



ANZCA
FPM

ANZCA
CLINICAL
TRIALS
NETWORK

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 - 2029



The ANZCA Clinical Trials Network

This strategic plan outlines the vision, priorities and actions of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) Clinical Trials Network (CTN) for 2026–2029. The CTN is a collaborative, binational network supporting the design and delivery of high-quality multicentre clinical trials in anaesthesia, perioperative and pain medicine. It brings together investigators, trainees, research coordinators and institutions to generate evidence that improves patient outcomes and informs clinical practice, policy and guidelines.

Further information about the ANZCA CTN is available at www.anzca.edu.au/ctn

Acknowledgements

This strategic plan has been developed through extensive consultation with members of the ANZCA Clinical Trials Network. We acknowledge the valuable contributions of the CTN Executive, Anaesthesia Research Coordinators Network (ARCN) sub-committee, CTN office, and the broader network of investigators, research coordinators and fellows across Australia and New Zealand.

We also recognise the insights provided through national surveys, strategic planning discussions and stakeholder engagement, which have shaped the direction and priorities outlined in this plan.

Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information at the time of publication, this document is intended to provide general strategic guidance only. The ANZCA Clinical Trials Network does not accept responsibility for any errors or omissions and disclaims all liability for any loss or damage arising from reliance on the information contained within this document.

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Who we are and what we do

High-quality clinical research is essential to improving patient outcomes and ensuring safe, effective and equitable care in anaesthesia, perioperative and pain medicine.

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) is committed to strengthening the evidence base for clinical practice across Australia, New Zealand and internationally.

The ANZCA Clinical Trials Network (CTN) is a leading binational network delivering high-impact, multicentre clinical trials and related research. Over the past three decades, the CTN has supported more than 30 major investigator-initiated trials, recruiting over 67,000 patients across more than 130 hospital sites globally, securing more than A\$80 million in competitive funding and publishing in leading journals including *The New England Journal of Medicine* and *The Lancet*.

The CTN brings together fellows, trainees, research coordinators and investigators to deliver practice-changing research that informs policy, guidelines and clinical care. As the clinical trials delivery arm of ANZCA's research mission, the CTN fosters collaboration, builds research capability and supports the translation of evidence into practice.

The CTN Executive oversees the network as a subcommittee of the ANZCA Research Committee, reporting to ANZCA Council. The Anaesthesia Research Coordinators Network (ARCN) Sub-committee supports more than 180 research coordinators across Australia and New Zealand, enabling efficient, large-scale trial delivery.

Message from the Chair

I am pleased to share our strategic vision and plan for 2026–2029, developed following extensive network-wide consultation. Despite recent challenges, we have continued to grow, strengthen our collaborations and expand our impact.

As many founding members of the CTN Executive step down, we acknowledge their extraordinary contribution and welcome the next generation of talented leaders. Their legacy is the robust, innovative and vibrant network the CTN is today.

This plan positions us for the future by strengthening engagement across the network, the ANZCA fellowship, our collaborators, workforce, consumers and emerging research leaders. Our research coordinators remain central to the success of the network, and we will continue to advocate for their recognition and employment security.

I am confident that we will continue to adapt to the changing research landscape and build on our past successes, and I am excited to see our progress in the next few years.

- ▶ **Global leadership in pragmatic, multicentre trials**
- ▶ **Improving patient outcomes**
through evidence that changes practice
- ▶ **30+ years of trial delivery**
- ▶ **30+ major multicentre trials**
underway or published in leading international journals
- ▶ **67,000+ patients recruited**
- ▶ **130 hospital sites globally**
- ▶ **180+ research coordinators**
across Australia and New Zealand
- ▶ **A\$80M+ in competitive funding**
- ▶ **A binational network**
across Australia and New Zealand



A changing research environment

The CTN strategy is informed by a comprehensive evidence base, including CTN and New Zealand SWOT analyses, national survey feedback and strategic planning discussions. It aligns with the ANZCA Strategic Plan 2026–2028.

The research environment is evolving rapidly. Increasing regulatory complexity, workforce pressures and declining funding success rates present significant challenges to sustaining impact.

This represents a critical turning point. Sustaining and expanding the CTN's impact will require a shift in governance, operating models and infrastructure to support long-term sustainability and inclusive participation in research.

Alignment with the ANZCA strategic plan 2026–2028



Improved patient outcomes

The CTN supported trials generates high-quality evidence that informs guidelines, policy and system reform, supporting measurable improvements in care delivery and equity of access.



Elevated standards

The CTN provides methodological leadership and evidence that underpins ANZCA guidelines and professional documents. It strengthens safety and quality through rigorous trial design.



A vibrant college

The CTN builds leadership pathways, supports communities of practice through the annual strategic research workshop and ARCN network, and promotes inclusive participation across all sites. It embeds research literacy into training and continuing professional development.



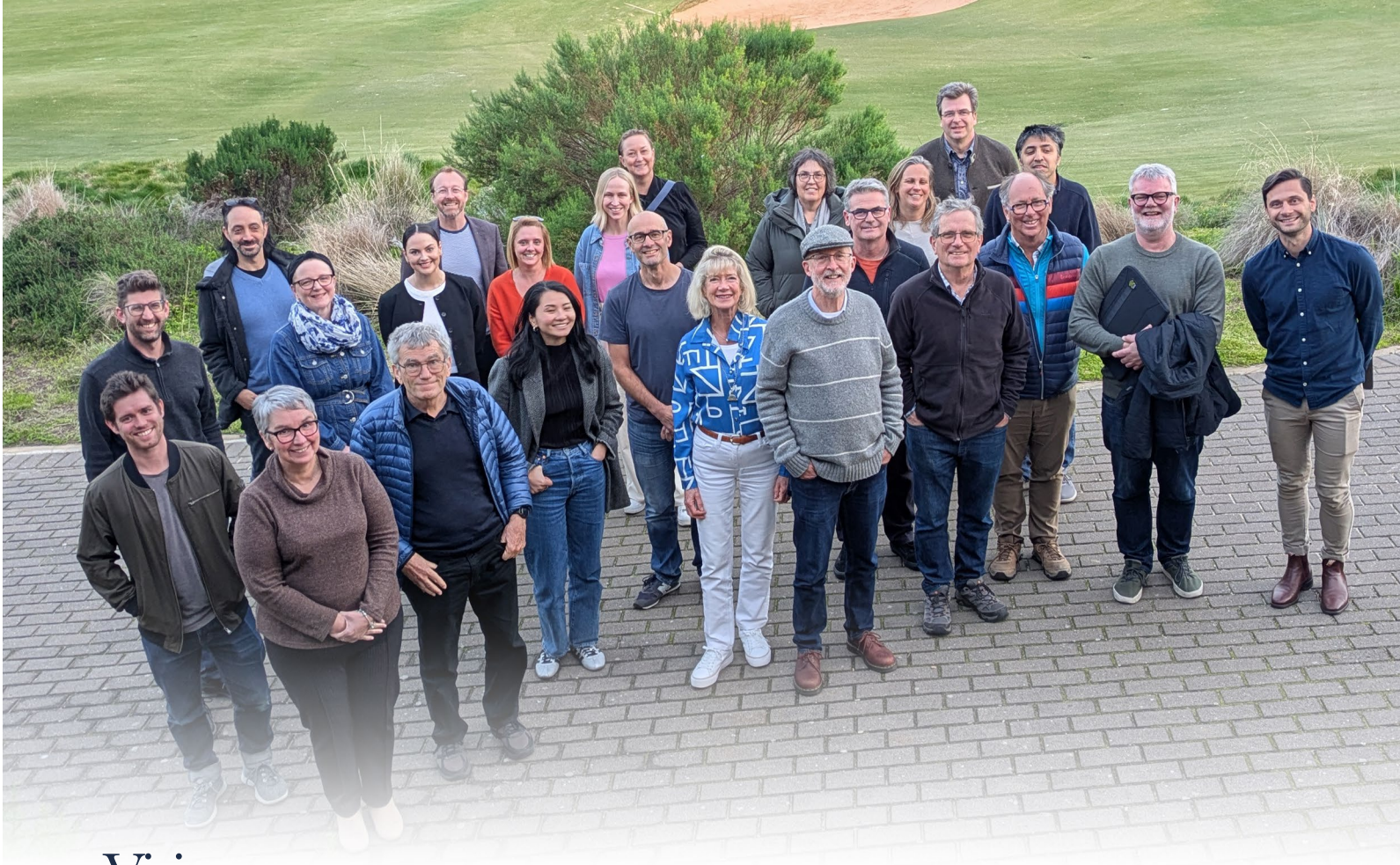
A trusted college

The CTN reinforces institutional credibility through ensuring transparency of governance, benchmarking of research performance and delivery of high-quality peer-reviewed evidence that strengthens stakeholder confidence in ANZCA standards.

Research governance and capability

Strategic discussions identified declining research literacy, fragmented governance structures, sustainability risks and under-representation of research, including research skills development, in core college activities as key institutional vulnerabilities.

This ANZCA CTN strategy responds by strengthening research capability, clarifying governance roles and embedding research within education, leadership and ANZCA operations to support long-term national impact.



Vision

To be the leading perioperative clinical trials network in the world, delivering transformative evidence that leads to improved patient outcomes, strengthens research capability and enhances research literacy across the specialty.

To achieve this vision, the CTN is critically dependent upon the next generation of research leaders. The CTN commits to supporting enhanced research literacy throughout the ANZCA specialties and fast-tracking mentorship for emerging leaders, both in terms of identification of individuals and acceleration of research education.

Strategic pillars

To deliver this vision, the CTN will focus on four strategic priorities:



LEAD

World-class, innovative clinical trials



ENGAGE

A diverse and inclusive research community



ENABLE & INFLUENCE

Strong governance and system impact



SUSTAIN

Long-term financial and organisational resilience

1 LEAD

World-class, impactful and innovative clinical trials

Why this pillar

The CTN's international reputation is built on pragmatic, practice-changing trials that improve patient outcomes.

However, increasing regulatory complexity, recruitment challenges and workforce pressures mean that sustaining global leadership requires more than excellence in trial delivery. It demands system-level innovation, scalable research models and a strong, future-ready pipeline of investigators and studies.



KEY OUTCOMES



A globally recognised portfolio of innovative, high-impact multicentre trials.



Increased methodological innovation and efficiency in trial design and delivery.



Expanded reach, equity and diversity of CTN research across subspecialties, settings and communities.



Strong translation of research into policy, guidelines and clinical practice.



A sustainable pipeline of trials supported by observational, registry-based and implementation research.



A new generation of clinician-researchers leading high-impact multicentre studies.



PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ▶ Establish innovative trial infrastructure with embedded statistical, health economic and implementation science expertise.
- ▶ Expand adaptive, cluster crossover, registry-based and platform-ready trial designs.
- ▶ Develop a standing multicentre observational, implementation and de-implementation research stream to strengthen feasibility, translation and investigator development.
- ▶ Utilise national datasets and digital health platforms to support registry-based and embedded trial designs.
- ▶ Strengthen trans-Tasman collaboration and expand international research partnerships.
- ▶ Increase support for investigator-initiated multicentre studies across diverse settings.
- ▶ Prioritise feasible protocols suitable for regional and resource-variable sites.
- ▶ Strengthen consumer-informed, culturally inclusive and culturally safe research practices.
- ▶ Develop structured partnerships supporting Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Māori and Pasifika participation, leadership and data sovereignty within CTN trials.
- ▶ Increase and support electronic consent, digital data capture and routine data integration.
- ▶ Increase engagement with national and international funding schemes.
- ▶ Embed defined leadership roles for emerging investigators within all CTN-endorsed multicentre trials.
- ▶ Establish CTN support for a structured CTN academic pathway linking trainee involvement, higher degrees and progressive trial leadership roles.
- ▶ Strengthen New Zealand trial start-up capability through distributed ethics leadership and coordinated communication pathways.
- ▶ Develop clinically meaningful perioperative core outcome datasets and standardised outcome measures suitable for trials, registries and linked datasets.

2 ENGAGE

A diverse, inclusive and nationally embedded research community

Why this pillar

Feedback highlights workforce fragility, succession risk, inequity and variable research literacy across departments. Sustained excellence in clinical trials requires a visible, inclusive and research-literate community that reflects the diversity of researchers, patients and communities across Australia and New Zealand.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 2 ENGAGE



KEY OUTCOMES



Strengthened research workforce and leadership pipeline from trainee to senior trialist.



Improved cultural and societal diversity, equity and regional inclusion in participation, leadership and authorship.



Transparent, inclusive culture that welcomes participation across career stages, institutions and geographies.



Increased CTN visibility and engagement across the fellowship and broader community.



Identify and dismantle perceived barriers to trials entry by prioritising accessible research models and decentralised advocacy.



Strengthen research literacy as a core professional capability embedded across training and continuing professional development.



Further develop international collaborations.



PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ▶ Implement structured mentorship, peer review and early investigator support pathways for emerging researchers and multicentre trial development.
- ▶ Support equitable engagement, participation and leadership of under-represented populations in research.
- ▶ Support ARC-led research coordinator leadership, education and recognition.
- ▶ Advocate for research coordinator roles within accreditation standards.
- ▶ Embed research participation within trainee learning experiences.
- ▶ Advocate for a formal academic training pathway that allows flexibility for higher degrees.
- ▶ Encourage higher research degrees and structured academic pathways.
- ▶ Increase representation of emerging investigators on grants, publications and committees.
- ▶ Develop practical research literacy resources aligned with trainee milestones and CPD frameworks.
- ▶ Partner with ANZCA education to integrate research literacy, critical appraisal and modern trial methodology into curriculum reform, trainee milestones and CPD frameworks.
- ▶ Expand patient and public engagement strategies to strengthen awareness of and participation in perioperative research.
- ▶ Communicate perioperative research impact, risk and patient outcomes clearly and compassionately to patients and the broader community.
- ▶ Expand collaboration with Hong Kong and international sites to strengthen global trial delivery and research partnerships.

3 ENABLE & INFLUENCE

Strong governance, systems and institutional impact

Why this pillar

To deliver improved patient outcomes and elevated standards, the CTN must continue to strengthen and operate as a mature national research infrastructure network, supported by clear governance, efficient systems and strong institutional partnerships.

Strategic discussions identified opportunities to strengthen governance clarity, reduce fragmentation across committees and ensure appropriate separation between strategic oversight and operational functions. At the same time, the CTN has an important role in advocating for a healthcare system that embraces innovation, implements emerging science and supports evidence-based change.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 3 ENABLE & INFLUENCE



KEY OUTCOMES



Clear, transparent and efficient governance structures across the ANZCA and FPM research ecosystem.



Reduced administrative burden and improved coordination across committees.



Stronger institutional partnerships and national research influence.



Improved translation of CTN research into policy, guidelines and practice.



Greater visibility of CTN within ANZCA and across the broader healthcare system.



A fully integrated research pathway from early-stage ideas to large multicentre trials.



PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ▶ Establish and implement a clearer governance framework defining strategic oversight, operational leadership and grant review functions
- ▶ Advocate for a research governance restructure, including a dedicated strategic governance committee reporting to ANZCA Council.
- ▶ Streamline endorsement and partnership processes through standardised review and due diligence pathways.
- ▶ Strengthen alignment between CTN Executive, Research Committee, FPM Research Committee, Council and Foundation.
- ▶ Transition the CTN office toward a facilitation and capacity-building role across the network.
- ▶ Demonstrate the strategic and financial return on investment of CTN research infrastructure and workforce.
- ▶ Benchmark research staffing and infrastructure relative to hospital size and activity.
- ▶ Publish annual impact and translation reports.
- ▶ Secure formal research representation within major College initiatives and governance forums.
- ▶ Embed research as core business within ANZCA strategy and operations.
- ▶ Strengthen strategic communication and advocacy to increase awareness, engagement, influence and support for CTN research infrastructure.
- ▶ Strengthen engagement with the broader fellowship to increase awareness and participation.
- ▶ Support perioperative research priority-setting processes to identify clinically meaningful and strategically aligned research questions.

4 SUSTAIN

Long-term financial and organisational resilience

Why this pillar

The CTN's success has been built on strong leadership, collaboration and a critical mass of research expertise. However, structural reliance on short-term grants and cross-subsidisation presents ongoing risk.

Sustainability is critical but at risk. It must extend beyond funding alone. It must encompass financial stability, organisational resilience, workforce continuity, and the development of the next generation of research leaders. Ensuring long-term viability requires a deliberate shift toward stable funding models, protected institutional knowledge and a strengthened, future-ready workforce.



KEY OUTCOMES



A diversified, transparent and sustainable funding model supporting core CTN infrastructure.



Reduced reliance on short-term grants and cross-subsidisation.



Stable and appropriately resourced research coordinator workforce across sites.



Strong organisational continuity supported by succession planning and leadership development.



Equitable participation across metropolitan and regional sites in Australia and New Zealand.



Sustained national and international reputation for high-quality clinical research.



Strong advocacy and recognition of the CTN as essential national research infrastructure.



PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ▶ Secure a multi-year indexed infrastructure funding commitment from ANZCA and national funding bodies.
- ▶ Develop strategic funding partnerships with the ANZCA Foundation.
- ▶ Establish a hybrid funding model combining core support with service-based contributions from trials.
- ▶ Introduce a transparent CTN service catalogue embedded within major grant budgets.
- ▶ Formalise cost recovery models reflecting true infrastructure requirements.
- ▶ Quantify and communicate the full operational value of CTN, including in-kind institutional and ANZCA support.
- ▶ Implement equitable infrastructure contributions from large trials.
- ▶ Build internal methodological, statistical, database and health economic capability.
- ▶ Reduce reliance on third-party providers and short-term grant-funded staffing.
- ▶ Expand CTN office capability in line with sustainable funding growth.
- ▶ Develop formal succession planning for executive and emerging leaders.
- ▶ Provide business case templates to support site-based research investment.
- ▶ Establish sustainable site funding models, including realistic per-patient payments and start-up cost recovery.
- ▶ Strengthen support for New Zealand sites and ensure equitable participation.
- ▶ Identify, mentor and develop the next generation of research leaders through structured pathways.
- ▶ Strengthen engagement with government and funding bodies to support long-term investment in trial delivery capability and research career pathways, including trial coordinators and non-clinician investigators.

Measuring success

We will measure success through a set of clear, meaningful indicators that reflect patient impact, research excellence, workforce capability and system influence.



Patient Impact

Delivering better outcomes and equitable care through evidence.



Research Excellence

Generating high-quality evidence that drives practice, policy and guidelines.



Workforce Capability

Building research leadership and strengthening our clinical trials workforce.



Sustainability

Securing the infrastructure and resources needed for long-term impact.



System Influence

Influencing policy and systems to improve care at scale.



MEASURING SUCCESS



PATIENT IMPACT

- ▶ Increased citation of CTN trials in national and international guidelines.
- ▶ Demonstrable improvements in perioperative care delivery and outcomes.
- ▶ Increased translation of research into policy and clinical practice.
- ▶ Increased recruitment and engagement of a patient population reflecting our communities.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

- ▶ Growth in major national and international competitive research funding schemes.
- ▶ Increased number and diversity of multicentre trials.
- ▶ Sustained or improved recruitment performance across CTN studies.
- ▶ Improved coordination and efficiency of research governance processes.
- ▶ Two or more active platform or adaptive trials by 2028.
- ▶ Established observational or implementation research stream supporting the CTN trial pipeline.



WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

- ▶ Increased number of sites with ≥ 0.5 research coordinator FTE.
- ▶ Growth in trainee and emerging investigator participation.
- ▶ Increased number of emerging investigators leading multicentre trials or grant applications.
- ▶ Increased number of emerging investigators progressing to funded investigator roles (e.g. Category 1 grants).



SUSTAINABILITY

- ▶ Multi-year infrastructure funding secured.
- ▶ Reduced reliance on short-term grant-funded staffing.
- ▶ Stable or growing research coordinator workforce across sites.
- ▶ Reduced site-reported administrative burden.
- ▶ Transparent demonstration of CTN's total operational value, including in-kind contributions.



SYSTEM INFLUENCE

- ▶ Reduced time to trial start-up across CTN studies.
- ▶ Demonstrable policy and guideline uptake of CTN findings.
- ▶ Formal integration of research within training and lifelong education strategic initiatives and governance structures.
- ▶ Increased institutional partnerships and national research collaborations.
- ▶ Annual reporting of CTN performance, impact and return on investment.

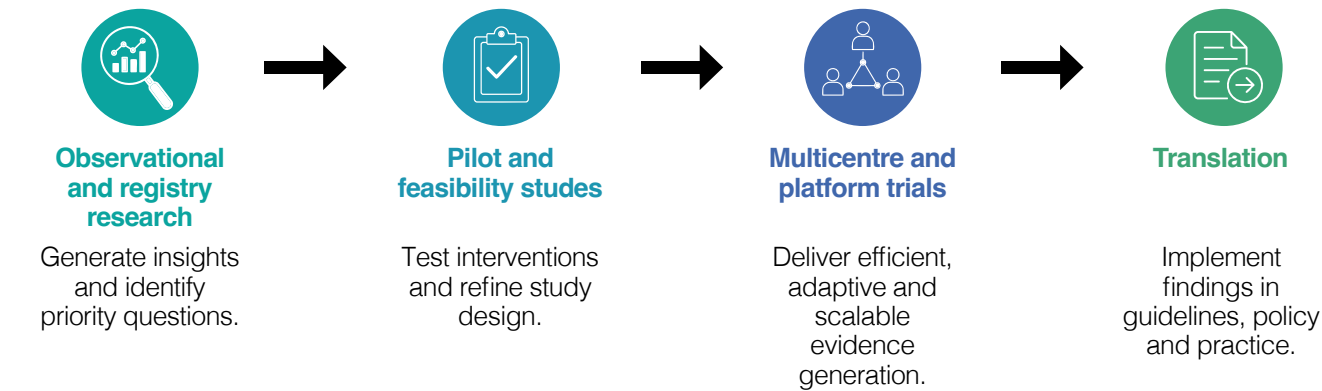
Our approach

Our strategy is delivered through five integrated enablers that support and strengthen all strategic pillars.



Research and capability pipeline

A connected pathway from early ideas to practice change and the next generation of research leaders.





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