



**Health**

Hunter New England  
Local Health District

# **Agency Information Guide**

*Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*

HUNTER NEW ENGLAND LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT

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[www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au)

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# Contents

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Introduction.....	2
About Us.....	3
Our District.....	4
Organisational Structure.....	5
Vision, Goals and Strengths.....	6
Community Participation.....	7
Right to Information.....	8
Ways of Accessing Information.....	9
Contact Us.....	10

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# Introduction

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Hunter New England Health's Agency Information Guide has been developed and adopted in accordance with section 20 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) (GIPA Act) and details who we are, our structure, what we do, how we do it, how we work with others, the kinds of information we hold, and how we make this information available to the public.

Further information on the GIPA Act is available at the website of the Information and Privacy Commission NSW [www.ipc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au).

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# About Us

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Hunter New England Health provides a range of public health services to the Hunter, New England and Lower Mid North Coast regions.

Hunter New England Health:

- provides services to 873,741 people, including 38,552 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (which equates to 21 per cent of the state's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population) and 169,846 residents who were born overseas;
- employs 15,912 staff, including 1,993 medical officers;
- is supported by 1,600 volunteers;
- spans 25 local government areas; and
- is the only district in New South Wales with:
  - a major metropolitan centre;
  - a mix of several large regional centres; and
  - many smaller rural centres and remote communities within its borders.

Our Chief Executive, Michael DiRienzo, and the Executive Leadership Team work closely with the Local Health District Board to ensure our services meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

These services are provided through:

- 3 tertiary referral hospitals;
- 4 rural referral hospitals;
- 12 district hospitals;
- 8 community hospitals;
- 12 multipurpose services;
- more than 60 community health services;
- 3 mental health facilities and several additional inpatient and community mental health services; and
- 3 residential aged care facilities

Our Health Committees, located in 36 towns across the district, provide leadership in the local community to ensure health services meet local health needs and ensure the promotion and enhancement of the health of the community.

# Our District

## Hunter New England Health



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# Organisational Structure

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Hunter New England Health commenced operations on 1 July 2011 and is a part of NSW Health. In addition to our local health district, NSW Health comprises the NSW Ministry of Health, the 15 other local health districts, specialty networks, statutory health corporations and affiliated health organisations.

Hunter New England Health has been set up in accordance with the National Health Reform Agreement. Local decision-making is at the forefront of how the agency functions, led by a professional health district Board and the Chief Executive.

The Hunter New England Health Board consists of 11 members from a range of backgrounds and with local ties to the Hunter, New England and Lower Mid North Coast regions. Profiles of the Board members are available on the Hunter New England Health website at: <http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/about/Pages/Our-Board.aspx>

Together, the Board and Chief Executive are responsible for:

- ensuring effective governance and risk management processes are in place to guarantee compliance with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework;
- improving local patient outcomes and responding to issues that arise;
- monitoring Hunter New England Health's performance against measures outlined in the Service Agreement with NSW Health;
- delivering services and performance standards based on annual strategic and operating plans within an agreed budget (this forms the basis of our Service Agreement);
- ensuring Hunter New England Health provides services efficiently and accountably;
- producing annual reports that are subject to State financial accountability and audit frameworks; and
- maintaining effective communication with local and State public health stakeholders

The Board Meeting Schedule and Board Meeting Minutes are available at [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/about/Pages/Board-Meetings.aspx](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/about/Pages/Board-Meetings.aspx).

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# Vision, Goals and Strengths

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## Vision

Healthy people – now and into the future



## Goals

Keeping people healthy and in the community

Providing world-class clinical services with  
timely access and effective infrastructure



## Strengths

- High quality, safe patient care
- Skilled, hard-working and valued staff
- A strong commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people
- A dedicated Aboriginal Employment and Equity Unit
- The best immunisation rates in the State
- Highly developed telehealth and information technology services
- Expertise in health promotion and prevention
- A focus on innovation, teaching and research
- Successful strategies to improve staff safety
- Effective models of community participation

**Excellence. Every patient. Every time.**

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# Community Participation

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## Patient and Community Partnership

Hunter New England Health is committed to ensuring genuine patient and community partnership in healthcare decisions, in planning our services, designing care and monitoring and evaluating our services. We value the contributions patients, their carers and families, and our communities make in improving the quality and safety of our services.

Putting our patients at the centre of what we do, delivering safe and quality care, doing it consistently and with respect is what we strive for at Hunter New England Health. Increasingly we are working with our patients, their carers and families, and with our communities to help achieve this.

## Framework for Partnering with Patients and Community

Hunter New England Health's Framework for Partnering with Patients and Community provides a conceptual framework and outlines Hunter New England Health's approach to partnering with patients, their families and our communities more broadly.

The framework aims to foster greater awareness and understanding of patient/carer and community partnership and provides guidance and support for staff to partner effectively with patients and community members.

## Committees

The organisation is currently supported by a range of committees with clinical and community representatives.

These groups include Local Health Committees which are an important link between health services and the communities they serve.

Hunter New England Health also involves consumers, carers and the wider community at a ward, facility and service level.

Key stakeholders are invited to participate in the planning of new facilities and we use a range of methods to involve consumers and the community in reviews of health services.

## Community Partnership Forums

Two district-wide forums are held annually with our Local Health Committees, Health Service Managers, members of the Executive Leadership Team, and key partners including the local Primary Health Network.

The aim of these forums is to explore ways to improve engagement at a local community level.

The forums have a strong focus on:

- national and State health reform;
- building better working relationships between Local Health Committees and health services;
- developing new tools and resources to support Local Health Committees; and
- partnering with Hunter New England Health on key health initiatives.

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# Right to Information

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Hunter New England Health is committed to improving accountability and transparency by increasing access to government information.

The GIPA Act provides for an open and transparent approach to gaining access to government information in New South Wales.

The objectives of the GIPA Act are to maintain and advance a system of responsible and representative democratic Government that is open, accountable, fair and effective by:

- authorising and encouraging the proactive public release of government information by agencies;
- giving members of the public an enforceable right to access government information; and
- providing that access to government information is restricted only when there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

In line with these objectives, Hunter New England Health proactively provides the community with information on our structure, functions, policies and contracts. We also proactively disclose as much other information as possible about our activities and projects. Consumers can also ask us for information that is not already publicly available by submitting either an informal request or formal access application.

Detailed information about the GIPA Act and how to lodge a request for Hunter New England Health information is available on our website [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au).

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# Ways of Accessing Government Information

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The GIPA Act provides members of the public with a right to access government information.

Under the GIPA Act, there are four ways that members of the public can access government information, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure. These include:

## **1. Mandatory Disclosure**

Hunter New England Health is required to publish 'open access information'. Hunter New England Health makes open access information publicly available on its website free of charge, including this publication (Agency Information Guide), our policy documents, our register of government contracts and our disclosure log of formal access applications.

## **2. Proactive Release**

In addition to the mandatory disclosure of certain government information, Hunter New England Health is authorised under section 7(1) of the GIPA Act to make any government information held by the agency publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information. Information is to be released in an appropriate manner and free of charge (or at the lowest reasonable cost).

## **3. Informal Release**

Hunter New England Health is also authorised to release government information held by it to a person in response to an informal request by the person unless there is an overriding public interest against public disclosure of the information under section 8 of the GIPA Act

## **4. Formal Release**

Hunter New England Health may release government information in response to a formal access application. This is a last resort. The public has a right to request information in this way unless the GIPA Act provides a reason to withhold the information.

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# Contact Us

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Hunter New England Health's Right to Information Officers are able to assist members of the public to obtain more details about access to government information. Right to Information Officers can be contacted via our website [www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au) or by telephone on (02) 4985 5890.