



INTEGRATING HEALTH SCHOOLS AND HEALTH RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

LIVERPOOL INNOVATION PRECINCT
POSITION PAPER

A scientist wearing a white lab coat, a white hairnet, and a blue surgical mask is working in a laboratory. The scientist is holding a small glass vial and is positioned next to a piece of laboratory equipment, possibly a pipette or a syringe. The background is a solid blue color. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

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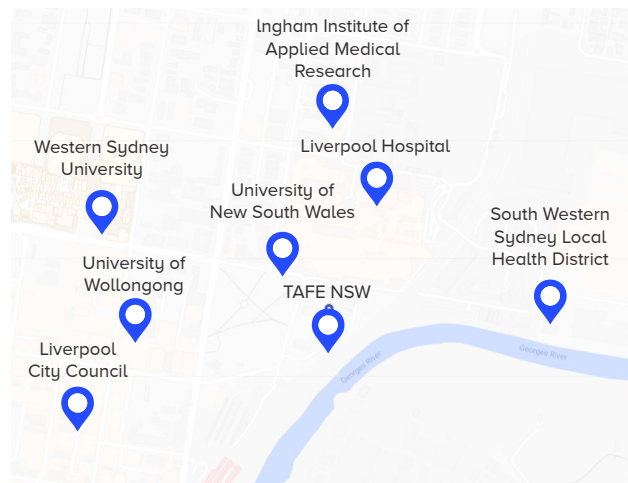
‘An integrated health school has the potential to fulfil a number of NSW Government priorities in health, education, economic development and employment, addressing social disadvantage with a single, collaborative project. Liverpool in south west Sydney, is one of the fastest growing areas of the country, and has the infrastructure, the will and track-record to make it happen. The time to act is right now’.

School Infrastructure NSW (SINSW) and the South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) have commissioned this position paper to build on the opportunities already identified by the Liverpool Innovation Precinct Steering Committee (the LIP), around colocating a school with academic research facilities, Liverpool Hospital and TAFE NSW facilities in the Liverpool Innovation Precinct.

An integrated health school needs to be a lighthouse school, leading in good health and wellbeing practices for students, staff and the community. The school will provide a health-oriented curriculum stream embedded in the regular curriculum, while also offering specialist courses.

Liverpool is an ideal location for creating such a concept. It is one of the fastest growing and most demographically diverse regions in Australia, representing what NSW will look like in 20 years’ time – a multilingual community with global networks.

There is already a significant program of capital works and infrastructure development underway in Liverpool, facilitated by the establishment of the new Western Sydney Airport just 20kms away from Liverpool CBD. The expansion of activity by its institutions, their colocation and collaborative approach presents massive opportunities for lifelong learning.



In Liverpool there is a unique opportunity to focus on the wellbeing of a community with the spirit and the will to thrive.

The Liverpool Innovation Precinct Steering Committee has already proven itself to be a cohesive model of governance. Its members’ passion, collaboration, and cooperation will make the integrated health school a success.

This paper outlines the key characteristics of a school which is integrated into a health and education precinct in Liverpool. The University of Wollongong, the University of New South Wales, and the Western Sydney University, alongside TAFE NSW, the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research, the Department of Education and the massively expanding Liverpool Hospital, all are initiators of the concept of an integrated health school at Liverpool, and will bring momentum and ownership to its implementation.

THE INTEGRATED HEALTH SCHOOL CONCEPT

There are existing examples of integrated health schools from other jurisdictions around Australia, such as in Victoria with the Department of Health and Human Services' Workforce Innovation and Reform Unit, however most of these examples focus on a specific health curriculum. Similarly, specialist schools such as sports or agricultural schools have a focus on curriculum. In Queensland the Health Science Academy is established for students in Years 10 to 12, working in partnership with Griffith University to offer pathways for a career in health sciences, research science and academia.

The Australian Government's Sporting Schools initiative is a \$200 million program designed to help schools increase children's participation in sport, and to connect them with community sporting opportunities. Sporting Schools provides a program for primary schools, and a targeted program for Year 7 and 8 students in secondary schools. Research shows that an early connection to sport can positively influence participation and encourage a lifelong love of sport.

Each of these examples demonstrates qualities in its objective which should characterise an integrated health school at Liverpool.

'Magnet' Schools in the United States are characterised by diversity, innovative curriculum and professional development, academic excellence, high quality instructional systems, and family and community partnerships.

The Bravo Medical Magnet School (so termed as a 'magnet' which is broader and not the traditional educational catchment boundaries) has broadened its objectives through experience. It connects students to the real world of health-care providers, biomedical research and hospitals, and offers options for pursuing medical careers. The school's focus has evolved over the years to ensure that students who pursue those professions have a clear pathway, while those who do not will be fully prepared for college or post-school work. Bravo's partnerships with world-class medical and research facilities such as the University of Southern California Health Sciences Campus (USC-HSC) and the Saban Research Institute offer students diverse field experiences, learning enrichment opportunities, and internship possibilities.

Similarly, in a partnership approach in South Africa the Department of Health together with the Department of Basic Education revised the National School Health Policy in 2011 to introduce the Integrated School Health Program. The goals of the integrated health concept were to contribute to the improvement of the general health of school children, as well as the environmental conditions in schools while addressing health barriers to learning.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AN INTEGRATED HEALTH SCHOOL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOCUS

“A health promoting school (HPS) is a school that constantly seeks to strengthen its capacity to promote healthy living, learning and working conditions. It aims to provide a multifaceted response to the health needs of students.”

– World Health Organisation

An integrated health school should promote a focus on health and wellbeing outcomes for students, their families and the broader community. At Liverpool, such a school could build on the existing collaboration of the members of the LIP to empower and assist vulnerable local communities to achieve greater sustainable health outcomes for the region. Across the region, the local community experiences increased rates of a range of diseases and issues including chronic and complex disease, cancer, diabetes, childhood obesity, mental health and drug and alcohol abuse. These lifestyle and disease profiles contribute to pockets of the region with lower life expectancy.

Embedding wellbeing and healthy outcomes awareness in this way will develop a wellness mindset in future Chief Executive Officers, managers and key decision-makers, creating long-term positive flow on effects throughout our society.

In addition, the concept of safe and healthy access to the school site should be facilitated, including safe cycling and walking opportunities around the school and to and from the major transport hubs including train stations, as well as end of trip facilities for students, staff and the community.

IMPROVED WORKPLACE/ OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAYS

An integrated health school aspires to enhance the pathways between school, tertiary education and the workplace, better preparing young people for each step in their journey to the workforce.

This is a prime opportunity to align and work with existing health care providers in local institutions with a health, or health and education focus.

Surrounded by three tertiary educational institutions, Liverpool is a very different prospect for an integrated health school than the average suburban environment. With a growing population, the NSW Government is already in early planning phase to build a new school to service future demands in the area.

An integrated health school will also provide opportunities for training teachers to practice their skills in a specialist environment.

Similarly, NSW Ministry of Health provides guidelines for the provision of setting up Work Experience programs in the NSW public health system.¹ The guidelines reinforce that participation in work experience programs has advantages for both the health sector and the student. These programs raise awareness of the variety of career opportunities available in the health care industry, and awareness of the organisation of the system delivering care, and will be a fundamental mechanism in the establishment of the integrated health school.

There is also potential for a health curriculum stream through the National Education Standard Authority (NESA) to be piloted using the resources of the adjoining institutions at Liverpool. However the main strategy will be to weave relevant themes – for example, wellbeing, compassion and community – throughout the curriculum more generally.

This would further enhance the opportunity for LIP partners to co-design a comprehensive and localised curriculum for the lifelong learning for an individual starting from a young age, and continuing through to tertiary education, working and living in the local area.

In addition, other professionals such as legal and information technology workers, can get valuable exposure to how their profession works within, and is integral to, the health sector and the integrated health school can play a role in transitioning their skills to the health sector through the identified pathways.

¹ https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/GL2005_020.pdf

OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The integrated health school model recognises the power of vision, partnerships and shared benefits in pooling staff and financial resources.

The vision is to create an intellectual environment that invites key education stakeholders (the school, TAFE NSW, Universities, Liverpool Hospital and the South Western Sydney Primary Health Network) to break down their silos and open doors to create a transparent “intellectual bubble”. Rapidly developing and future technology – particularly immersive interactive environment learning tools such as virtual reality - can be incorporated into the design of the facility and the curriculum from the early planning stages by leveraging the facilities of the adjoining institutions.

This inclusive learning approach will be more economical and promotes greater educational opportunities, especially for a practical curriculum and early exposure to tertiary life.

Tertiary Institutions in Liverpool are already highly collaborative, and the integrated approach to the school will create partnership delivery opportunities. For example, the expansion of the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research and its physical connection with the hospital will enable closer proximity of service delivery and greater learning ability under the same roof.

RESEARCH

There is a unique opportunity to embed an inquisitive research mindset in everyone who comes through the integrated health school, instilling the value of translational research and developing the skills to undertake robust research from an early age.

Open access to research facilities and personnel will allow for research based approaches to input into the current curriculum to shape the new, enhancing the learning capabilities of the students. Furthermore, leveraging new research opportunities can increase learning pathways and job opportunities.

For example, work is already underway by UNSW in collaboration with Liverpool Council on a Cooperative Research Centre concept which provides learning on future food systems.

BROADER COMMUNITY USE

Inclusivity and the creation of a community environment needs to be a core underlying principle of an integrated health school. The school and its surrounding precinct should be seen as the ‘hub’ of the area, a community place that is for everyone, where families feel connected.

The diversity of Liverpool and south west Sydney can be leveraged to overcome social and health barriers, while at the same time building resilience in the community. This will also create an exemplar for other regions with similar demographics and characteristics.

EARLY EXPOSURE AND PROXIMITY TO HEALTH CARE RESOURCES

Early exposure and proximity to health and wellbeing education and services translates to lifelong impacts, ensuring a dynamic continuous learning capability rather than a static linear pathway to learning.

Early intervention through colocation of health services and education providers can drive both better health and academic outcomes for the students. It also provides an opportunity to generate interest in new and existing professions from an earlier age.

EVALUATION

The integrated health school needs to have an evaluation framework embedded into its planning from the beginning.

The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health² uses three key measures to understand the effects of Comprehensive School Health:



Environments

Positive physical and emotional environment



Health

Physical, mental, and social well-being



Educational

Personal growth and scholastic development

Once established and fully operational, an evaluation framework for Liverpool will include data collection around the key elements outlined above using existing tertiary expertise, measurement of staff retention and parent involvement. Mental Health indicators will also provide evaluation criteria. It will be important for Liverpool to measure the creation of jobs and attraction of students to local jobs. There will also be rich research opportunities for the tertiary institutions.



CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED HEALTH SCHOOL FOR LIVERPOOL

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

While the rapid growth of Liverpool presents an opportunity, it also presents challenges.

The final integrated school model will need to include the flexibility required to facilitate quick adaptation as technology, health needs and community demographics change. For example, we know today that mental health and obesity are both significant health issues for young people- but we cannot confirm that these will remain the same for twenty years. The same may be said for the technology used in schools and the aspirations and values of the community.

As the context changes, the Liverpool Integrated Health School will need to change and work with its partner institutions, to ensure it is always fit for purpose.

GOVERNANCE

An integrated health school creates ambiguity around existing clear lines of governance, which will need to be agreed and articulated early in the project to avoid intra government roadblocks. For example, the key elements of the concept touch on the portfolios of four different NSW Ministers (Health, Education, Skills, and Mental Health), as well as into the federal sphere.

Key leadership, reporting and decision making structures will need to be in place from early planning, supported by true partnerships between stakeholders. Ministerial and departmental oversights are also important to understand from an execution and conflict resolution perspective.

There are NSW and Federal Government policies that will impact the integrated health school, such as testing and reporting, enrolment caps, international student placements, ATAR restrictions to university among many others.

Liverpool City Council will also be a key stakeholder around the future development of the school.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING


The feasibility and design of the proposed health-oriented curriculum stream to sit alongside the regular curriculum will need to be thoroughly explored, so that NSW Department of Education and NESA can guarantee that:

1. All students will receive the standard education as required by Australian and NSW legislation;
2. Students not electing to participate in the health-oriented stream will be in no way disadvantaged;
3. All students receive the mental-health and wellbeing benefits promoted by the school.

Ensuring these three elements for students will be central to other planning decisions, such as the model of the school, extra-curricular opportunities, and the different higher-education and TAFE NSW pathways offered.

The concept being proposed is new and as such, may not fit directly into the existing legislative framework. As the two core policy areas of Health and Education are high profile and often contentious, the policy navigation for the health and educational elements of the school will need to be made with the utmost transparency.

² <http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/index.php/partnerships/education-health-connections>

A woman in a white lab coat is smiling and looking down at a student in a lab setting. The student is holding a test tube and looking at it. Another student is visible on the right, looking at a microscope. The background is a blurred lab environment. The entire image has a blue tint.

**LIVERPOOL IS UNIQUELY
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HOW CAN WE MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Liverpool is uniquely placed to deliver an integrated health school as a lighthouse project for NSW and Australia. The area's demographic and socio-economic profile, combined with leading health and education institutions, and the commitment to collaborative projects already underway, mean Liverpool will fully realise the benefits of such a school.

The LIP has volunteered to support the planning and development of the integrated health school in Liverpool.

An evaluation sub-group will be established, and another group formed to identify existing opportunities for beginning the process of integrating the local school curriculum and activities with the opportunities presented by the Liverpool Innovation Precinct.

This document and the collaborative work done to create the document will also feed into the business case being developed for the school at Liverpool and indeed the other capital works programs and research initiatives in the Precinct.

The Liverpool Innovation Precinct brings together key stakeholders from across government, education, business and health sectors in a collaborative effort to deliver an aspirational vision for the Precinct, with a focus on developing the area as a growth precinct focusing on Health, Education and Research sectors.



