

Transforming health and justice

Our strategy to 2026

Draft for feedback

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1. Introduction: Transforming health and justice

There are many people stuck in cycles of disadvantage, experiencing complex and intersecting problems that affect their health, like poor-quality housing, fines and debt, violence, abuse and neglect. In situations like these, one of the places people are likely to turn for help is a trusted healthcare worker, but often the solutions to their problems sit outside the healthcare system.

Health Justice Australia supports and promotes collaborations known as health justice partnerships, which bring legal services into healthcare settings so people experiencing these kinds of problems can receive the support they need when and where they need it.

Over the past four years, Health Justice Australia has supported health justice partnerships by building the capability of services to work effectively together, gathering evidence to support and inform this way of working, and advocating for policy reform that supports health justice partnership.

The experience gained during this time is highlighting a better way forward. Services are learning how to work collaboratively in ways that best address the needs of their clients and patients, and health justice partnerships are helping to identify and address the range of factors that lead to poor health and legal outcomes in the first place.

Now we are looking to the future and have an ambitious agenda over the coming years to improve health and justice outcomes for people experiencing multiple, intersecting health, legal and other problems; and to reduce the complexity of the health and legal assistance systems that respond to those problems.

Informed by what we have learned over the four years since our establishment, our Strategy to 2026 will drive transformation in health and justice outcomes through new knowledge (what we learn), new practice (how we work) and new systems (working towards change at the system level).

The more people are in control of their own needs, the better their outcomes. A key element of our strategy to 2026 is our commitment to work towards stronger engagement with people effected by complex need, particularly people experiencing multiple and intersecting health and legal problems. These are the people whose needs health justice partnership works to address. At its most integrated, health justice partnership reflects deep collaboration between health and legal assistance services; policy and service areas that are otherwise be siloed, operating from their own discrete, single vantage points. Through health justice partnership, health and legal assistance services have driven innovation in their own work, using partnership to drive multidisciplinary, holistic responses to people's needs. Now we want to work with the practitioners in those services to evolve towards partnerships with the communities they serve. Our work towards greater engagement with the people served by health justice partnership is critical to improving health in people's lives and the effectiveness of the service systems that exist to meet those needs.

The lessons of our work towards new knowledge, new practice and new systems will be captured, translated and shared as we transform ourselves into a knowledge hub. This is a further key element of our strategy to 2026, informed by the critical role of learning to drive growth, impact and outcomes. As a national centre of excellence, knowledge is critical to our impact in supporting the effectiveness and expansion of health justice partnership in addressing complexity. Only by learning about what works and how, and critically, what doesn't, can we drive improved outcomes and reshape services around the people they are here to help. As a knowledge hub we will play a key role in informing and influencing the actions of others towards improved health and justice outcomes, particularly across research, practice, policy and community settings.

2. Our capability for impact

What we've built

In our first four years, Health Justice Australia has established itself as a national centre of excellence for health justice partnership. Our work supports effective collaboration between health, legal and other services to achieve better health and justice outcomes for communities made vulnerable by the systemic drivers of health inequity and injustice; and by the barriers to accessing the services designed to support them. Through our work to date to support the expansion and effectiveness of health justice partnerships, Health Justice Australia has laid the following foundations for our impact:

A trusted partner: A strong profile and reputation with a diverse network, including practitioners, philanthropy, business and government.

Practical knowledge and experience: Gathering and translating evidence into knowledge that is valued by practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and funders.

Advice and support: Building the capability of health, legal and other practitioners to work collaboratively, including through brokering, facilitating and mentoring partnerships.

Policy advocacy: Working to reform policy settings, service design and funding, informed by the experience of people coming through health justice partnerships, and their practitioners.

Building the capability to demonstrate our impact: The foundations of a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning framework to assess our own impact, even as we support the impact of others.

Outstanding team: A talented, experienced and diverse team of leading practitioners, researchers and changemakers.

What we have learned

Based on what we have learned to date, our strategy to improve outcomes relies on working across a range of disciplines and sectors to enable better health and justice outcomes. In particular, we will work to support new ways of knowing and working to transform health and legal assistance service systems and the outcomes they can achieve.

Developing **New Knowledge** requires building connections across networks and disciplines, bringing together existing forms of knowledge to learn new insights, translating knowledge from across perspectives and disciplines and, where required, undertaking careful research and analysis.

Establishing **New Practice** requires convening opportunities to share and enhance knowledge and partnering in the application of that knowledge, within and across siloed approaches. This leads to new forms of capabilities, mindsets and approaches that enable practitioners to better respond to the intersecting health and legal issues faced by the people they are here to help.

Forging **New Systems** requires using new knowledge and new practice to influence transformation across health, legal and social policy, building an authorising environment that demonstrates new approaches and acts to remove the barriers to better health and justice outcomes that currently exist in systems and structures.

Driving change

Health Justice Australia has developed the following **model** to work together with our partners to drive transformational change.

Our five-step model for change



Applying our model for change involves connecting with, convening, translating to and influencing actors across the whole system.

Practitioners working as part of the national network of health justice partnerships are a core focus of this work, with approximately 100 partnerships in the network at the end of 2020. We support these practitioners to build the knowledge, skills, mindsets and collaborations necessary to develop and sustain new ways of responding to people with multiple and intersecting health and legal issues. Our activities here include:

- Partnership brokering to build the collaborative capability of health justice partnerships.
- Facilitating peer sharing and learning from experience.
- Building the capability for outcomes measurement.
- Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers in the health, legal assistance and other systems that shape health and justice outcomes and the environments in which health justice partnerships operate.
- Developing resources that share the lessons of this work.

We have also developed a strong track record of working at the systemic level, influencing the operating environment around health and legal assistance services. We work at the intersection of government, philanthropy and the health and legal assistance sectors to build evidence-based solutions that contribute to better health and justice outcomes for people across Australia and reduce the complexity of the service systems that exist to support these outcomes.

Our theory of change is that we can improve health and justice outcomes for people experiencing multiple, intersecting health, legal and other problems and reduce the complexity of the service systems that respond to those problems, by bringing together **new knowledge**, **new practice** and **new systems**.

Our theory of change

Our vision	Better health and justice outcomes Improved health and wellbeing for people experiencing complex need through more responsive, people-centred health and legal service systems		
We believe that our vision is achieved through	New Knowledge Through connecting, learning and translating	New Practice Through convening, sharing and partnering	New Systems Through influencing, acting and demonstrating
Our model for change	05 Transform	Transforming structures and systems and creating an authorising environment to promote scaling for impact	
	04 Demonstrate	Demonstrating the outcomes and impacts of effective people-centred service delivery models	
	03 Develop	Developing and facilitating effective models to provide people-centred services and supports that overcome the barriers to access, availability and quality	
	02 Identify	Identifying the evidence to demonstrate the overlap between poor health and wellbeing outcomes and underlying legal issues	
	01 Convene	Convening existing networks and connecting those with new relationships to support a better networked system	
Our foundations	Practice development	Research and evidence	Policy advocacy
	Trusted partner	Impact measurement	Outstanding team

Health Justice Australia Knowledge Hub
Infrastructure and capability for evidence-driven systems change

Our suite of resources on the value of health justice partnership includes a [theory of change](#) for health justice partnership.

3. Our activity for impact

Health Justice Australia’s ability to scale our impact builds on the foundations we have laid since our establishment in 2016. These foundations are the core organisational competencies which underpin and drive our model for change over the next five years.

The foundations we have laid

Through our research work, we have:

- established the field of health justice in Australia, defining the landscape and services on it;
- developed the foundations for gathering, learning from and sharing evidence within and across networks that would otherwise be siloed by their single vantage points;
- built trust in our ability to produce useful, relevant and easy to use knowledge across research and practice; and
- formed research partnerships to explore the integration of legal help into health settings.

Through our work with health, legal assistance and other practitioners, we have:

- translated our knowledge to sustain and improve how health and legal services partner for impact;
- supported practice-based knowledge in identifying and driving system improvement; and
- co-designed health justice partnership outcomes with practitioners across the health justice landscape.

Through our policy advocacy we have:

- developed our reputation as a key and trusted stakeholder in policy-making;
- influenced the design and implementation of innovative, national approaches to outcomes measurement across collaboration between health and legal assistance sectors;
- begun the work to enable legal assistance outcomes also to be measured in terms of health and wellbeing.

Our approach to driving excellence in the innovation of health justice partnership has laid the foundation for generating new knowledge, facilitating shared learning in practice, and driving systemic change in how we improve health and justice outcomes. Over the next five years we want to deepen these foundations as the underpinnings of our capability for impact.

Deepening the foundations that underpin our model for change

Our Foundations	Practice development	Research and evidence	Policy advocacy
	Trusted partner	Impact measurement	Outstanding Health Justice Australia team

i) **Practice development**

As a national centre of excellence, we support the effectiveness and expansion of health justice partnership. This support entails developing the capability, skills, knowledge and mindset of health and legal services and practitioners to partner effectively to improve their responsiveness to complexity in the lives of the people they support; and the capacity of Health Justice Australia to support our growing network to learn from each other and evolve practice for better outcomes through health justice partnership. We will continue to: implement learning and peer development opportunities; provide ongoing partnership mentoring and brokerage to specific services and communities of practice across our network; and scope, design and develop practice-based tools to enhance partnership activities for impact.

Building and maintaining a resilient health justice workforce is a new direction for this work over the next five years, recognising that practitioners cannot achieve positive outcomes for people vulnerable to health inequity, including people experiencing mental ill-health or at risk of family violence, if practitioners themselves are struggling to maintain and sustain their own wellbeing and resilience. Our practice development activity will have practitioner wellbeing and resilience at its heart, to support practitioners to be the levers for change in how health, legal and other services improve health and justice outcomes among people with complex needs.

In line with our focus on systems change, we will support health justice partnerships to collaborate with the people and communities they serve. As we develop knowledge to support this, we will work with practitioners to test models; facilitate learning among peers and others grappling with similar challenges; and advocate for new ways of working. Through partnerships with universities, other training providers and professional bodies, we will translate this knowledge into professional training, building a pipeline of practitioners

who are better equipped to be truly people-centred in their approach.

ii) **Research and evidence**

A key direction of our Strategy to 2026 is the development of Health Justice Australia as a knowledge hub. Our strongest potential lies in our ability to leverage the knowledge we learn, develop and test through practice, in order to transform health and legal assistance services to become more responsive to people's needs and therefore more effective in improving health and justice outcomes.

Enabling evidence-driven systems change requires us to build both capacity (the infrastructure) and capability (how that infrastructure is used) for improved impact measurement by Health Justice Australia and by our network of health justice partnerships. In delivering on that potential, we will build capacity and capability for learning, testing, evaluating and evidence-driven systems change.

Our foundations for research and evidence recognise the value in convening existing, cross-disciplinary evidence and expertise to generate new insights, as well as undertaking our own research directly. We will continue to create and facilitate spaces for inter-disciplinary dialogue and shared learning, through our events (eg our national conference), cross-disciplinary relationships (eg the Health Justice Partnership Outcomes Network) and our commitment to partnering on strategic research initiatives (eg through National Health and Medical Research Council-funded Centres of Research Excellence).

Supporting community engagement in improved health and justice outcomes will be a core focus of this work over the next five years. Evidence from both the social determinants of health and access to justice literatures identify that the more communities are in control of their health and have the capability to access their legal rights, the better their health and legal outcomes and broader wellbeing. Yet the people who are most vulnerable to health-

harming legal need are the least likely to have a voice in shaping the health and legal services that exist to support them. We recognise different forms of expertise including that of personal or lived experience, alongside that of professionals, researchers, policy-makers and others, in areas such as outcomes measurement as well as in our commitment to new knowledge more broadly.

We will continue to implement the shared health justice partnership outcomes framework, developing tools to capture indicators across the health justice partnership network. We will work with health justice partnerships, researchers and funders to test, implement and improve these tools, building the capability for improved measurement and evaluation in the health justice landscape. We will continue to refine the way we measure our own impact as well.

iii) Policy advocacy

Our policy advocacy draws on findings from our knowledge and practice work to identify key areas of policy attention and advocacy, and key strategic initiatives where our model for change has the potential for greatest impact (eg in mental health and domestic and family violence). Our policy advocacy prioritises the identification and disruption of root causes of complex problems and inequity, as part of the whole-of-system approach that is central to our theory of change.

Over the next five years we will elevate our focus on the 'authorising environment' of the health and legal assistance systems: the ways in which health, legal and related services are designed, developed, implemented, funded and assessed for their effectiveness. Through this focus we will identify and tackle inadequacies in how systems recognise and respond to the complex factors that drive people's experience of poor health and justice, and that often exacerbate root causes in doing so.

Our policy advocacy over the next five years will include a focus on supporting the health

justice landscape to explore models of community leadership so that the voices and experiences of the communities with whom we work can make a powerful contribution to decision making. Currently there is no clear pathway for health justice partnerships to have a role in supporting communities to advocate for their own health and access to justice. There are often structural barriers that act against health justice partnerships leading this work, barriers which may include the absence of community capacity-building within funding agreements, or the poor alignment of policy and practice for community development across different and siloed structures.

iv) Trusted partner

Our ability to work collaboratively is critical to our impact. We recognise that many of the health and justice issues we identify are already the focus of sustained attention by others including practitioners, philanthropy, business, governments and, most importantly, communities themselves. Our ability to forge new connections and build relationships as a trusted partner with other actors in the systems we seek to change is critical to our effectiveness.

We will convene opportunities for health justice practitioners to connect, share, learn from and inform each other and Health Justice Australia on the practice evidence underpinning health justice partnership. This will include scoping, designing and maintaining a fit-for-purpose virtual health justice practitioner platform. With regular peer networking opportunities, we will enable practitioners to explore the challenges in collaborative practice and responding to complexity; and to test and demonstrate new and changing elements of their work. We will add value, guidance and broader context to these conversations by contributing Health Justice Australia expertise across our capability in knowledge, practice and systems change.

We will continue to broker relationships between our national network and thought leaders and change makers in other areas

too, supporting broader dialogue and bringing a range of influences into our own work towards new knowledge, new practice and new systems. We will contribute in a range of ways, from playing a leadership role as a trusted intermediary, such as we have in responding to crises (as demonstrated in our convening of the Covid19 Legal Assistance Working Group in 2020); to joining established networks as a collaborative partner (eg as a national convener of ChangeFest and in our contribution to the next national framework for protecting Australia's children).

We have intentionally committed our time and energy to developing trusted relationships with leaders within communities where our work has the potential to support and deliver positive health justice outcomes. These relationships are critical to our model for change, illustrated through our strategic initiative focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led health justice partnership; and the possibilities of our work in mental health and family violence. These strategic initiatives demonstrate how, over time, our model for change can deliver outcomes for other priority groups, for example people with disability (who represent a cohort most vulnerable to unmet legal need and its impact on health inequity). Over the next five years, consistent with our model for change, we will continue to invest in developing new relationships and building new knowledge to better understand how we can support greater impact for individuals and communities.

Our foundations have demonstrated our role as a valued partner to strategic philanthropists who invest in innovation, collaboration and evidence-based, community-driven approaches to systems change. We will build on these foundations to attract investment in our work, as well as to support strategic funding towards broader health and justice outcomes from the philanthropic sector.

v) Impact measurement

The scope for impact measurement to drive our work for improved health and justice outcomes cannot be underestimated. There has been very little investment in the capacity or capability to measure outcomes well across the health justice landscape, beyond our own investment in the co-design of shared health justice partnership outcomes indicators. Services have differing capacity to collect, share and use data, which hampers their ability to learn from and drive improvement within their own services and across the system.

Yet the foundational work we have undertaken to date and the growing engagement in this work across our network indicate the clear potential of this focus on impact measurement as a foundation of our work across new knowledge, new practice and new systems.

The greatest limitation to scaling the impact of this work lies in the currently small-scale opportunities for impact measurement. Our proposal to build the capability for impact measurement and evidence-driven systems change will enable a significant scaling up of impact measurement in our work and the proposed infrastructure and architecture will provide key capability to scale up that impact itself. As an actor in the systems we seek to change, this capability will simultaneously provide added value to our own measurement of impact.

vi) Outstanding team

Responding to our evolving role in the health, justice and broader human service landscape, we will continue to invest in capability across our organisation: recruiting for expertise and partnering with community and thought leaders. We are committed to building a diverse team that continues to drive creative and innovative solutions to complex need and service systems.

We have laid the foundations for diverse skillsets, capabilities and experience in the people we have recruited to date. We continue to value this diversity as core elements of our organisational capability. We

identify additional areas for development including how best to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership towards improved health and justice outcomes; and in capability towards knowledge translation and exchange, partnering, and understanding systems. We will invest in and extend these skills across the Health Justice Australia team, as core components of our operational capability for impact.

Over the next five years we will incrementally move towards a more mature funding model, where a blend of revenue sources strategically drives, supports and delivers our work for impact. This will include broadening our partnerships with philanthropists who support our model for systems change and the key areas of focus within it; and testing, developing and implementing a suite of service offerings and events through which we generate non-grant income.

About Health Justice Australia

Health Justice Australia is a national charity and centre of excellence for health justice partnership. Health Justice Australia supports the expansion and effectiveness of health justice partnerships and works to change service systems to improve health and justice outcomes through:

Knowledge and its translation: developing evidence and translating that evidence into knowledge that is valued by practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and funders.

Building capability: supporting practitioners to work collaboratively, including through brokering, mentoring and facilitating partnerships.

Driving systems change: connecting the experience of people coming through health justice partnerships, and their practitioners, with opportunities for lasting systems change through reforms to policy settings, service design and funding.