. In our technologically connected world we need to excel at building international research partnerships. As stewards of the health of our community, we are challenged to find the most effective and efficient ways of providing great care. To compete, we need to have a robust research culture, attract the best and brightest researchers and support all our staff to work in a research-rich environment.

Over the life of this Plan, we have chosen to prioritise Clinical Research and Health Services Research, to help us answer questions about what works and how this can be implemented most effectively. We will partner with our community and research partners, old and new, to investigate these important questions. We will also focus on building the research capability of Eastern Health so that we can ensure “great care, everywhere, every time”.

We commend our Research Plan to you.

A blue ink signature, likely of Dr Joanna Flynn, consisting of a stylized, flowing script.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM  
Chair, Eastern Health Board

A black ink signature, likely of Adjunct Professor David Plunkett, consisting of a stylized, bold script.

Adjunct Professor David Plunkett  
Chief Executive

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Eastern Health is one of Melbourne's largest metropolitan health services, delivering a comprehensive range of quality services to communities in Melbourne's east. This is achieved by effectively integrating clinical care with high-quality education and robust research in a supportive and safe work environment. Over the 2017 year, Eastern Health worked up its new Strategic Plan which emphasised the role of research in a high-performing health service. The Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022 identifies research and innovation as priorities alongside the provision of healthcare excellence, teaching and training and a values-based safe workplace. Our goal is to deliver "great care, everywhere, every time".

This Research Plan highlights the transformational effort required to ensure that Eastern Health's research aspirations are realised. The Plan describes the priorities and actions Eastern Health will take over the next four years to realise its strategic intent to be *renowned for research*, and for *translating research evidence and innovation into enhanced patient care*. The Research Plan recognises and builds upon Eastern Health's existing research culture and capabilities, whilst supporting Eastern Health to continue to differentiate itself as a research organisation, both in its research focus (based on the needs of the Eastern Health community) and the way in which it operates and implements research-driven change.

Through a process of engagement with researchers across Eastern Health, three priority areas of action have been identified as forming the basis of the Research Plan:

- 1. Investing in research activities that are strategically aligned to improve the health of the people for whom Eastern Health provides care: Health Services Research and Clinical Research**
- 2. Building organisational capability for high-quality research**
- 3. Partnerships for research that are strategically aligned.**

Eastern Health has also determined that several enablers underpin research performance:

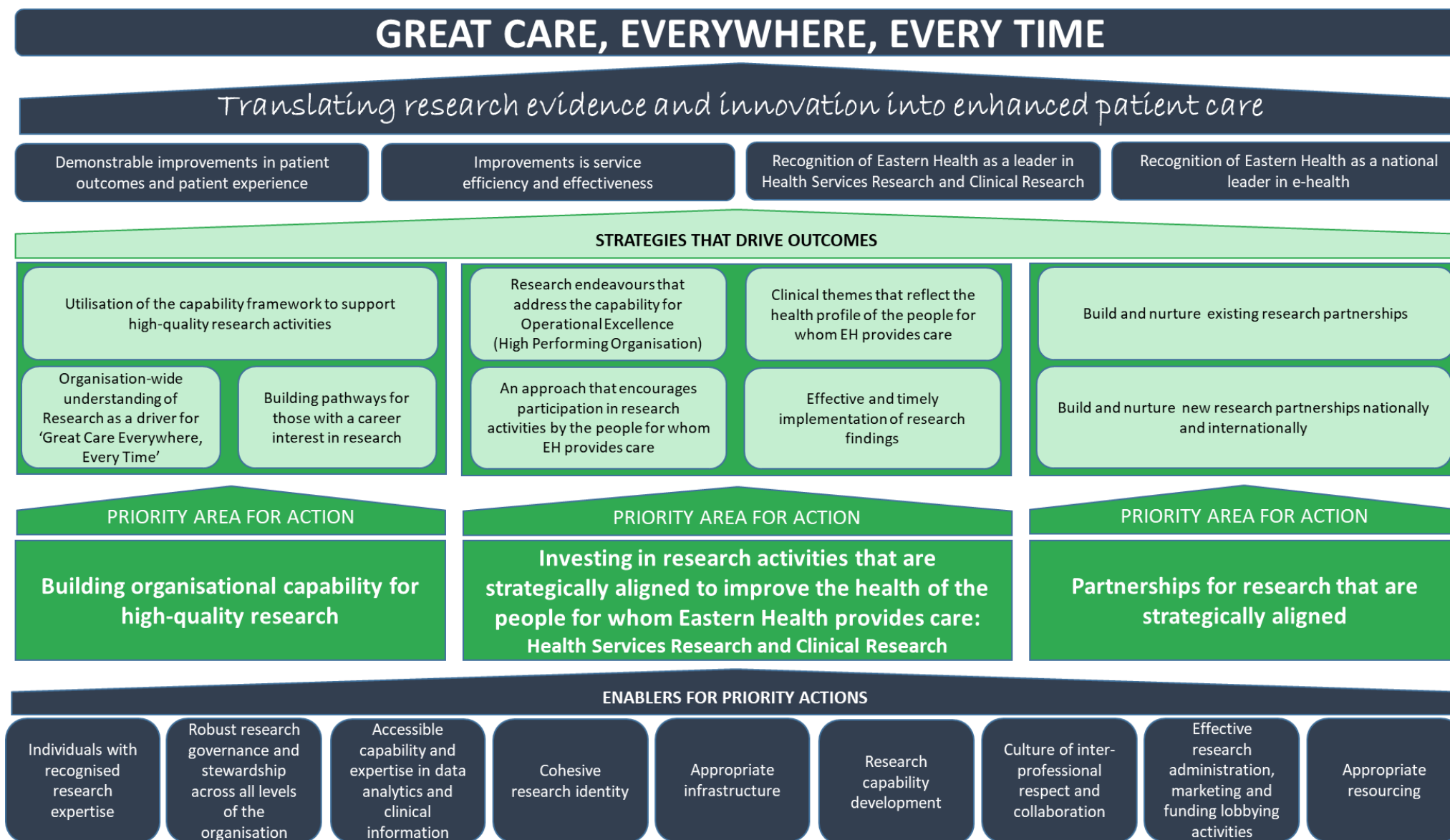
- individuals with recognised research expertise;
- robust research governance and stewardship across all levels of the organisation;
- accessible capability and expertise in data analytics and clinical information;
- a cohesive research identity;
- appropriate infrastructure;
- a culture of interprofessional respect and collaboration;
- research capability development;
- effective research administration, marketing and funding lobbying activities; and
- appropriate resourcing.

The research plan recognises the longstanding effective and highly productive relationships with major university partners that are embedded within Eastern Health.

Actions to be taken over the coming four years focus on these enablers supporting delivery of outcomes against each of the three priority areas of action. Implementation of the actions described in this Research Plan is expected to result in demonstrable improvements in patient outcomes and patient experience, improvements in service efficiency and effectiveness, and recognition of Eastern Health as a national leader in e-health, Health Services Research and Clinical Research, each of these being an important signpost on the pathway to ensuring "great care, everywhere, every time". (Figure 1)



Figure 1: Representation of the Eastern Health Research Plan 2019 – 2023; Strategies and Outcomes driven by Priority Areas, supported by organisational enablers



## 2. ABOUT EASTERN HEALTH

Eastern Health is one of Melbourne's largest metropolitan health services extending from inner metropolitan Melbourne to rural communities in the Yarra Valley and up to Alexandra in the North East. As a service, it provides a comprehensive range of emergency, medical and general healthcare services, obstetrics, mental health, drug and alcohol, residential care, statewide specialist services and community health services to these eastern communities. Eastern Health delivers care across the continuum, from health promotion and disease prevention, to interventions for some of the most complex and critically unwell people and integrates clinical care with high-quality education and robust research. The integration of these elements underpins the way in which Eastern Health works, ensuring that staff are supported to deliver up-to-date, evidence-informed care and services.

Eastern Health employs over 9,000 people and manages a budget of nearly a billion dollars per year. The organisation focuses on achieving performance excellence and delivering a high-quality healthcare system for the people it serves. It aspires to be **GREAT** in all that it does, delivering great health care to its consumers everywhere, every time.

### 2.1. Eastern Health's Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022

Eastern Health's Strategic Plan 2017 -2022 reflects Eastern Health's strengths and its commitment to be an organisation that consistently delivers "great care, everywhere, every time".

**Figure 2: Representation of Eastern Health's Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022**



To deliver on this long-term aspiration, Eastern Health will focus its efforts around four strategic initiatives and associated priority goals. These strategic initiatives have been determined after careful consideration of the environment in which Eastern Health operates. Against each of the strategic initiatives there are related priority goals. These priority goals describe the specific focus of Eastern Health's work over the life of the Strategic Plan.

The priority goals for Leading in research and innovation are reflected below:



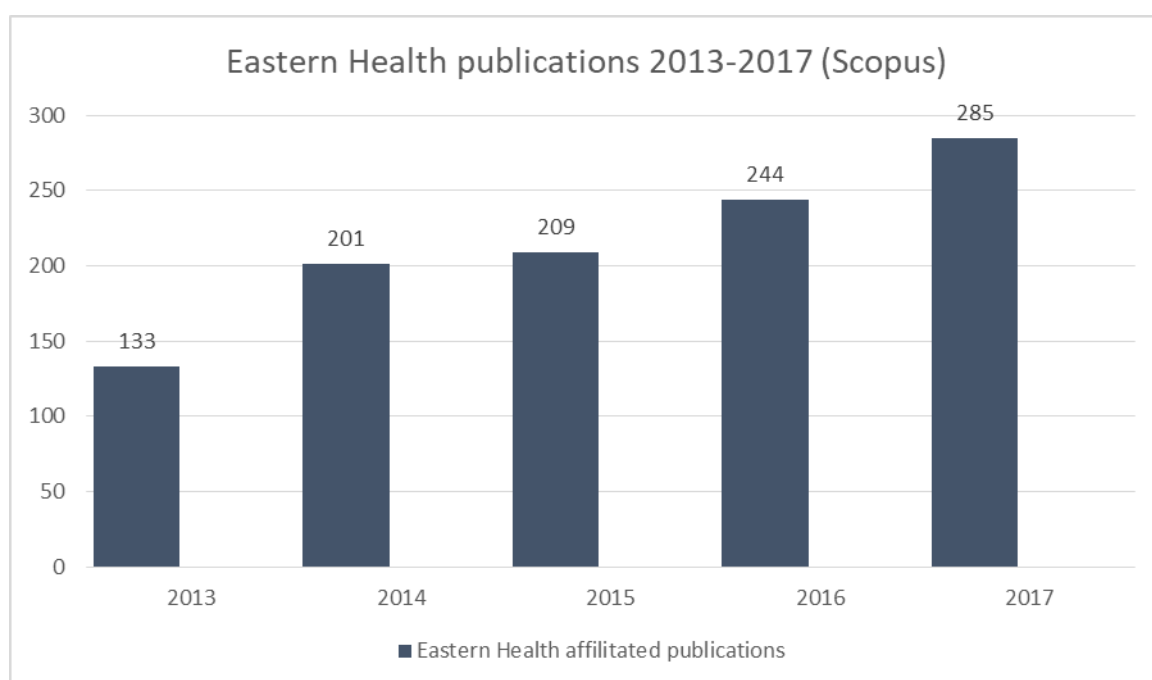
## 2.2. Leading in Research and Innovation

The Eastern Health strategic initiative “Leading in Research and Innovation” provides the basis upon which this Eastern Health Research Plan was developed. Through debate and discussion, Eastern Health, in conjunction with our patients and community, our partners and other stakeholders has recognised that a robust research culture, high-quality research outputs and research translation into clinical practice are critical enablers of a high-performing health service, i.e. one that is capable of reliably delivering safe, high-quality care and great patient experiences.

Eastern Health has a vigorous and well-established research culture and Eastern Health’s Research Plan 2019 – 2023 builds upon this existing strength. The quality and output of publications by Eastern Health researchers has steadily grown and the number of postgraduate research students has steadily increased with 70 currently undertaking higher degrees. In 2018, Times Higher Education Global Ranking of Research Institutes ranked Eastern Health (Box Hill Hospital) as the top hospital in Australia and 36<sup>th</sup> non-university research organisation overall in the world based on citations of published works from global research organisations.

Since 2013, Eastern Health researchers have been awarded \$39,630,560 in research grants (just under half awarded as Australian Competitive Grants) and has contributed 1730 publications (in the form of articles, book chapters, reports and reviews).

**Figure 3** (below) illustrates and increase in publications over the last 5 years.





Eastern Health is an acknowledged research leader in the following fields:

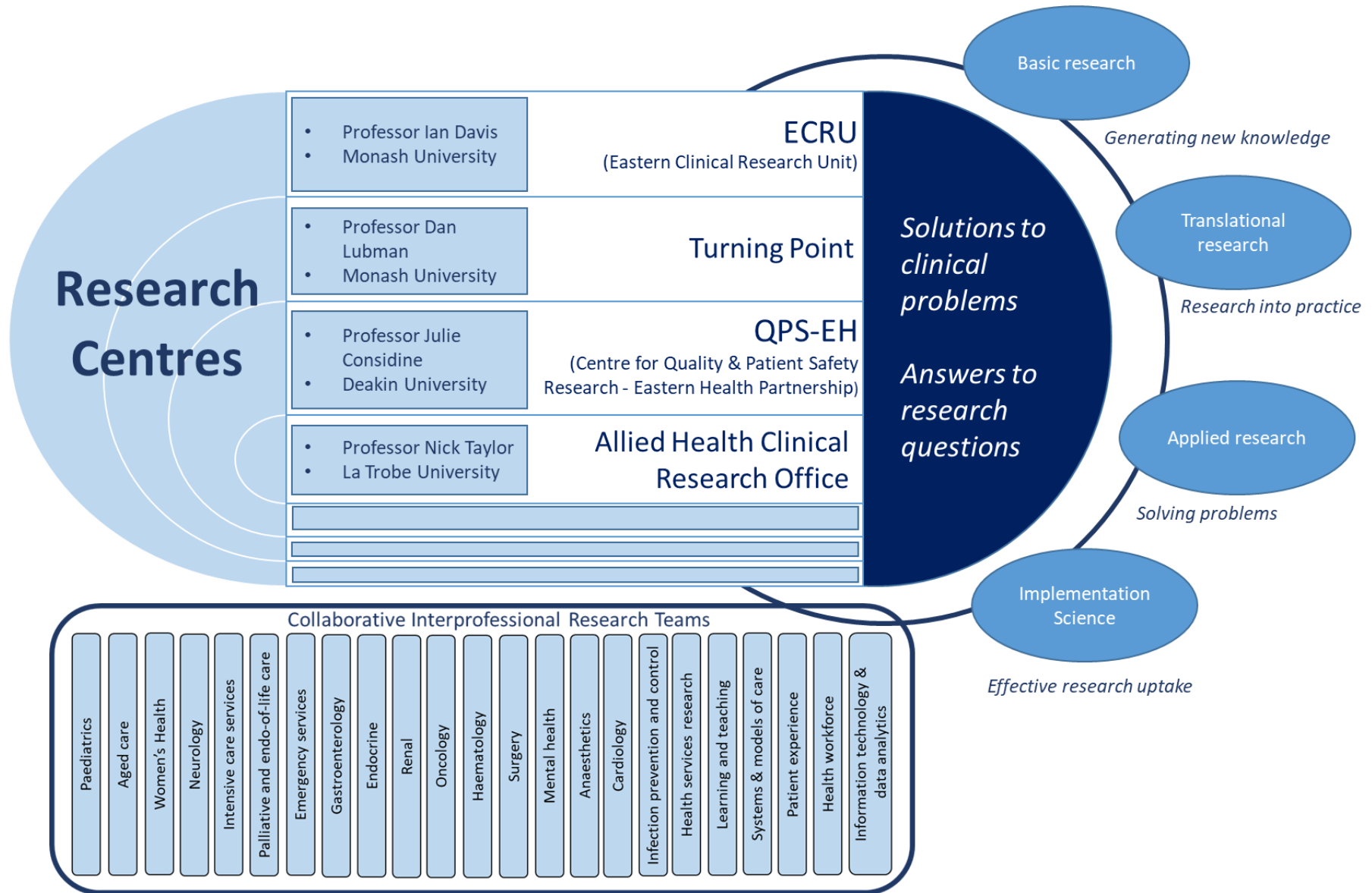
- **Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling** – Turning Point is recognised as an international leader in this field. It conducts world-class clinical research which includes cohort studies, trialling new interventions and modalities, evaluating existing clinical models and practices, and disseminating evidence-based treatment approaches. Its Population Health Research Program conducts unique epidemiology and surveillance research, investigating trends and emerging patterns of alcohol and drug use and associated harms within and across populations at local, state and national levels. The research extends to the causative effects on mental health, self-harm, suicide and family violence.
- **Allied Health Clinical Research** plays a significant research role in evaluating the effectiveness and value of many standard treatment modalities. Their efforts have resulted in improved patient rehabilitation services, provided more opportunities for exercise and physical activity, and have improved nutrition and social services. The role of Allied Health Clinical Research is crucial to the betterment of outcomes of patients with chronic care needs.
- **Clinical Trials Research** – Eastern Health has a Memorandum of Agreement with Monash University, whereby the Monash University Eastern Health Clinical School Eastern Clinical Research Unit (ECRU) is the mechanism by which Eastern Health performs clinical trials. ECRU clinical trial activity has more than doubled over the last five years across a broad range of medical disciplines, and as at November 2018 was performing over 250 active trials and close to 500 trials in total, involving more than 400 currently active trial participants and over 1200 in follow-up. Forty-five new trials had been activated in 2018. Significantly, 1/3 of ECRU trials are not sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry but are collaborative group or investigator-initiated trials, representing the commitment of Monash and Eastern Health to translational research and implementation of research outcomes. Eastern Health is a preferred site for clinical trials through the contract research organisation IQVIA, meaning that trial opportunities in multiple disciplines are frequently offered to Eastern Health. ECRU received a national excellence award from IQVIA in 2018 and was the highest ranked IQVIA site nationally for Good Clinical Research Practice compliance.
- **Mental Health and Dementia Research** – Spectrum, Child and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS) and Adult Mental Health Services all engage in research involved in treatment and prevention of major mental disorders. Eastern Health undertakes a number of significant clinical trials in Alzheimer's disease research.
- **Palliative Care Research** – in May 2016, Eastern Health held its first Searchlight Research Dinner to raise funds for the appointment of the Vivian Bullwinkel Chair in Palliative Care Nursing. This professorial position is charged with undertaking research to provide the very best healthcare outcomes for patients at the end of life.
- **Quality and Patient Safety** – the Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research (QPS), Eastern Health Partnership was established in 2018. It is a marker of the further evolution of Eastern Health's research partnership with the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Deakin University, which has been in place since 1998. QPS strives to produce world-leading research that has a positive impact on the communities it serves and directly improves the quality, safety and experience of patient care and health workforce through effective partnerships that facilitate knowledge translation.

The breadth of research currently undertaken at Eastern Health by the collaborative interprofessional research teams is supported by the research centres as depicted in Figure 4 (on the following page).

The Eastern Health Research Plan reflects and further develops the firm commitment Eastern Health has made to research, as described in the Eastern Health Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022. The Research Plan details the actions Eastern Health will take over the next five years to enable the service to realise its strategic intent to be *“Renowned for research”*, and *“the rapid and effective adoption of research evidence into practice”*.

In its Strategic Plan, Eastern Health also commits to becoming a learning organisation, characterised by a culture that supports its staff to be curious and continuous learners. Through the learning journey, staff are supported to think critically and develop new understandings and new skills. This commitment to learning and improvement work, in concert with Eastern Health’s aspirational research agenda where new learnings gathered through research are effectively incorporated into practice, create a virtuous cycle of improvement.

Figure 4: Eastern Health's Research Centres and Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research Teams



## 2.3. Research Differentiation

Systematic and measurable improvements in patient care have resulted in Eastern Health becoming a nationally and internationally recognised centre for innovation and research. Eastern Health's approach to using research evidence to improve quality of care is contemporary, responsive and focused on achieving the goals of *"putting patients first"* and ensuring *"great care, everywhere, every time"*. It is important for Eastern Health, however, to carve out a unique space for itself in relation to research as it continues to attract superior research talent and research funding.

Eastern Health seeks to differentiate itself as a research organisation, both in its research focus and the way in which it operates and implements research-driven change (Table 1).

**Table 1: Eastern Health's research differentiators**

Eastern Health's strengths	How Eastern Health will operate
Dedicated organisational effort and focus in the areas of Health Services Research and Clinical Research.	We have a supportive, nurturing and responsive research environment and culture which enables research efforts by staff in the workplace. There are incentives to engage in research and dedicated pathways into research careers.
Routine, reliable outcome measurement underpins clinical service delivery and improvement activities.	Research and innovation are part of Eastern Health's core business, where daily work is informed by research evidence and clinical practice informs the research agenda.
Unique assets such as the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) are leveraged.	Focus on structures, processes and outcomes of care to solve important and complex problems in clinical care and health services research.
Translation of effective practices, systems and models is more effective, faster and sustainable.	We are an agile, supportive and responsive health service, providing clinical and research environments.

### 3. PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

In order to realise its transformational strategic intent, Eastern Health will need to change the way it prioritises, funds and governs research, and builds the capability of the organisation to support a research-driven culture. Consistent with its commitment and understanding of high-performing organisations, Eastern Health knows the importance of rigorously building organisational capability. This Research Plan focuses on the activities and investments needed to build the capability of Eastern Health to be leading in research (and innovation) and to consistently be a provider of “great care, everywhere, every time”. This plan seeks to provide some of the enabling elements upon which a new way of operating can be built.

Through a process of engagement with researchers and managers across Eastern Health, three priority areas of action have been determined:

- 1. Investing in research activities that are strategically aligned to improve the health of the people for whom Eastern Health provides care: Health Services Research and Clinical Research**
- 2. Building organisational capability for high-quality research**
- 3. Partnerships for research that are strategically aligned.**

#### **3.1. Investing in research activities that are strategically aligned to improve the health of the people for whom Eastern Health provides care**

Given Eastern Health’s role as one of the largest public health providers in Victoria, it is vital that Eastern Health invests in capability that allows it to answer questions about its work. In short, it must know what works, and how to translate that understanding into effective routine practice.

Eastern Health has taken a deliberate decision to focus on two types of research over the life of this plan: Health Services Research and Clinical Research.

Eastern Health works in the context of its local community. Its research themes already centre on issues relevant to the health profile of its community (including issues related to ageing, chronic disease management and mental health) and will continue to be responsive to the changing demographics and catchment characteristics. Eastern Health research is multidisciplinary and inclusive, and aims to support research activities and researchers whose work is patient-centred. Eastern Health will also focus on building its capability for more effective and timely implementation of research findings, to ensure that patients and the community are more quickly able to benefit from up-to-date, evidence-informed practice. This research strategy is intended to facilitate the conduct of such research and its translation into practice, starting from an already high base but with the understanding that improvement is always necessary and desirable.

Eastern Health will also seek to encourage its local community and its patients to become active participants in research. This will require Eastern Health to develop new ways of presenting research to its community and patients, and to build research participation for patients into the organisation’s everyday work.

This focus on Health Services Research and Clinical Research in areas which make a difference to the outcomes of its patients and community, ensures that Eastern Health will build upon its existing strengths to ensure a platform for a variety of research endeavours. In a crowded research space this will also create a marketable profile for Eastern Health.

This approach will provide a foundation for Eastern Health to broaden its research capability in addition to its traditional areas of clinical research, to build and grow research capability about health outcomes in the community, and to improve the quality of health services and organisational performance.



## Definitions:

### Clinical Research

Clinical Research is a type of research where human participants or groups of humans are assigned to one or more health-related interventions to evaluate the effects on health outcomes. Interventions include but are not restricted to drugs, biological products, surgical procedures, radiological procedures, devices, behavioural treatments, process-of-care changes, preventive care, etc.

(Adapted from World Health Organisation.)

### Health Services Research

Health Services Research is a “multidisciplinary field of scientific investigation that studies how social factors, financing systems, organisational structures and processes, health technologies, and personal behaviours affect access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, and ultimately, our health and well-being.” For example, products stemming from Health Services Research serve to enable providers and patients to make better decisions. They also can be used to design healthcare benefits and inform policy.

(Adapted from Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.)

Consistent with its primary role as a healthcare provider, Eastern Health has until recently focused on developing its research capacity and capability in clinical care and related areas. Eastern Health’s Strategic Plan is a testament to the organisation’s understanding that research must underpin all of Eastern Health’s functions. It is equally important for Eastern Health to understand what factors support a values-based, safe organisation and how these are effectively implemented and sustained. Eastern Health needs to ensure that its efforts in learning and teaching reflect the current evidence in relation to effective educational preparation of staff, and capability development. There is growing evidence about the characteristics of organisations capable of operational excellence. A key challenge for Eastern Health is to understand how this evidence can be applied locally, and how to implement and sustain these characteristics within the organisation.

## 3.2. Building organisational capability for high-quality research

Eastern Health develops and operates its organisational and performance improvement efforts through the lens of a capability framework, describing the range of capabilities required for high performance to be realised. Through this process Eastern Health will describe, develop, implement and continually improve the range of capabilities necessary for high-quality research and a research-driven organisational culture. This work is expected to include the systems, structures and processes which support robust governance of research activities, the skills, knowledge and support which staff will access to build their research capability, and the tools which will be used across the organisation to support high-quality research. It is Eastern Health’s intention that every staff member understands how research drives “great care, everywhere, every time” and that every staff member has the skills and support what they need to successfully operate in a research-driven culture. Furthermore, Eastern Health will support those with a career interest in research by building pathways into meaningful research careers.

## 3.3. Partnerships for research that are strategically aligned

Eastern Health will not realise its strategic research aspirations by acting alone. It must build, nurture and leverage strategic partnerships to bring research expertise, profile and research funds to Eastern Health.

Eastern Health has longstanding, well-established research partnerships which support its well-developed research activities. These include:

- **Monash University's Eastern Health Clinical School (EHCS)** comprises four directorates, all of which are highly research active:
  - **ECRU** (see section 4.1) conducts clinical trials for Eastern Health across a broad range of medical disciplines, to the highest standards of quality and research governance.
  - **Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre** has a wide-ranging research program on various issues relating to alcohol abuse, drug addiction, addiction recovery systems and services, studies on ambulance and other first-responder data, gambling, and many other areas, including government projects.
  - **Research & Higher Education** oversees other research projects performed in the context of medical units across Eastern Health, aiming to build capacity and capability, provide resources, encourage collaborative links and effective use of shared platform resources, access to statistical support, higher research degree opportunities, and other activities.
  - **Medical Student Programs** includes a vigorous research program on medical education research, including novel approaches such as the Patient Teaching Associate program, and participation in the Interprofessional Practice Placement program pioneered at Eastern Health.
- **Deakin University's Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research.** This partnership is a major driver of patient safety research at Eastern Health, leading a range of interrelated programs, aligned to three strategic priority areas: patient experience; patient safety and health workforce). The Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Research has recently become a member of Deakin University's newly established **Institute for Health Transformation** which has been established to address some of the most compelling and complex health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through translational research excellence in: health systems and services (including health leadership transformation); prevention and population health; and data and digital health.
- **Deakin University's Centre for Organisational Change in Person-Centred Healthcare** - a research centre housed in the Faculty of Health that strives to achieve organisational change through collaborative education and research in clinical communication; consumer empowerment; bioethics; and professionalism.
- The **Allied Health Clinical Research Office (AHCRO)** aligned with La Trobe University's Sport and Exercise Medicine Research Centre. AHCRO promotes and supports allied health research and has research strengths in rehabilitation and nutrition sciences. Research evaluates the effectiveness of interventions and examines how services can be provided more efficiently.

Membership of the **Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre** provides an opportunity to accelerate the introduction of research findings into health care and also highlight healthcare problems to the researchers across a range of clusters of specialisation aligned with national health priorities and burden of disease locally. Eastern Health research is aligned with and participates in a number of themes including Cancer and Blood Diseases, Cardiovascular Disease, Critical Care, Trauma and Perioperative Medicine, Metabolic Medicine, Neuroscience, Mental Health and Sleep, and Women's and Children's Health.

These significant alliances continue to give researchers access to support, expertise and guidance. Eastern Health will prioritise leveraging these existing relationships to build closer and better functioning partnerships to ensure that Eastern Health’s community is able to get maximum benefit from these existing arrangements.

In addition, Eastern Health recognises the value of building research partnerships with other national and international health service providers and research organisations, especially where there is strong strategic alignment.

## 4. A FOCUS ON RESEARCH ENABLERS

Realising the strategic intent to be ‘Leading in Research and Innovation’ is a complex task. For success to be realised, identified enablers must be present, coordinated and operational.

**Figure 5: Priority Areas for Action, supported by organisational enablers** (Extract from Figure 1)



These enablers are:

### 4.1. Individuals with recognised research expertise

Eastern Health understands that research is driven by people, supported by organisations. When these people are talented researchers, and when the organisations are committed to becoming high-performing, then research success is possible. It is these researchers who will create a magnetic environment, attracting research funding, new talent and new partnerships.

For success to be realised it will be necessary for Eastern Health to continue to invest in attracting, supporting and retaining the right research talent. As Eastern Health’s research reputation continues to grow, staff with research expertise will seek to work here, but as part of the recruitment process, the organisation should increase the priority for research expertise for new staff, particularly senior staff.

Eastern Health has the advantage of having more than ten university-appointed Professors from across a range of disciplines and areas on staff, bringing together a wealth of experience and expertise, and ensuring that all major health professions are represented. They also bring with them access to the resources of three major universities, and can collaborate to ensure that Eastern Health’s research agenda meets current, emerging and future needs. They provide leadership, not just in current research, but also in the operational and strategic priorities of the health service.

## **4.2. Robust research governance and stewardship and best practice administration and business processes across all levels of the organisation**

Eastern Health's Office of Research and Ethics supports the Eastern Health Human Research Ethics Committee, which in turn ensures that the organisation fulfils its responsibilities under the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The office also supports research at operational and strategic levels. It manages the operational components of research administration at Eastern Health including research data collection, governance and reporting and Human Research Ethics Committee operations.

For Eastern Health to realise its research and organisational aspirations, there will need to be increasingly robust governance processes across all levels of the organisation, up to and including the Board. Like Eastern Health's well-developed clinical governance, quality and safety systems, the organisation must have equivalent and integrated systems that support high-quality research. A number of these governance systems already exist, and some of them operate in partnership with Eastern Health's research partners e.g. the approach taken to supervise and support postgraduate research students. The relationships with our key university partners (Monash University, Deakin University and La Trobe University) are underpinned by formal partnership agreements which ensure that the interests of Eastern Health are represented. These agreements ensure that the universities are embedded within the Eastern Health research structure, ensuring strong relationships and true partnerships that bring resources to Eastern Health.

The construction and operation of a governance system that is best able to support, monitor and provide feedback about the vast array of Eastern Health's research activities will take time and be complex. At any one time, Eastern Health staff may be involved in a mix of research activities from a small, highly localised research project, all the way to participation in international, multi-site, multi-intervention clinical trials. An effective governance system must take account of the full range of these activities and ensure that there are effective systems and processes in place to govern them. Eastern Health will not be able to build this governance system overnight, and should not do it in isolation from or by duplicating the existing organisational and partnership governance arrangements.

Research must also have robust financial systems to ensure that research dollars are spent with maximal effect and efficiency. This means that individual researchers must have access to systems of financial management which are easy to use, transparent and predictive. They must be able to access professional financial advice to plan a research budget and to deal with any deviations from their intended spend. As an entity Eastern Health has to have business systems which support research across the organisation such that activities of daily business which are either wholly, or in part, attributable to research have costs attributed systematically and accurately. Finally, Eastern Health when entering into research partnerships needs to develop systems to understand what indirect costs the organisation is incurring, as well as the overt costs of partnership fees.

## **4.3. Accessible capability and expertise in data analytics and clinical information**

Every day, Eastern Health collects, manages and stores a huge volume of clinical information. The current systems for the management of this information make its use in research time consuming. However, at the end of 2017, Box Hill Hospital moved to an integrated EMR. Ultimately this EMR will be implemented across the whole of Eastern Health. It will present Eastern Health with a range of new opportunities and an enhanced functional research capability. Data fields will be better defined and categorised, and patient information will be searchable and readily accessible. In Australia, this capability will set Eastern Health apart; it is critical that Eastern Health grasps and develops this advantage.

Eastern Health will need to expand its expertise and investment in data analytics and related clinical information activities to ensure that it provides best stewardship of this new clinical information environment, and uses the data made available in a productive and appropriate way. This work will also need to link with the Quality Systems that are currently in place across the organisation.

Growing clinical information capability and expertise will also provide bedrock for ongoing partnership development. Eastern Health is already sharing data with its community, primary and community care partners and academic partners for research purposes closely linked to improvements in healthcare outcomes including: identification of vulnerable populations; understanding predictors of prolonged Emergency Department stays; and identification of predictors of unplanned readmission within 28 days of hospital discharge. These activities will be able to be amplified with greater expertise and investment in data analytics and health data science capability.

#### **4.4. Cohesive research identity**

Research is a competitive field. Eastern Health competes with other research organisations for research talent and research funding. In a crowded space, Eastern Health also competes for philanthropic support. A cohesive research identity with broad recognition will support Eastern Health to compete more effectively. This plan recognises that the creation of a cohesive research identity need not be complicated, or expensive. In the first instance, it is about creating an identity under which all the existing research activities can be housed, supporting a natural coming together of the existing research effort. The bringing together of the existing effort in this way provides a leverage point for further expansion and maturity of the current research activities. The development of an identity will also support an increase in the visibility of research within Eastern Health. One of the key transformation challenges for Eastern Health will be to make visible the current and expanding research activities, and in doing so, encourage greater levels of participation from staff, patients and the community. This increasing visibility will also make evident the journey that sees positive research outcomes implemented into day-to-day practice; making ‘real’ the value of research to individual clinicians and patients.

#### **4.5. Appropriate infrastructure**

As Eastern Health’s research activity expands, its research infrastructure will also need to expand. This infrastructure will need to build upon and extend Eastern Health’s existing resources, such as its IT system, library and physical spaces. Eastern Health’s capital master planning and information technology and information management plan will need to consider the functional and physical requirements of a significantly enhanced research program. Currently plans are underway to create dedicated research spaces within select Eastern Health sites, including increasing the research space in Building B at Box Hill Hospital. Ultimately it is hoped to construct a purpose-built clinical trials building within the Box Hill precinct.

#### **4.6. Research capability development program**

Eastern Health has nominated as a priority area for action “building organisational capability for high-quality research” (Eastern Health Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022). A critical component of this priority is building the skills and knowledge of Eastern Health’s staff. There currently exists a mix of research capabilities, ranging from staff who understand how research informs their day-to-day practice, to highly capable lead researchers of complex research programs.



To support the development and ongoing improvement of this range of skills and knowledge, a well-resourced and evaluated capability development program is required. This may mean that Eastern Health has to invest in in-house research training programs and/or support staff to undertake external training.

#### **4.7. Culture of interprofessional respect and collaboration**

Eastern Health has already determined that it will focus its research efforts around the needs of patients and the multidisciplinary nature of health care. To do this effectively, research must occur in a culture of interprofessional respect and collaboration, where researchers come together to share their expertise and experience, and to recognise the same in others. Assisted by the co-location of researchers within the research precinct and in line with our values and strategic intent, this enabler is very strong at Eastern Health, where, through this collaborative effort, the research is robust and reflects the way high-quality health care is delivered and effective teams work.

#### **4.8. Effective marketing and funding lobbying activities**

Eastern Health's Office of Research and Ethics has strong links to the Eastern Health Foundation as part of the Research Grants Scheme which has grown significantly since its introduction in 2012. In 2017/18, the Foundation provided funding for 25 research grants to the value of half a million dollars. As Eastern Health's research footprint expands, the administration and marketing functions will also require expansion and a focused approach to further developing our research identity and reputation. Given Eastern Health's aspirations to attract significant new research funding, an increased capability and capacity for effective lobbying will be required. There is scope to align the marketing to the Foundation's Transformation Appeal, which is a 5 year campaign, yet to be launched.

#### **4.9. Appropriate resourcing**

One of the key challenges for Eastern Health will be to find a way to pay for its research aspirations. Currently, Eastern Health contributes directly and indirectly to research activities by funding staff, providing infrastructure and participating in research partnerships. Since 2012, the Eastern Health Foundation Research Grants Scheme has raised and awarded more than \$1.7 million to Eastern Health researchers. Whilst this contribution is significant, the focus moving forward will be on attracting grants.

To realise the transformation signalled in the Eastern Health Strategic Plan, the organisation will need to do more than it does currently. For research to be driven to the point of clinical care, and for all Eastern Health staff to have the capability to operate successfully in a research-driven culture, the organisation will need to identify resources to support this new effort. It is anticipated that these resources will be drawn from a range of different sources, both internal and external to the organisation. They will include additional revenue, more effective and efficient use of existing revenue, and new workplace models that can integrate research into day-to-day work without adversely affecting patient outcomes, experience or organisational efficiency and effectiveness. The ability for Eastern Health to resource its research aspirations is the most significant risk to the effective implementation of this Plan.

## 5. PRIORITY ACTIONS OVER THE LIFE OF THE RESEARCH PLAN

This section describes the priority actions (Table 2) to be undertaken by Eastern Health over the life of the Research Plan. Consistent with Eastern Health's Planning Framework, these actions should be incorporated into the annual Improvement and Innovation Plans. Through its integrated planning process, actions associated with the Research Plan will become part of routine improvement and innovation effort. Equally, it will be important to evaluate the impact of each of these actions and determine whether any alterations to these actions are required as external and internal conditions change. Again, this process will be supported through the organisation's annual planning processes.

**Table 2: Priority Actions for the five years of this Research Plan**

Enablers of Priority Areas	Priority actions in the first 12 months are expected to focus on
5.2 Robust governance and stewardship across all levels of the organisation	Further define the success measures for the Eastern Health Research Plan, and research-related measures included in the Eastern Health Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022.
	Increase the maturity of the research governance system and strengthen its relationship to Eastern Health's existing governance systems to ensure strong involvement of the Eastern Health Board.
5.3 Accessible capability and expertise in data analytics and clinical information	Create and recruit to the position of Professor of Clinical Information Science (or similar) to leverage the growing clinical information access and capacity afforded by the EMR.
	Establish an Eastern Health scholarship program link for internal and external applicants to critical organisational issues such as real-time use of patient-related data.
5.4 Cohesive research identity	Develop and implement a cohesive research identity and align existing research to agreed strategy.
	Ensure the research program and operating system is organised in such a way that it reflects Eastern Health's multidisciplinary models of care, where the primary organising principle is "Patients First".
5.5 Appropriate infrastructure	Enable academic research centres to have a presence and function across Eastern Health, linked to the cohesive research identity.
5.8 Effective research administration, marketing and funding lobbying activities	Enhance the existing research secretariat functions to support the increased volume of research-related activity.
5.9 Appropriate resourcing	Develop a business plan to reflect the infrastructure and associated funding requirements.

Enablers of Priority Areas	Priority actions in years 2 and 3 are expected to focus on
5.1 Individuals with recognised research expertise	Support the appointment of a core body of lead clinician researchers in areas aligned with community needs and strategic intent.
5.3 Accessible capability and expertise in data analytics and clinical information	Commence a program to develop a core data set that supports measurement of patient function, quality of life and outcome.
5.4 Cohesive research identity	Identify and target strategic thematic areas of research and invest appropriately.
5.5 Appropriate infrastructure	Increase access to appropriate research infrastructure.
5.6 Research capability development	Continue to develop and implement approaches to embed research activities into the standard work of clinicians and in clinical areas.
	Further develop and enhance a research capability development program, recognising the various research 'roles' and capabilities needed across the organisation.

Enablers of Priority Areas	Priority actions in years 2 and 3 are expected to focus on
5.8 Effective research administration, marketing and funding lobbying activities	Develop and implement initiatives to further grow Eastern Health's research profile and make research more visible.
5.9 Appropriate resourcing	Increase time available to undertake research in key/targeted positions across the organisation as a starting point for career pathways into research.

Enablers of Priority Areas	Priority actions in years 4 and 5 are expected to focus on
5.3 Accessible capability and expertise in data analytics and clinical information	Increase the availability and use of outcome measures to inform continuous improvement.
5.6 Research capability development	Increase the resourcing of the proposed scholarship program.
	Broaden the roll out of the capability development program.
	Build further capability for effective implementation of research into clinical practice so that patients experience measurable improvement in their satisfaction, their quality of life, and their morbidity and mortality outcomes.

## 6. MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

Eastern Health's Strategic Plan emphasises the importance of research to Eastern Health's long-term success. In order to deliver on its strategy, Eastern Health will require a strong, successful and sustainable research culture and capability.

This strategic plan will be underpinned by a detailed operational plan that will include specific measures of success and appropriate timelines. Example indicators may include:

- increased levels of staff engagement in research activities;
- increased levels of patient/community engagement in research activities;
- improvements in patient outcomes, including patient experience;
- improvements in service efficiency and effectiveness, resulting in better financial outcomes;
- recognition of Eastern Health as the national leader in e-health; and
- recognition of Eastern Health as a leader in Health Services Research and Clinical Research.

Across the five-year period of the Research Plan, it is expected that Eastern Health will:

- continue to garner a national and international reputation as a centre of excellence in research and innovation;
- continue to attract and grow research funding; and
- continue to increase the number of high profile publications, including publications from a broader range of researchers, and across the range of different clinical themes and professional groups.