



# **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2020 - 2023**

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## INTRODUCTION

Tallangatta Health Service (THS) is a small rural public health service who for over 100 years has served our local community, the people of the western end of Towong Shire, and people in surrounding communities.

'Empowering People for Health' is the long-term vision of Tallangatta Health Service. In achieving the vision, people of our region will have the confidence and authority to make decisions about personal and community health.

The Strategic Direction 2018-2027, identifies the strategic priorities that will enable the service to achieve its vision. Tallangatta Health Service cannot achieve its vision alone. The journey requires cooperative action with our community.

The communication strategy (strategy) will assist us to achieve our vision with communication aligned, targeted at our staff, consumers, and other stakeholders and partners.

Our communication internally and externally will be driven by a set of objectives and key principles. The strategy is matched to the communication channels available to our organisation internally and externally.

Communication should always be a "two-way street." As a health service provider, it is critical to the quality of the services we provide and health outcomes of our community.

The strategy provides a pathway toward ensuring good communication and is a key element to support good governance. It is a living document and as such will be reviewed regularly as part of our continuous improvement environment.



integrity



caring



adaptable



respect



excellence

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The *Strategic Direction 2018-2027* is based on four strategic priorities identified by Tallangatta Health Service as critical to ensuring the service achieves its vision. These are:

- **Strategic priority one**

*Our care is relevant, safe, high quality, responsive services*

- **Strategic priority two**

*Our infrastructure is planned for future needs*

- **Strategic priority three**

*Our partnering with communities cultivates connections*

- **Strategic priority four**

*Our workforce is adaptive, skilled and compassionate*

## COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

This strategy is a key element to achieving our vision and strategic priorities and has the following communication objectives:

1. Strengthens connections – every stakeholders voice is heard
2. Is inclusive – everyone's voice is treated with respect, empowers consumers to make informed decisions about their health and influence broader health system decisions
3. Has direction - everyone knows how they fit in, what is expected of them and how they can offer feedback
4. Innovation is harnessed - everyone looks for opportunities for better communication
5. Enhances reputation – we are trusted and valued

# **PRINCIPLES OF GOOD COMMUNICATION**

When considering the principles of 'good communication' it is important to distinguish between our communication on general matters and our communication on health matters at an individual level.

This strategy focuses on the general communication of the organisation, that may convey health messages and has been adapted from the World Health Organisation's six principles of communication.

## ***Accessible***

Communicators should identify all channels and modes that are available, and map their comparative capacities to reach priority audiences. Using the right mix of channels and modes helps empower audiences with the information they need to make informed decisions. Priority audiences are staff, consumers and their families. The methodology of our communication should be in an easy format and therefore in varied formats to enable target audience accessibility.

## ***Actionable***

To be successful, communicators must understand target audience knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours in order to create messages that address barriers and encourage people and decision-makers to take the recommended actions. The end user must always be in mind. Communications should also involve consultation, inviting key people to contribute and include a feedback loop to measure success.

## ***Credible and trustworthy***

Tallangatta Health Service's reputation is a key factor for whether individuals will act on the organisation's advice and guidance. The more people who trust Tallangatta Health Service, the more likely they will believe, and act on, the information communicated by us. Our communicators must use every opportunity to reinforce our trustworthiness so that our recommendations become the basis for decisions.

## ***Relevant***

To be relevant, communications must help decision-makers/people understand that the information/ knowledge and /or action required for themselves or for those they care for is important. When the message, that is often targeted at reducing risk, people and decision makers understand the relevance of them undertaking recommended actions.

## ***Timely***

Across all health issues, Tallangatta Health Service must make information, advice and guidance available in a timely way, so audiences have the information they need when they need it, in order to make appropriate decisions.

## ***Understandable***

People need information that is easy to understand in order to take appropriate actions.

Health literacy is a key factor in considering the end user and communication channel in health messages. Health Literacy is "the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions". All information developed should be assessed with the aim of enhancing the health literacy of the consumer.

# TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

To be effective we have identified those stakeholders we must communicate with and deliver our key messages which will be tailored to the target audience.

**Table 1: Stakeholders**

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS
Consumers Patients/residents/clients/participants Board Staff Committee /working party members Volunteers Families Contractors Visitors	Community - local and surrounding Local businesses Local Members Parliament Community Groups Other Healthcare Providers Department of Health (Victoria) Other agencies (schools, police, employment agencies) Department of Health (Commonwealth) Regulatory Bodies

# KEY MESSAGES

Key messages form the basis for formal communication and will align with our Strategic Direction. They will be delivered by the Board and Chief Executive Officer and as delegated to other key staff by the Chief Executive Officer.

Key messages will be customised to suit specific target communication on a matter, target audiences and communication channels and will align with our communication objectives. In emergency management response to a crisis, key messages will be tailored and approved by the Emergency Management Team Incident Controller.

Decision making on our key messages will be informed by this strategy and our strategic direction pillars of;

- Person-centred approach - *the person will be at the centre of all we do and we will empower them in health decisions.*
- Evidence-based decision-making - *our decisions will inquire, looking for best practice to inform our decisions.*
- Sustainability - *our decisions ensure that success can be maintained.*
- Culture of excellence, innovation, learning and development - *we will be the best we can by embracing new ways.*
- Robust clinical and corporate governance - *our governance systems will provide assurance that we are providing the best care possible and our Strategic Vision is being achieved.*

- Quality controlled - *involving key staff and consumers to review the communication when relevant*

## COMMUNICATION MODEL

Our model will encompass who, what and why in enabling the strategy.

### WHO

All staff have responsibility for enabling this communication strategy; everyone plays a part throughout our organisation in communicating key messages.

The Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, will make all official statements and will be the media liaison on behalf of Tallangatta Health Service.

The Chief Executive Officer may sub-delegate this role if strategically appropriate. In this case the spokesperson would be fully briefed and authorised to speak across specific issues that might arise in the media.

Our executive and operational team leaders will lead most formal communication through the organisations and/or teams but all staff have a role to play in:

- sharing our stories
- being involved, responding to and sharing key messages
- holding true our corporate branding and identity
- ensuring relevant stakeholders/consumers have opportunity to participate in organisational decision making
- opportunities for improvement
- communication during emergency management activities

### HOW

In linking with our communication principles, especially accessible, a variety of channels need to be considered. These channels may be used singularly or in combination, in response to the target audience characteristics.

**Table 2: Channels**

Channel	Internal/External	Examples
Print Media	External & Internal	Media Release Newspaper Article Advertisement Editorial Newsletters Posters/Fact Sheets Memos
Broadcast Media	External	TV Radio You Tube

Digital	External & Internal	Public Website Intranet Email Social Media Platforms
Feedback	External & Internal	Consumer Surveys Staff Surveys Feedback Forms Conversations Evaluation Reports Compliance Assessments
Print Publications	External & Internal	Reports Staff Newsletters Community Newsletters Brochures Pamphlets Flyers Posters Stories Fact Sheets Feedback
In-Person	External & Internal	Forums /One-on-One Discussion Groups Workgroups Committees Meetings Community Events Consumer Engagement Advisory Group
Events	External & Internal	Exhibitions Community Events Conference Presentations

## WHAT

We will communicate key messages in response to achieving our strategic direction and business imperatives. An activity program will ensure key opportunities for communication to occur regularly. Activities will occur spontaneously but also programmed to ensure consistent messaging and connection with our stakeholders.

**Table 3: Activity Program**

Activity	Internal/External
Deliver a regular newsletter to staff/consumers	Internal
Deliver regular publications in chosen local newspapers to inform the community on health promotion topics, performance of the service and other information of interest to consumers and community.	External
Review of the Intranet content to ensure effective communication with staff	Internal
Regularly update the website with links to Facebook to ensure effective updated and timely digital communication and seek interaction from, consumers, community and other stakeholders	External
Attend appropriate events	External
Deliver an Annual Report and Quality Account	External & Internal
Participate in appropriate workgroups, forums and conferences	External
Invite, review and action consumer and community feedback through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Feedback Forms</li> <li>b. Creation and distribution of postcards that invite conversation and comments</li> <li>c. Regular surveys of consumers</li> </ul>	External
Identify 2- 3 formal "awareness" topics per quarter and commit to delivering relevant information. The scope and channel of the communication will vary dependent on the audience and topic.	External & internal

## **WHY**

As discussed in the introduction communication, “why” is a key factor to achieving our vision and a key element of good governance.

## **SHARING OUR SUCCESS**

Tallangatta Health Service has many successful activities that we share with stakeholders. These ‘stories’ support our vision and strategic direction, build on our reputation and are examples of our staff shining each and every day in care delivery, enhancing the trust people can have in our care as a public health entity.

It is key that these messages are planned to ensure we capture the moments. We will use all our channels to share our stories and will focus on:

- Publicly displaying our compliments and positive feedback to all our key stakeholders and consumers
- Linking the stories to our vision and benefit to others
- Engage our staff and stakeholders to share their stories with us and others
- When possible, actively market our stories, linking to themes in our environment e.g. 16 days activism, year of the volunteer
- Celebrate our success with planned activities

## **SHARING CHANGE**

Organisational change is part of a continuous quality improvement environment and needs to be communicated well. To ensure organisational change is supported by good communication a communication plan will be developed specific to the change occurring. Focus areas of sharing change will be service delivery and infrastructure changes e.g.

- Service Delivery
  - Models of service delivery change such as variations to services, addition of services, ceasing services
- Infrastructure
  - infrastructure upgrades or capital works that will impact on staff, consumers, community and other stakeholders
- Key points in communication regarding organisational change will be:
  - Contact points for clarification /feedback
  - infrastructure upgrades or capital works to include:
    - Areas affected with timelines of works to be completed

- Scope of works including critical service interruptions
- Impact to consumers, staff and stakeholders and any key actions required of them
- Major changes to workforce

## **MANAGING OUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Management of our opportunities for improvement is key to retaining our reputation and trust as a health provider. It is a focus of our organisation in our person centred approach, upholding the rights of others to receive feedback, complaints or negative stories, real or perceived.

Even a negative story is an opportunity for improvement. To manage these opportunities, we will focus on:

- Processes to identify early areas of concern with clinical care being our highest risk
- Respond to feedback, complaints and negative stories in a professional and timely manner to minimize risk
- Seek support where areas of expertise are required
- Involve key stakeholders in resolution of the issue including the complainant and other support agencies e.g. unions.
- Empower staff to take a position of 'no comment' in the event of a discussion, formal or informal, being had on an issue/issues that are outside their scope of authority to comment. It is recommended that the staff member simply refrain from entering commentary or, state that "unfortunately it is outside of my area of knowledge" or similar when exposed to a situation. This is particularly important in light of confidentiality requirements.
- Understand early if this is a critical risk and a crisis management approach is required. Support for media communications will be sought in response. Tallangatta Health Service's spokesperson will be advised to provide open and informative answers, with empathy in response. At times answers may not be able to given and as an example, a response may be "It is part of an ongoing investigation/litigation, I cannot comment at this stage" or "At this time I do not know the full facts and circumstances and it would be inappropriate for me to comment"

**Table 4: Sharing Success / Opportunities for Improvement**

ISSUES/NEWS	EXAMPLE
<b>Employees</b>	New staff profiles, departures/retirements of long serving staff, significant milestones passed by long-serving staff, Indigenous employment initiatives/successes staff achievements, for example, awards, employee training and safety initiatives.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<p>Capital works and infrastructure spending, significant equipment purchases. Multiple opportunities arise from each significant spending decision.</p> <p>For example: the announcement of planned infrastructure spending; the announcement of a tender awarded (with additional benefits when the tender is awarded to a local supplier/vendor delivering economic benefits to the local community, social and sustainable procurement); the announcement that work has begun (as a possible picture story or TV opportunity showing contractors at work); the announcement that the work is complete and consumers/employees will now benefit from the work (as a possible picture story or TV opportunity showing happy consumers/employees).</p>
<b>Medical</b>	Interesting medical cases where they arise and where the patient is agreeable.
<b>Quality, safety and risk management</b>	Innovative processes and practices that improve safety of service delivery for our consumers and/or staff.
<b>Community engagement</b>	Home and community services, hospital services, residential aged care, sharing of resources and expertise with other health services, and aboriginal health services.
<b>New or expanded services</b>	Variety of opportunities may present here.
<b>Announcement of reviews and positive outcomes</b>	<p>Acute patient episode rehabilitated back to home</p> <p>Successful transition to residential aged care</p>
<b>Donations</b>	Acknowledge the generosity of donors (and encourage further donations and bequests) by highlighting improvements in the provision of healthcare achieved through donations. Possible picture story plus TV opportunity.
<b>Groundbreaking initiatives</b>	Project activities
<b>Research Collaboration</b>	Research activities
<b>Data analytics</b>	Highlights in service data e.g. Length of Stay in Hospital
<b>Named days/weeks</b>	Stories that highlight particular "week/day" that might be relevant, for example, National Stroke Week, International Nurses Day.



# "Empowering people for health"

## Strategic Vision 2018-2027

### *our care*

relevant with  
safe, high quality,  
responsive  
services

### *our infrastructure*

is planned  
for future needs

### *our partnering*

with community  
cultivates  
connections

### *our workforce*

is adaptive,  
skilled and  
compassionate