



SHORTLISTED

Summary

The Alice Springs Hospital (ASH) Safety and Quality Team launched the Holistic Care of Central Australians project to enhance workforce capability, workplace culture, and service delivery across the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS). This initiative assessed staffing, infrastructure, and client services to prioritise holistic care, ensuring that the Central Australian community remains at the heart of NT health services. Key improvements include optimising hospital space for better staff collaboration, co-locating teams such as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) and Patient Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) to streamline discharge and follow-up care. These efforts led to a significant reduction in Did Not Attend (DNA) rates for elective surgery pre-admission telehealth appointments (from 43% to 29%) and face-to-face DNAs (from 21% to 11%). Additionally, the project introduced new training opportunities, reduced reliance on costly agency nurses, and implemented initiatives to improve workplace morale and cultural responsiveness.

The Challenge

The project aimed to enhance NTPS workforce capability and improve patient outcomes by:

- **Reducing Patient DNA Rates:** Addressing inefficiencies that contributed to high rates of missed pre-admission appointments.
- **Optimising Workforce & Staffing Resources:** Reducing reliance on agency nurses and building a more sustainable workforce.
- **Enhancing Cultural Support & Services:** Co-locating services to improve discharge times and patient care plans.
- **Improving Patient Flow & Hospital Efficiency:** Implementing morning huddle meetings and optimising bed availability.



The Solution

A multi-layered approach was implemented to achieve sustainable healthcare improvements:

- **Morning Huddle Meetings:** Improved bed management, creating up to 40 additional beds daily.
- **Co-Location of ALOs & PATS:** Enhanced culturally safe care and streamlined discharge processes.
- **Hospital Resource Coordination Unit (HRCU):** Optimised staff allocation and reduced overtime costs.
- **Food Security & Nutrition Initiatives:** Established a fruit orchard and partnered with local supermarkets to provide fresh fruit to visitors suffering food insecurity.

Results and Next Steps

The initiative has led to measurable improvements in patient care and hospital operations:

- **Reduced DNA Rates:** Telehealth appointments dropped from 43% to 29%, and face-to-face appointments from 21% to 11%.
- **Improved Hospital Efficiency:** Despite a 3.8% rise in hospital admissions, patient wait times reduced by 18%.

- **Optimised Workforce Utilization:** Reduced reliance on agency nurses through a FIFO nursing pool model.
- **Enhanced Cultural & Community Engagement:** Strengthened Aboriginal cultural services and strengthened our approach to a patient centred care.

Alice Springs Hospital's holistic approach to healthcare transformation serves as a replicable model for improving workforce sustainability, hospital efficiency, and culturally safe patient care in regional and remote communities.