

# Communicable Diseases Control in Custodial Settings: overcoming IPAC hurdles

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Population Health | Justice Health NSW

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# Acknowledgement of country



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands in which we are meeting today, as well as those where our Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (Justice Health NSW) services are located. We pay our respects to their Country's Spirit and Traditions.

This "Aboriginal Health" artwork was created by a Wiradjuri man from Wellington NSW and patient in 2019 and represents the importance of Aboriginal cultural elements being intrinsic to our work. About the artwork, the artist says: "This painting is about getting Aboriginal people, both male and female, to go and seek out the mental and justice health services that are available inside the correctional centres in NSW".

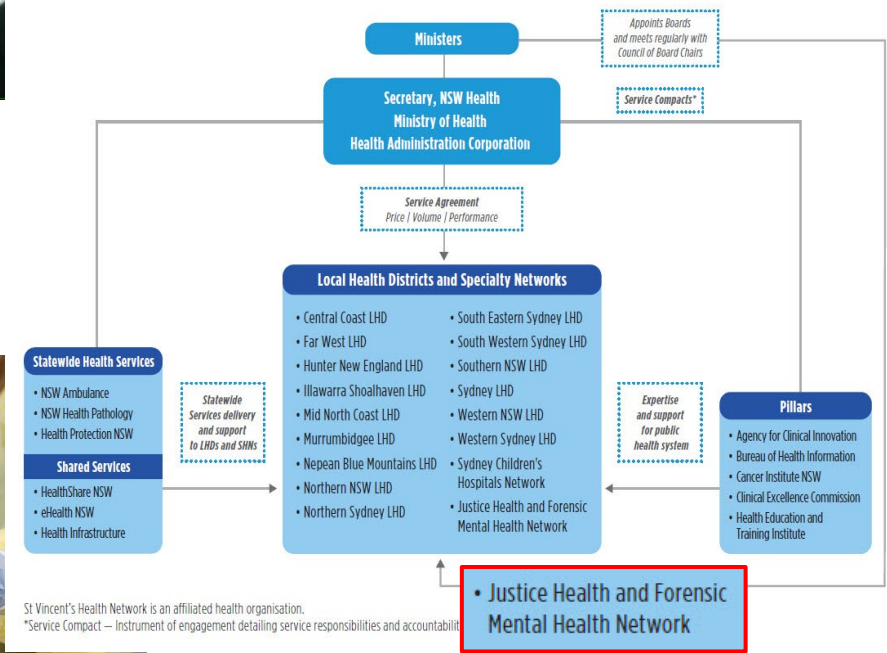


# Overview

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- Justice Health NSW: our Service, our Population, locations, demographics, background
  - Correctional Health Nursing – the IP&CDC CNC Role
  - Infection Prevention Control and Public Health Communicable Disease Control - some unique challenges
  - Risks and management strategies for this specific population
  - Pandemics and preparedness – past learnings and moving forward



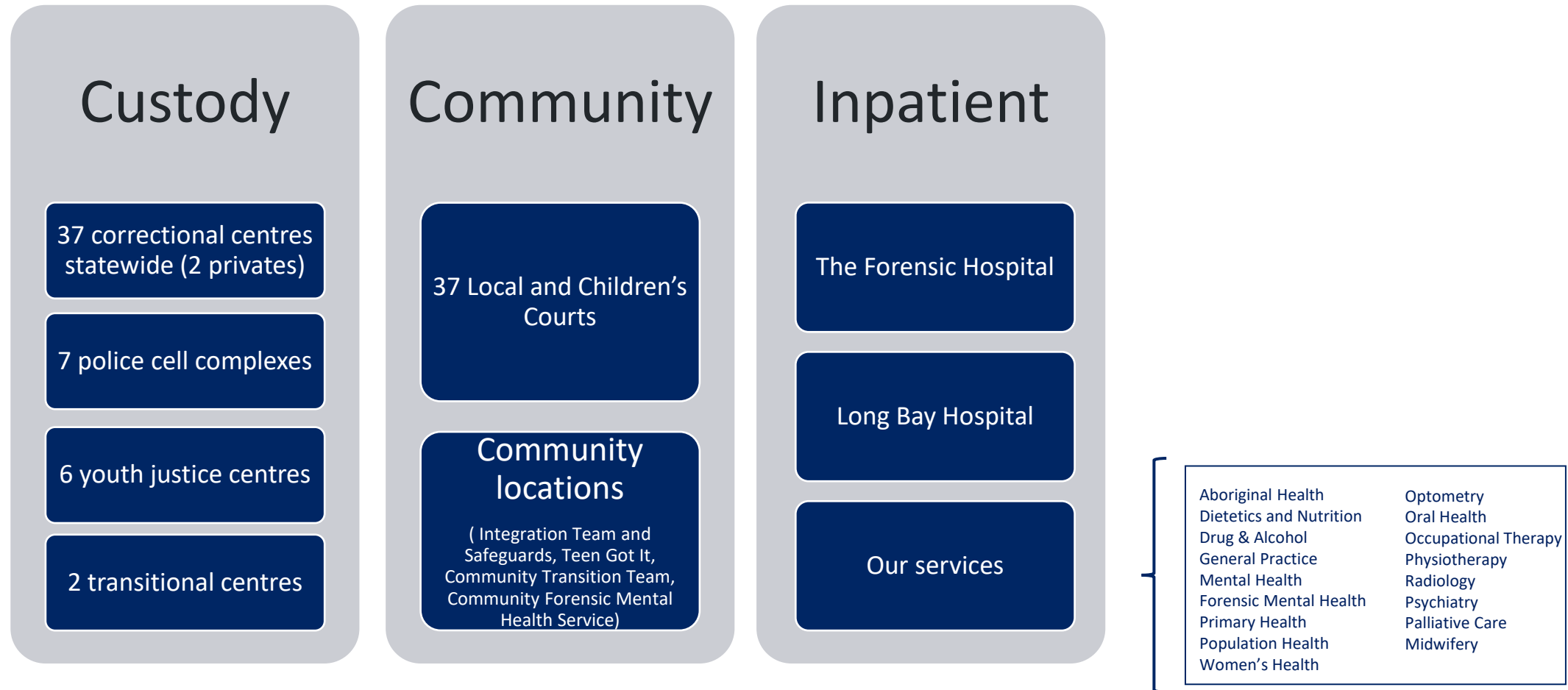
# Who is Justice Health NSW?



St Vincent's Health Network is an affiliated health organisation.  
\*Service Compact — Instrument of engagement detailing service responsibilities and accountability



# Health care delivery occurs across a variety of settings





# Our locations: Metropolitan and Rural - Regional





# Patient profile

## Adult custodial Patient profile

### Gender split\*



### Country of birth\*



### Age\*

18-24	10%	45-54	16%
25-34	32%	55 and over	12%
35-44	30%		

### Substance use#



**70%**

of prison entrants reported smoking tobacco

**54%**

of prison entrants used drugs in the 4 weeks before custody. Of these, 55% used methamphetamine during this period.

**27%**

of prison entrants consumed alcohol in the 4 weeks before entering custody. Of these, 36% reported consuming alcohol daily or almost daily during this period.



### Mental health#

**47%**

of prison entrants have received treatment for mental health problems

**13%**

of prison entrants reported self-harm

**12%**

of prison entrants reported suicide attempts



### Aboriginal identity\*

**28%**

of people in custody identify as Aboriginal compared with 3% of people in the wider NSW community.

### Top 5 health conditions\*\*

1. Opioid dependence
2. Depression
3. Hypertension
4. Anxiety Disorder
5. Mild Asthma

## Adolescent custodial Patient profile

### Gender split\*



### Age\*

10-14	9%
15-19	87%
20+	4%

### Aboriginal identity\*

**41%**

41% of young people in custody identify as Aboriginal, compared with 5% of young people in the wider NSW community.



### Top 5 health conditions\*\*

1. Attention deficit disorder
2. Oppositional defiant disorder
3. Post-traumatic stress disorder
4. Mild Asthma
5. Intellectual Disability



## Forensic Hospital Patient profile

### Gender split\*



### Age\*

18-24	5%	45-54	28%
25-34	18%	55 and over	20%
35-44	29%		

### Top 5 health conditions\*\*

1. Schizophrenia
2. Paranoid schizophrenia
3. Diabetes Type 2
4. Obesity
5. Hypertension





# Justice Health Statewide Service - Our Networks

## MoH – Health Protection NSW

Reporting to the Chief Health Officer

**Public Health Unit &**  
Sexual Health Services  
Networks NSW  
Local Health Districts

**Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) IPAC**

JH Population and  
Preventive Health  
Directorate

Public Health CNCs  
**CDC / IPAC**  
IPAC / Covid Coordinator  
Sexual Health  
Hepatology  
NPs Hepatitis  
Environmental Health Officer  
Health Promotion

**Justice Health Statewide  
Network** of Public health/  
Sexual Health Nurses



# Infection Prevention and Communicable Disease Justice Health Team



IP&CDC CNC3  
IP&C Programs CNC2  
Surveillance Officer

- Lead the IPAC Program – NSW Metro / Regional / Rural
- Provide Public Health Response (as Justice Health PHU / Health Protection), for Communicable Disease Control, Immunisation and TB Services
- Health Services are geographically spread across the state and delivered within a variety different settings:
  - ✓ Surgical Medical Unit
  - ✓ Aged Care Unit
  - ✓ Forensic Mental Health Hospital
  - ✓ Primary Health Center Clinics
  - ✓ Youth Justice Health Centers
  - ✓ Police Cell Complexes



AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION  
ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

## 3 PREVENTING AND CONTROLLING HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTION

### Bare Below Elbows



Hand Hygiene Annual Audit Periods  
Audit period 1: 1 November- 31 March  
Audit period 2: 1 April- 30 June  
Audit period 3: 1 July-31 October





# The Nursing Story ....





# Population Health and Preventative Health Directorate

## Infection Prevention and Control



### Meeting the challenges – Maintaining our Core IPaC focus

- Standard Precautions
- Risk Assessment and Monitoring
- Education and Training

### Identifying and Addressing gaps:

- Hand hygiene
- Effective use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Effective cleaning and disinfection protocols
- Partnering with our patients
- Partnering and Collaboration with Public health Agencies and Corrective Services NSW





# Population with increased risk for disease

- ‘At risk’ population:  
concentrations of people with both communicable and non-communicable diseases – or at a greater risk for and with high rates of co-morbidities, living together in high density / housing
- Social determinants of health impacts:  
custodial population are known to be disproportionately unstably housed within the community with increased rates of substance use disorders and/ or mental illness





# IP&CDC challenges

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Complex  
operational  
environment

Shared  
airspace

Barriers to  
symptom  
reporting

Social  
distancing  
challenging

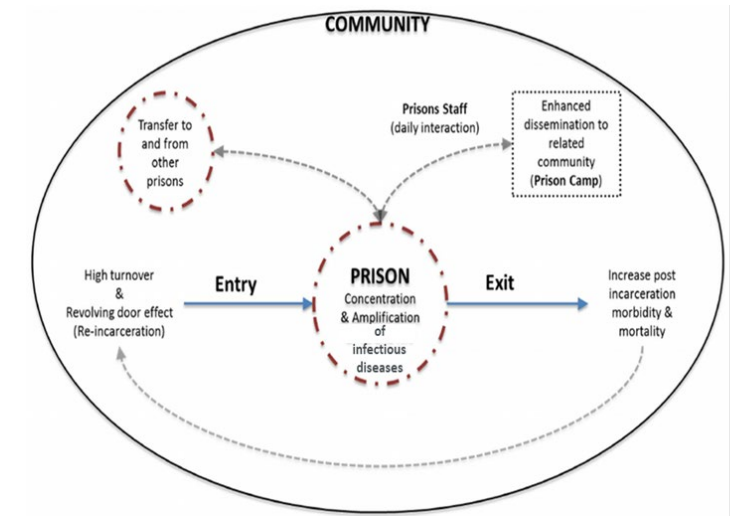
Built  
environment

PPE: education  
and correct  
use



# High-risk environment for infection transmission

- Close contact in poorly ventilated buildings
- **Movement of population** – between custodial and community setting and between centres
- **Outbreaks** potential to **spread** to surrounding communities – and viceversa
- Outbreaks can overwhelm prison health-care services (and those in surrounding communities- LHDs)
- Prisons are a **vector for community transmission** that are known to risk disproportionately impacting marginalised communities





# Complex working Environment

Justice Health staff are required to work within the Correctional Centres Security and Safety Policies. Security is priority focus within the Correctional Centres and Environment

Typical workday starts with a casual eye scan / fingerprint scan, body scan, bag scan, duress allocation and key retrieval. After entering and closing many gates, staff reach the clinic or hospital space to be ready for work



- No mobile phones allowed
- All drinks and / or food must not be opened
- Only clear bags are allowed
- Personal duress alarms are to be worn at all times
- Keys are to be chained to a belt and worn at all times



# The Built Environment

Variety of Correctional Centre types, unit / pod / wing set up and age of buildings



Bathurst CC – built 1888!  
Same cells still remain in use today in one part of complex



Macquarie CC – Pod style centre at Wellington

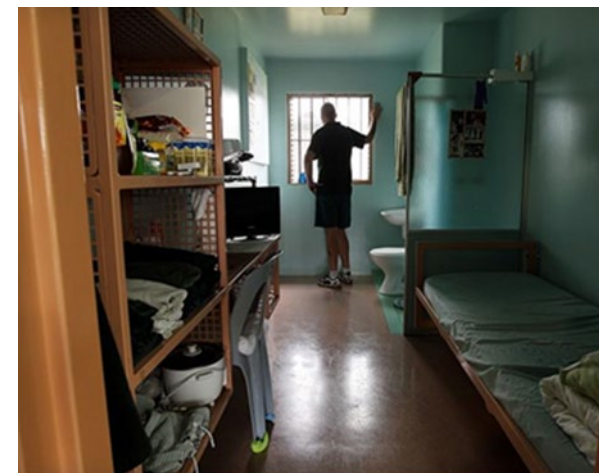
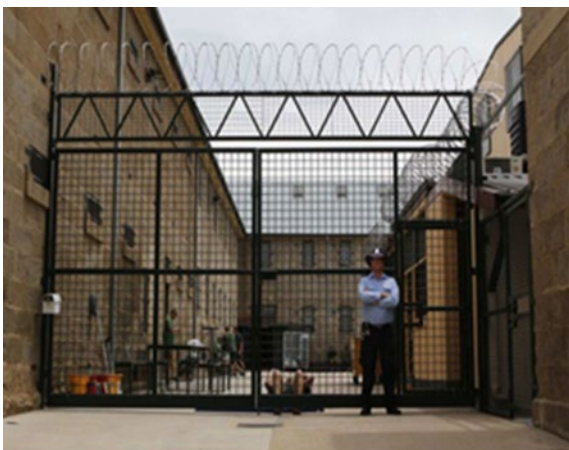


Goulburn CC - >100 years old

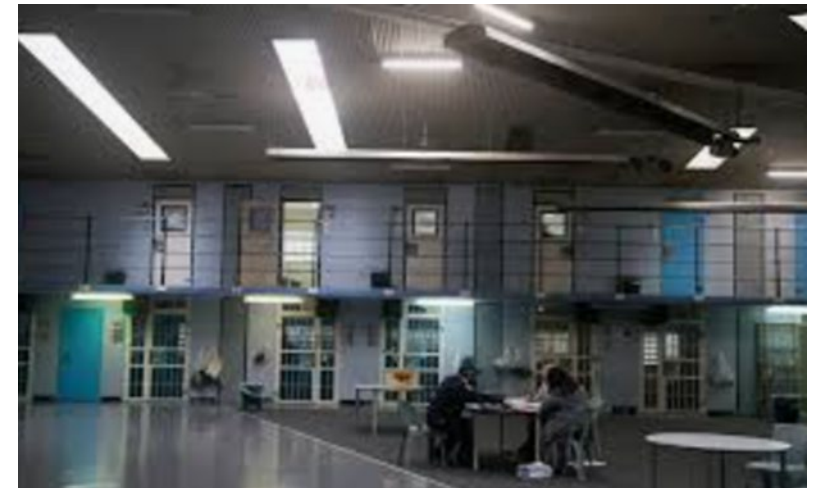
Important impact and consideration  
for communicable diseases!



# A glimpse into the environment

















# Many of our patients work in Industries and gather for education groups and transport



Working in industries



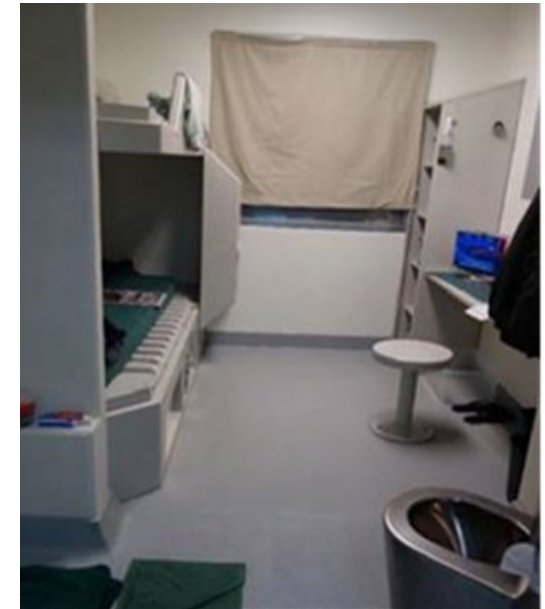
Prepare their own food in some centres



# Living areas within the Secure Environment



Macquarie inmates do not have cells. They sleep in pods, and are free to interact with other inmates. (ABC News: Isobel Roe)





# Emerging infection risks impact Correctional Populations



North Korea was one of the last countries in the world to report COVID-19 cases.

NSW prisons outbreak infected hundreds

Published: 25.03.2025 Updated: 25.03.2025 2 min read

## Hakea Prison braces for potential measles outbreak after person struck down by contagious illness

Authorities are working to identify and manage any prisoners or staff that may have been exposed.

By Bryce Luff



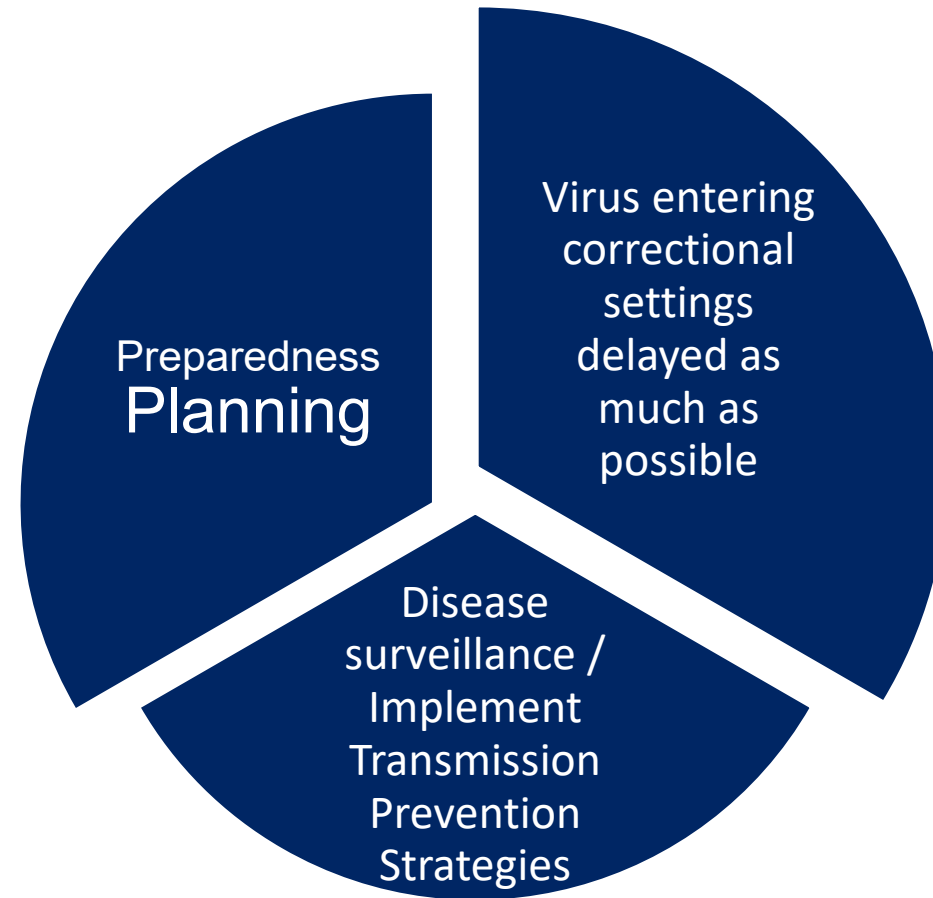
## NSW families fear COVID-19 outbreak in prisons leaving unvaccinated inmates like 'sitting ducks'

By Indigenous communities reporter Nakari Thorpe

Posted Thu 2 Sep 2021 at 7:55pm

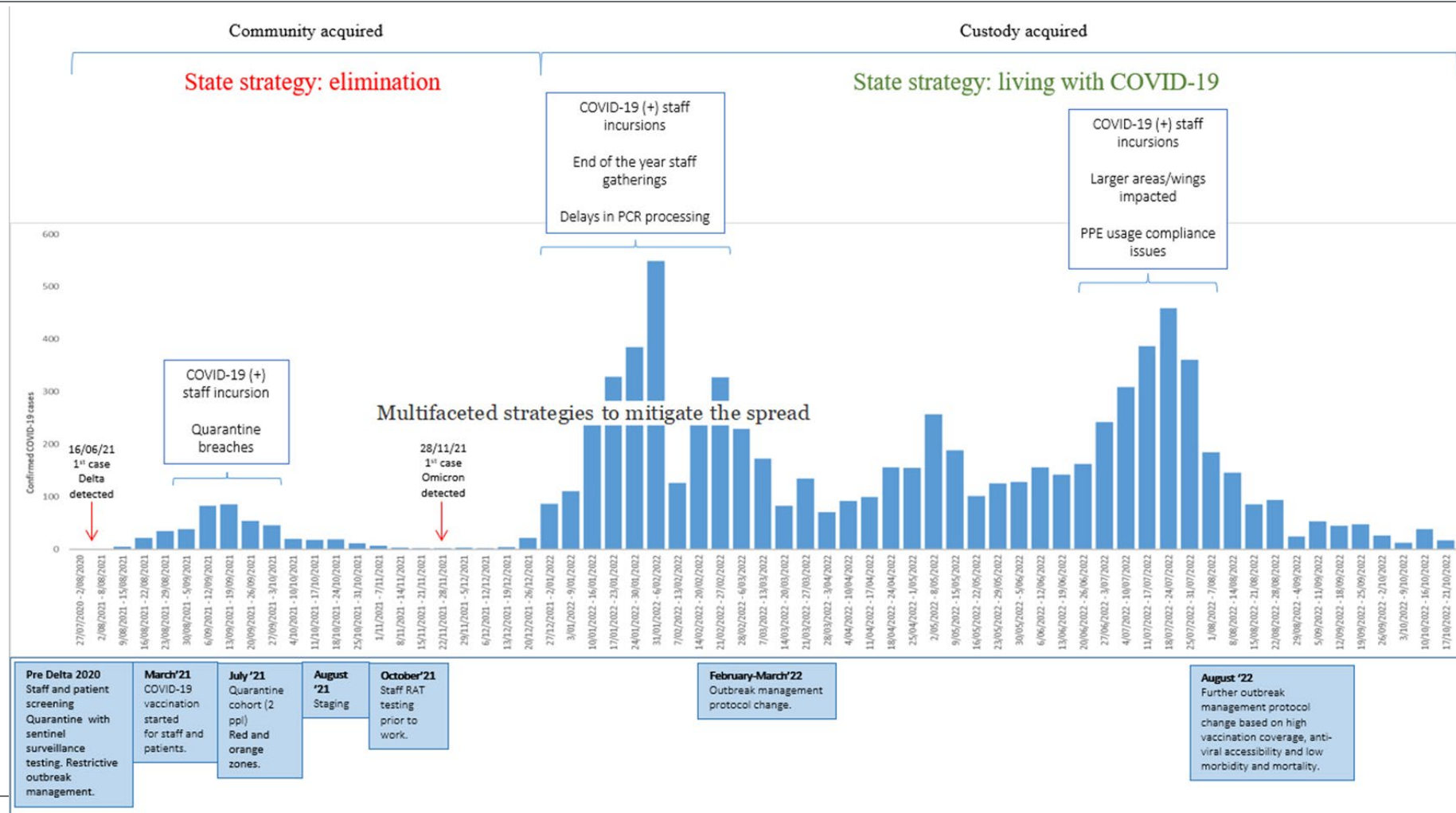


# Justice Health IP&CDC preparedness and response: Opportunities for innovation





# Looking beyond the health data





# Public Health preparedness and approaches for infectious diseases risks require

## Collaboration

Shared response with  
partner agencies

Partnering  
with patients

Education

Feedback

Workforce



# Justice Health NSW IPAC Priorities



<b>Justice Health NSW - IPAC</b>  <b>and</b>  <b>Public Health CDC Program</b>	IPAC core skills and practice, QI and education - focus for all settings and groups of employees Local Procedures for our setting - Supported by CEC- IPaC leadership and strong Justice Health and health networks Vital for effective outcomes that <b>'Infection prevention and Control is Everyone's business'</b>
<b>Immunisation Program</b>	Focus on vaccination and program development. Aim for increased rates of vaccination. Plays critical role in outbreak prevention and control
<b>Skilled and available workforce</b>	Mobilized workforce beyond Public Health. Vital strategy + opportunities for education and upskill – breaking down silos.
<b>Correctional Services Partners</b> – shared visions and goals - strengthened	Keeping populations (patients and staff) safe while maintaining security as the priority – maintaining operations within context of CDC threats



# Innovation – Partnering with our Patients

Justice Health and  
Forensic Mental Health Network



## Find health info easier on tablets



Justice Health has upgraded the health info on  
digital tablets.

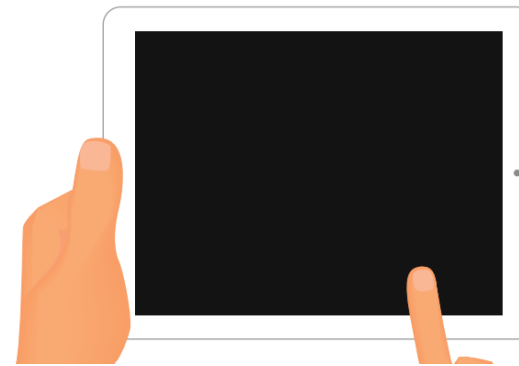
Click on 'Justice Health' in the web browser to get  
started.

Justice Health and  
Forensic Mental Health Network




## Check out the tablets for new info

An easy way to learn about your health










# Health Promotion Strategies developed and tailored for our population

Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network 

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**Flu and COVID-19 are serious illnesses**  
**Protect yourself and those around you now!**


-  **✓ Get a flu and COVID-19 vaccine - ask a nurse**
-  **✓ Tell staff if you feel sick**
-  **✓ Cover your cough and sneeze**
-  **✓ Wash your hands often**
-  **✓ Keep your distance and wear a mask if you can**

**Flu is serious illnesses**


**Protect your mob this winter.**

We are offering flu vaccinations on:


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Ask to see a nurse or fill in a self-referral form

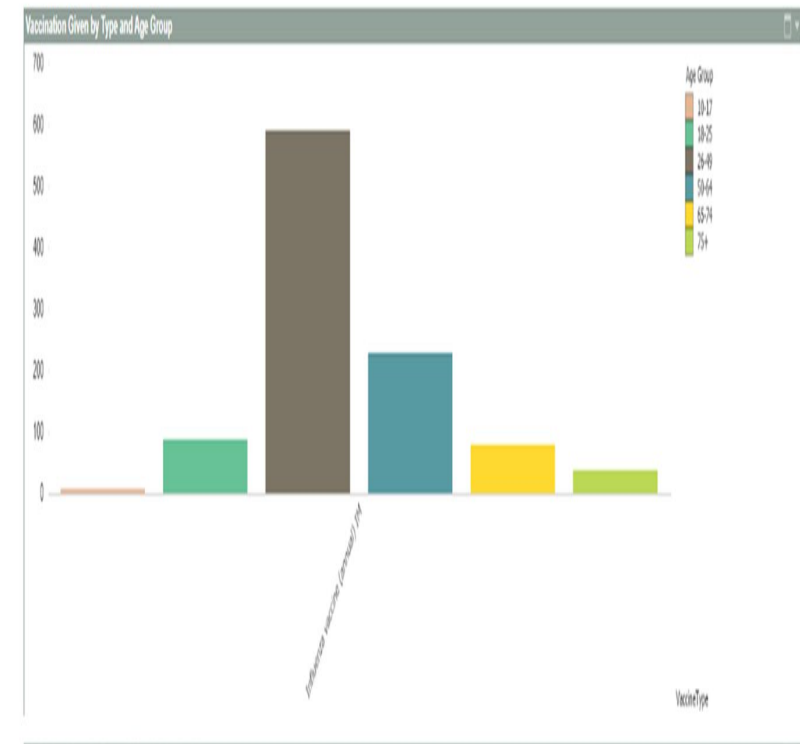
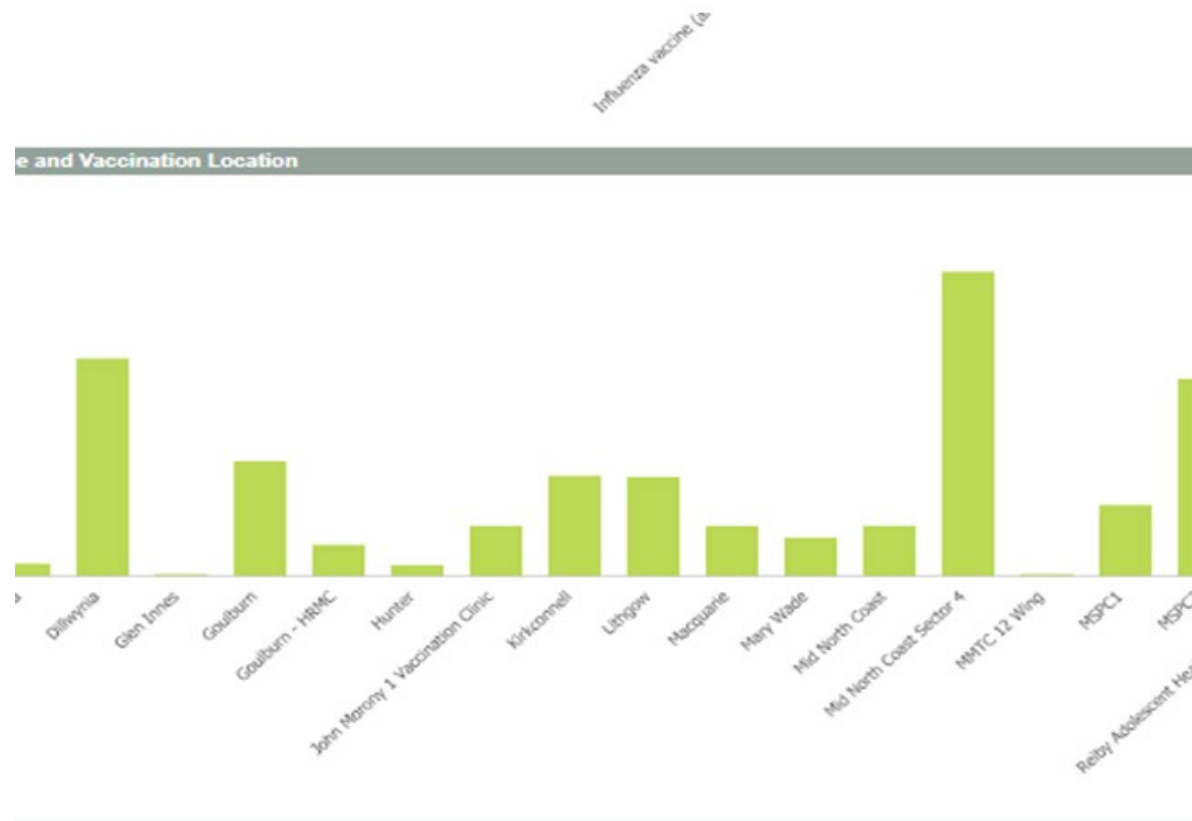


You can speak to an Aboriginal healthcare worker

Justice Health and Forensic Health Network 



# Innovative tools to support key programs





# Winter Immunisation Program (WIP)

## What we different this year

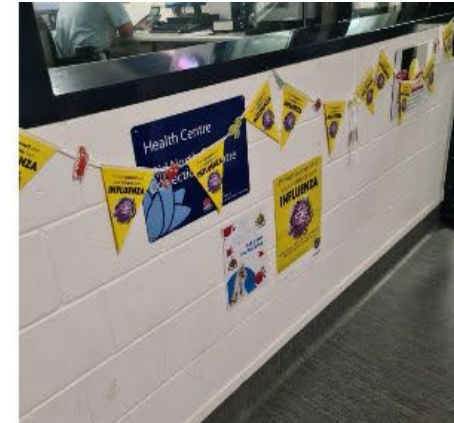
- Heath Centre Competition
- Allocated Individual targets for each centre based on state numbers
- Incentives 7000 bags Jellybeans distributed
- Created streamlined vaccination forms
- Influenza posters
- Weekly tablet broadcasts with posters, video messaging on influenza
- Influenza campaign included in Close the Gap
- Streamlined spreadsheet with timeline and checklist for NUM's
- Weekly updates on thermometer – main page of intranet
- WIP tab created on intranet – resources, links, tools



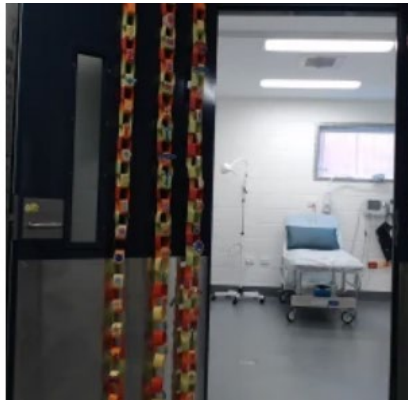
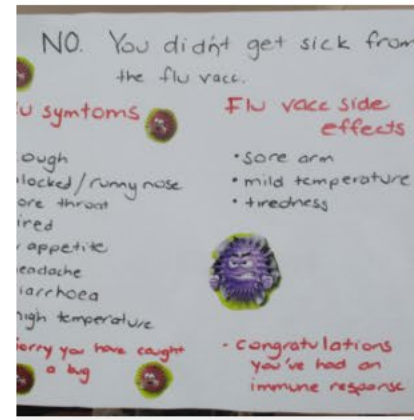
You can speak to an Aboriginal healthcare worker













# Learning from the past - Building future Resilience

- **Surveillance:** vital for early identification and response, Including effective efficient systems
- **System innovation:** COVID-19 dashboard
- Optimising **ventilation** for all indoor spaces
- **Consultation** is crucial to decision making.
- **Stopping disease transmission**

*must be balanced with security and maintaining overall patient and staff safety*





# Key Future Considerations

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**Weighing cost vs  
benefit of mass  
quarantine**

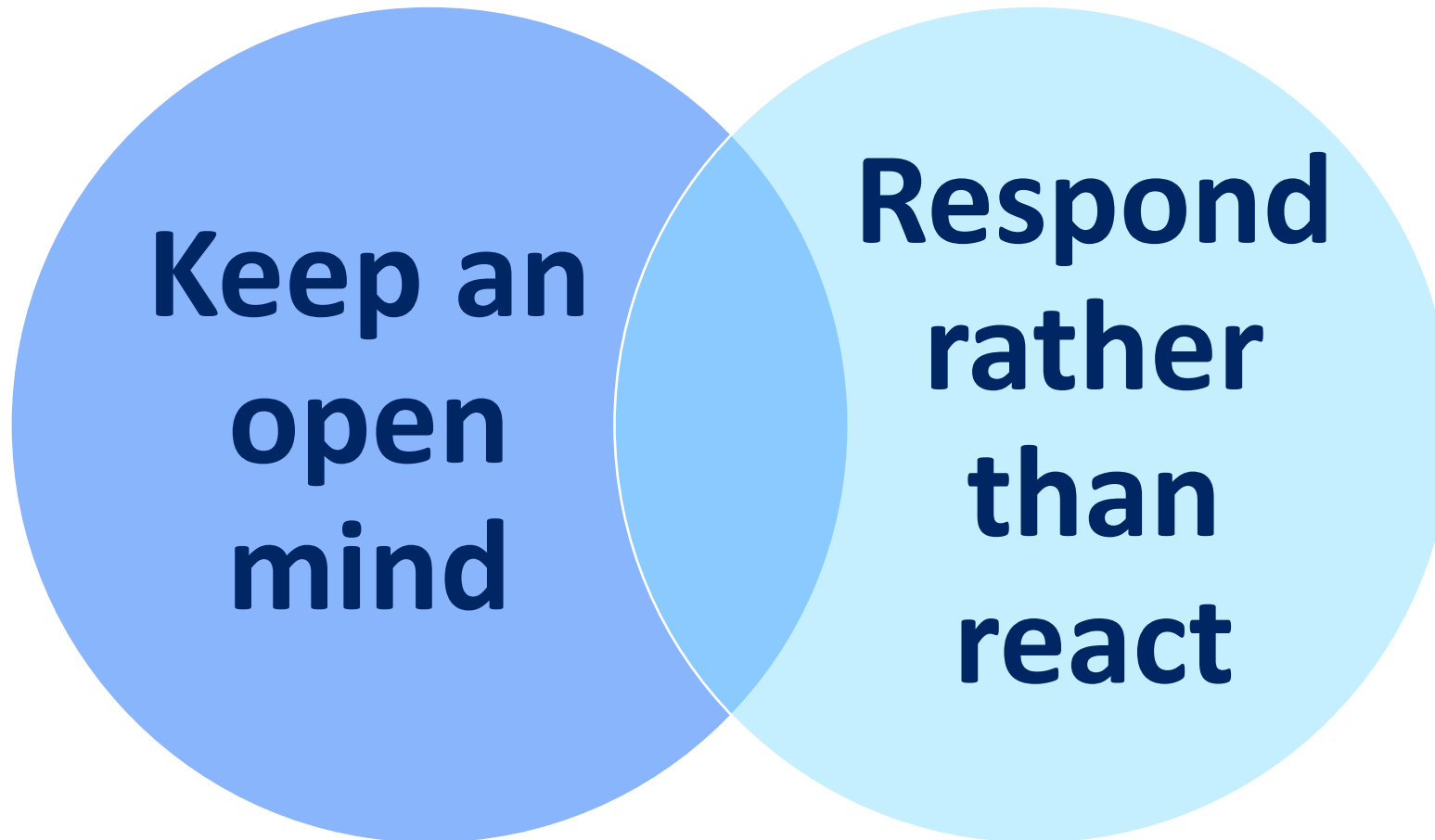
**Communication**

**Impact on  
patient health  
and wellbeing**



# Key learnings

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# In Conclusion....

**Infection Prevention and Communicable Disease Control requires a unique and adaptable approach within the custodial setting**

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- New and emerging High Consequence Infectious Diseases and outbreaks continue to shape IPaC priorities.
- Maintaining a strong foundation of IPaC across all service areas is key to protecting our vulnerable populations and ensure patient and staff safety outcomes.
- Together with NSW Health, Justice Health have taken significant strides in learning from past experiences to enhance our state of readiness like never before.





# Acknowledgements

Justice Health NSW - Population and  
Preventative Health Team

A/Service Director Population Health

A/General Manager Population &  
Preventative Health

CSNSW

CEC, HAI leadership team

Health Protection NSW

Immunisation Network NSW

