

Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 2 December 2021

Attendance (Boardroom, The Children's Hospital at Westmead or via Zoom)

Board

Elizabeth Crouch AM (Chair), David Nott (Deputy Chair)*, Dr Abby Bloom, Jack Ford, Jane Freudenstein, Dr Elizabeth McEntyre*, Professor Les White AM, and Jeremy Wright AM

Ex-officio

Cathryn Cox PSM, Chief Executive; Dr Kath Carmo, The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW) Medical Staff Council (MSC)*; and Dr Matthew O'Meara, NSW Chief Paediatrician*

Executive

Bart Cavalletto, Director, Strategy and Innovation; Professor Chris Cowell, Director, Research; Emma Cuell, Director, Office of the Chief Executive; Sam Galluccio, Director, People and Culture; Dr Joanne Ging, Executive Director, Clinical Operations; Judy Goldman, Director, Communication and Engagement; Tim Hoffman, Director, Redevelopment*; Dr Mary McCaskill, Director, Medical Services and Clinical Governance; and Sayeed Zia, Director, Finance and Corporate Services

Secretariat: Melissa Gibson Darling, Board Executive Officer

* indicates attendance via Zoom

1.0 In Camera Session

The Chair led an in camera session for Board members. The Chief Executive and Director, Office of the Chief Executive were present for the session. The Director, People and Culture attended for part of the session.

Other attendees joined the meeting from item 2.0.

2.0 Presentation and Discussion

2.1 COVID Update: Pandemic to Endemic, presented by the Director, Medical Services and Clinical Governance and Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN) COVID Lead

The Board received a presentation on the Network response to the COVID-19 pandemic including updates on service provision risks and ongoing risk mitigation actions for patients and staff. Board discussion included the challenges of balancing infection risk mitigation plans with the impact on patients and families, and particularly the needs of patients such as newborns, those newly diagnosed, and those receiving end of life care. Other Board discussion covered the impact of infection exposure on staff, the ability to provide services, trials of rapid test options, and plans for 2022.

The Board discussed the anticipated availability of vaccinations for children under the age of 12 years in early 2022. Dr McEntyre queried whether there was evidence regarding the long term effects of vaccines for COVID-19 and stated that she was not in favour of COVID-19 vaccinations being offered to children. The Board discussed SCHN's commitment to making decisions based on medical evidence and expert advice including from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation and the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance. It was also noted that given COVID-19 had only manifested in 2019 with vaccinations developed later, long term studies were not yet available as to their long term impact. The impact of COVID-19 for children beyond clinical considerations was also discussed, including on schooling and mental health.

The Board discussed the way in which COVID-related data can be interpreted, particularly regarding overseas hospitalisation levels. The role that SCHN clinical experts play in relation to correcting misinformation about COVID-19 and ensuring consistent and factually-correct messages were promoted, was acknowledged. This included through the media and working with clinicians across NSW to promote and share accurate and timely COVID-19 information.

3.0 Meeting Opening

3.1 Acknowledgement of Country

Mr Wright provided the Acknowledgement of Country, referencing the quote attributed to Dr Lilla Watson – *“If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together”*. Mr Wright acknowledged and further encouraged the actions of the Network in working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

3.2 Apologies

Bruce MacDiarmid

Sally Whalen, Director, Nursing, Midwifery and Education

3.3 Declaration of Interests

The Board noted Dr Bloom’s advice of her appointment to the board of ResusRight Pty Ltd, received during the previous month. This appointment was acknowledged and has been recorded.

3.4 Previous Meeting Minutes

Dr McEntyre advised that her apologies for the meetings of October and November 2021 should be updated to reflect her circumstances in line with the Public Health Order related to vaccination status.

Otherwise the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3.5 Actions Arising

The Board noted the Action Item Register.

- The update on the provision of statewide paediatric training will be deferred until June 2022.
- A summary of the Board’s feedback on the balanced scorecard tool, and consideration of enhancements, will be presented at the next Board meeting in February 2022.
- Board members were reminded of the opportunity to provide feedback on the People and Culture Due Diligence Report, able to be accepted now until the end of December 2021.
- The remaining items will be completed in today’s meeting.

3.6 Board Chair Report

The Chair noted her attendance at recent key meetings including the Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct and thanked the Deputy Chair for attending the NSW Health Council of Board Chairs meeting on her behalf. The Deputy Chair provided an update on the NSW Health Council of Board Chairs meeting.

Updates were provided on the NSW Health budget as well as the commitment to health redevelopments currently in progress, the importance of workforce planning in managing aging workforces and regional and rural placement challenges, the reviewing of industrial instruments, and what was working well in terms of Local Health District (LHD) governance structures.

The Board discussed the importance of partnerships, the roles that SCHN Executive and staff have taken to develop and support robust partnerships and collaborations with particularly the Ministry of Health, many LHDs, Western Sydney Primary Health Network, and John Hunter Children’s Hospital. The Chief Executive also highlighted the very positive feedback that had been received as a result of the SCHN work with teams across NSW, initiated as a result of COVID-19. These partnerships will be expanded in 2022.

Action: Update to be provided on the statewide paediatrics meeting facilitated by SCHN, including the Community of Practice and outreach services, to be presented to the Board early 2022.

Action: Update to be provided on the Kids Early Years (KEYS) Network, to be presented to the Board in the first half of 2022.

Dr McEntyre left the meeting.

Dr Carmo provided feedback that, based on MSC discussion, current Award arrangements were not meeting some clinical staff needs and that some staff were at risk of burn out and distress, linked to difficulties in filling vacancies where recruitment restrictions existed.

The Chair noted that the Board and the Executive Leadership Team were very sensitive to the needs of staff, wellbeing and the importance of addressing a range of workforce issues. The challenges of managing to budget were also noted as a factor when developing solutions.

3.7 Chief Executive Report

Noting the report as read, the Chief Executive reflected that while it had been an incredibly challenging year, there were opportunities from the significant Network redevelopments and the new models of care that have emerged. The commitment of the Executive team was acknowledged and commended.

The Board **noted** the report from the Senior Executive Forum regarding challenges of rural and regional LHDs in relation to workforce which may result in additional pressure on the Network to assist in supporting care for children and young people. Dr O'Meara noted the work being done through the Regional Paediatrics NSW network and the pending outcomes of the current Parliamentary Inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote NSW.

The Chief Executive thanked Professor Chris Cowell, retiring Director, Research for his exceptional contribution, and offered Professor Cowell best wishes for his retirement. The Chief Executive advised that interviews are being conducted on 3 December 2021 to select a short term replacement, with the longer term vacancy to be recruited to in early 2022.

The Board Chair congratulated Professor Cowell on his retirement and **offered** a vote of thanks to all SCHN staff for their extraordinary efforts over the past year. The Chair commented that the Board was extremely grateful for what has been achieved during 2021, the care shown to our young patients and their families, and the efforts made to explore new models of care that will serve us well in the future.

4.0 Matters for Decision

4.1 Board and Committee Meeting Schedule – Director, Office of the Chief Executive

The Board **noted** the schedule and the potential need to adjust the proposed meeting dates once the new Board appointees are confirmed. The Board discussed having a meeting at the Neonatal and paediatric Emergency Transport Service (NETS) in addition to CHW and Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick (SCH).

The Board **approved** the Board and Committee meeting schedule for 2022.

4.2 Board Evaluation – Director, Office of the Chief Executive

The Board **noted** the plans for both the internal evaluation in late 2021 and the external evaluation planned for the end of 2022. Ms Freudenstein noted that the external evaluation would be an opportunity to obtain advice on the internal annual evaluation processes.

The Board **approved** the evaluation to proceed as recommended, and supported the approach to a monthly post Board evaluation practice to be commenced in 2022.

4.3 Model By-laws 2021 - Chief Executive

The Board **noted** that the proposed model by-laws require the establishment of a Mental Health Medical Staff Council (MSC) or alternative mechanism for mental health medical workforce engagement, site clinical councils, and one Medical Staff Council for Speciality Health Networks.

The Board **approved**:

- Continuation of the current arrangements of a Network Clinical Council, previously approved by NSW Health
- A Mental Health Medical Staff Group being established as an 'alternative mechanism' for local mental health staff representation.

The Board **noted** that an initial meeting of the Mental Health Medical Staff Group has been held and was positive and productive.

The Board **noted** that the SCHN Model By-laws will be updated accordingly and made accessible to the organisation and the public. Further consultation will be progressed with the SCH MSC and CHW MSC regarding options for ongoing arrangements for the MSC structure.

Action: Provide the Board with a graphical representation of the SCHN Councils and Committee structure in Quarter 1 2022.

4.4 Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct (RHIP) – Collaboration Agreement – Chief Executive and Director, Strategy and Innovation

The Board **noted** that a Collaboration Agreement is in place which was signed in 2016. Following recommendations from the NSW Health Precincts Governance Discussion Paper, approval has been requested from all partners for the proposed 2021 RHIP Collaboration Agreement and Term Sheet.

The Board discussed the proposed documents including Network financial obligations, dispute resolution processes, risk mitigation approaches, other partner responses, and the interaction with the Health Science Alliance. The Board was advised that, subject to approval, the proposed Term Sheet would lay the foundations for the next stage of discussions.

The Board **approved** the RHIP Collaboration Agreement and Health Science Alliance Term Sheet.

4.5 Health, Safety and Wellness Strategy – Final – Director, People and Culture

The Board **noted** that the proposed final document had received SCHN Executive endorsement following final consultation. Subject to approval, it was planned that the Commitment Statement would be launched to staff next week.

The Board discussed the purpose of the strategic document, the ongoing review and renewal of the supporting policies and practices, possible measures of success, noting that progress would be monitored through the Health, Safety and Wellness Governance Committee and reported to the Board through the People and Culture Due Diligence Report. The Board discussed the importance of referring to employee 'mental health' and what the Network is offering in support.

The Board **approved** the Health, Safety and Wellness Strategy, noting the request for more specific references to supporting employee 'mental health' in employee wellness communication and support.

5.0 Matters for Discussion

5.1 SCHN Cyber Security Report – Director, Strategy and Innovation

The Board **noted** the Centium recommendations, plans to work with eHealth to develop the Information Security Management System, and the immediate focus on the ForeSite Project to improve the security of the Network's internet structure. The Board discussed the critical importance of ensuring 'people engagement' and an 'ecosystem approach' to technology-related implementation and remediation including around cyber security.

5.2 People Matter Employee Survey Results – Director, People and Culture

The Board **noted** the themes identified from the Survey and subsequent staff discussions, recent work on providing intensive support to teams with specific challenges, and how that support can be transitioned to positive longer term outcomes. The Board discussed the six focus areas for the 2022 Organisational Improvement Plan, including the work in support of developing mid-level manager skills.

6.0 Matters for Discussion – Executive Reports

6.1 Strategy and Innovation Update – Director, Strategy and Innovation

The Board **noted** the Balanced Scorecard outcomes and Strategic Plan progress.

The Board discussed the Strategy and Innovation portfolio, noting that it is a new role and the Director's initial focus will be on the Strategic Plan and cyber security risk management, and the role of the portfolio in supporting the RHIP and the Westmead Health and Innovation District.

Action: Update to be provided on the plans for conceptualising and supporting innovation, in early 2022.

Action: Stephen Palmer, Industry and Innovation Lead, RHIP, to be invited to present to the Board in the first half of 2022.

6.2 Education Update (including mandatory training)

The Chief Executive invited feedback on this inaugural Education Update. Board feedback included a request for mandatory training trends, to understand where changes were statistically significant, and the impact of delayed mandatory training due to COVID-19 on refresher training.

Action: Update to be provided on mandatory training trends as part of the next scheduled Education Update for the Board.

6.3 Finance, Capital Works and Performance Update – Director, Finance and Corporate Services

The Board **noted** the relative financial stability from the previous month and the ongoing work being done to address the key risk areas. The Board discussed recent advice on tender assessments, the recent Government approvals of the Viral Vector Manufacturing Facility and ten year Health and Innovation Precinct Plan, and the recent advice of the sponsorship of the Gene Technologies Building by the Greater Sydney Commission and Minister Ayres.

The Board **noted** that meeting the amended financial target for 2021-2022 was considered 'achievable' but dependent on several key factors. There are regular discussions with the Ministry of Health regarding the financial position.

6.4 Strategic Risk Update – Director, Finance and Corporate Services

The paper was taken as read.

6.5 Clinical Operations Update – Executive Director, Clinical Operations

The Board **noted** there has been a slight increase in Emergency Department presentations, and that the Christmas-New Year surgery shutdown was confirmed, to support staff being able to take leave. The Board also noted the number of breaches in Category B and C surgeries and the plans to recover from the COVID-19 surgery postponement over the next six to nine months.

6.6 Quality and Safety Update – Director, Medical Services and Clinical Governance

The Board **noted** the update.

Action: Board clinical visits to be included in the schedule for 2022. The SCHN Clinical Governance Unit will nominate teams to be considered for the schedule. The Board noted that while it was keen to undertake these clinical visits, they should be planned to minimise disruption and pressure on staff.

7.0 Matters for Noting

7.1 Communication and Engagement Update

Taken as read.

7.2 People and Culture Update

Taken as read.

7.3 Redevelopment Update

Taken as read.

7.4 Research Update

Taken as read.

7.5 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report

Taken as read.

7.6 People, Strategy and Engagement Committee – Annual Self-Assessment

Taken as read.

7.7 Committee Meeting Minutes

Taken as read.

8.0 Any Other Business

Update on Board appointments

The Director, Office of the Chief Executive advised that the proposed Board appointments were currently being considered by the Minister for Health, before being presented to Cabinet. Announcement of the new appointments was expected in the week commencing 13 December 2021.

Recognising the retirement from the Board by Professor Les White AM

The Chair, Deputy Chair and other Board members spoke of Professor White's significant contribution to the Network, his insightful counsel, strategic and measured thinking, and his commitment as a clinician, researcher, executive and Board member to improving the health and wellbeing of children and families. His contribution to the care of children and their families and to enhancing the capability of clinicians over many decades was acknowledged and applauded. The Chair presented Professor White with a letter from the NSW Health Secretary and the award of the title of SCHN Emeritus Life Associate in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the Network. Professor White thanked the Board for the honour bestowed upon him and noted his ongoing support and commitment to the important work of the SCHN including through his role as a Patron of the Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation.

Recognising the retirement of Professor Chris Cowell

The Chair, Deputy Chair and other Board members spoke of Professor Cowell's significant contribution to the Network, including through the development of research collaborations, grant success, promotion of research 'voices', and successful roles as leader and mentor to many developing and experienced researchers. Professor Cowell was awarded the title of SCHN Emeritus Life Associate in recognition of his significant contribution to the Network.

The Chair also acknowledged the extraordinary year that had passed and offered her personal thanks to the members of the Board, the Chief Executive, and the Executive Leadership Team for leading the Network through such challenging times over the past 12 months.

9.0 Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 0830, Thursday 3 February 2022.

The meeting closed at 1215.

Agenda Item	Description	Responsible	Due Date
3.6	Update to be provided on the statewide paediatrics meeting facilitated by SCHN, including the Community of Practice and outreach services.	Executive Director, Clinical Operations	3-Mar-22
3.6	Update to be provided on the Kids Early Years (KEYS) Network.	Executive Director, Clinical Operations	2-Jun-22
4.3	Provide the Board with a graphical representation of the SCHN Councils and Committee structure.	Director, Office of the Chief Executive	3-Mar-22
6.1	Update to be provided on the plans for conceptualising and supporting innovation.	Director, Strategy and Innovation	7-Apr-22
6.1	Stephen Palmer, Industry and Innovation Lead, RHIP, to be invited to present.	Board Executive Officer	2-Jun-22
6.2	Update to be provided on mandatory training trends as part of the next scheduled Education Update.	Director, Nursing, Midwifery and Education	3-Mar-22
6.6	Board clinical visits to be included in the schedule for 2022. The SCHN Clinical Governance Unit will nominate teams to be considered for the schedule.	Clinical Governance Unit; Board Executive Officer	3-Mar-22