

New Specialist Service Commissioning

Summary

This project designed, established and delivered a new ophthalmology service for a regional public hospital.

Context

Many public ophthalmology services across Australia struggle to meet the increasing needs of an ageing population.

In a highly privatised specialty, public ophthalmology services are increasingly under pressure, with many Hospitals unable to offer a reliable service to patients (if at all), or outsourcing services to the private sector.



The Problem

Due to an inability to continue to attract a full-time or visiting specialist, our client had closed its ophthalmology service in 2008. As a result, public patients requiring specialist eye services were required to wait on long waitlists and then travel for public care in the capital city. Alternatively, patients were forced to pay for local private fees or not receive care at all.

Our client believed a model of outsourcing and/or external referral of patients was not in the best interests of the patients in the Hospitals catchment and was seeking a more sustainable insourcing approach to meet the needs of its patients.

The Solution

Vanguard designed a program to gradually rebuild service capability through working in partnership with the client and senior private sector specialists on a fly-in fly-out basis.

This was delivered over multiple phases including:

- Pilot phase (3 months): to demonstrate business case through a partnership with the client, a private hospital and a local private sector specialist to trial the return of initial outpatient and surgical services.
- Commissioning Phase (12 months): Building the clients internal capacity and transition of the service solely within the public hospital setting with the opening of ophthalmic theatres and expanding visiting support to the hospital.
- Embedding Phase (12 months): Continuing to build the scope of services offered and support the placement of a full-time staff specialist and sustainable transition of program management back to the health service.
- Transition Phase (12 months): sustainable transition of program back to the health service.

Results

- The identification and commencement of a full-time staff specialist ophthalmologist (only the 2nd full-time public ophthalmologist in Queensland).
- Re-equipping the health service with the equipment, training, and policy frameworks to safely re-establish public eye services.
- The delivery of over 2,000 eye procedures and 3,500 patient consultations since the new service commissioned with low to no long-waits for the elective surgery or specialist outpatient waitlist.
- The establishment of a comprehensive eye service which meets the needs of the local population.

Key Achievement

The return of comprehensive and sustainable public ophthalmology services to a regional community

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