

---

**CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ATTESTATION STATEMENT**  
**NORTHERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT**

The following corporate governance attestation statement was endorsed by a resolution of the Northern Sydney Local Health District Board upon recommendation of the Chief Executive at its meeting on 15 August 2023.

The Board is responsible for the corporate governance practices of the Northern Sydney Local Health District. This statement sets out the main corporate governance practices in operation within the District for the 2022-23 financial year. The Chief Executive confirmed that the necessary systems and processes are in place in order for the Chair to sign on behalf of the Board.

A signed copy of this statement is provided to the Ministry of Health by 31 August 2023.

Signed:



Mr. Trevor Danos AM  
Chair

22 August 2023

Date



Adjunct Professor Anthony Schembri AM  
Chief Executive

Date 22.08.2023

---

## **STANDARD 1: ESTABLISH ROBUST GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT FRAMEWORKS**

### **Role and function of the Board and Chief Executive**

The Board and Chief Executive carry out their functions, responsibilities and obligations in accordance with the *Health Services Act 1997* and the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.

The Board has approved systems and frameworks that ensure the primary responsibilities of the Board are fulfilled in relation to:

- Ensuring clinical and corporate governance responsibilities are clearly allocated and understood
- Setting the strategic direction for the entity and its services
- Monitoring financial and service delivery performance
- Maintaining high standards of professional and ethical conduct
- Involving stakeholders in decisions that affect them
- Establishing sound audit and risk management practices.

### **Board Meetings**

For the 2022-23 financial year the Board consisted of a Chair and 11 members (from July 2022 to December 2022) and 12 members (from January 2023 to June 2023) appointed by the Minister for Health. The Board met for its regular monthly meeting 11 times during this period.

### **Authority and role of senior management**

All financial and administrative authorities that have been delegated by a formal resolution of the Board and are formally documented within a Delegations Manual for the District.

The roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive and other senior management within the District are also documented in written position descriptions.

### **Regulatory responsibilities and compliance**

The Board is responsible for and has mechanisms in place to ensure that relevant legislation and regulations are adhered to within all facilities and units of the District, including statutory reporting requirements.

The Board also has a mechanism in place to gain reasonable assurance that the District complies with the requirements of all relevant government policies and NSW Health policy directives and policy and procedure manuals as issued by the Ministry of Health.

---

## **STANDARD 2: ENSURING CLINICAL RESPONSIBILITIES ARE CLEARLY ALLOCATED AND UNDERSTOOD**

The Board has in place frameworks and systems for measuring and routinely reporting on Clinical Governance and the safety and quality of care provided to the communities the District serves. These systems and activities reflect the principles, performance and reporting guidelines as detailed in NSW Health Policy Directive '*Patient Safety and Clinical Quality Program*' (PD2005\_608).

The District has:

- Clear lines of accountability for clinical care which are regularly communicated to clinical staff and to staff who provide direct support to them. The authority of facility/network general managers is also clearly understood.
- Effective forums in place to facilitate the involvement of clinicians and other health staff in decision making at all levels of the District.
- A systematic process for the identification and management of clinical incidents and minimisation of risks to the District.
- An effective complaint management system for the District and complaint information is used to improve patient care.
- A Medical and Dental Appointments Advisory Committee to review the appointment or proposed appointment of all visiting practitioners and specialists. The Credentials Subcommittee provides advice to the Medical and Dental Appointment Advisory Committee on all matters concerning the clinical privileges of visiting practitioners or staff specialists.
- An Aboriginal Health Advisory Committee with clear lines of accountability for clinical and other health services delivered to Aboriginal people.
- Adopted the *Decision Making Framework for NSW Health Aboriginal Health Practitioners Undertaking Clinical Activities* to ensure that Aboriginal Health Practitioners are trained, competent, ready and supported to undertake clinical activities.
- Achieved appropriate accreditation of healthcare facilities and their services.
- Licensing and registration requirements which are checked and maintained.
- A Medical Staff Executive Council, at least two Medical Staff Councils and a Mental Health Medical Staff Council (or an alternative mechanism established in accordance with the Model By-Laws)
- A Hospital Clinical Council for each public hospital in the entity (where appropriate that Council may be a Joint Hospital Clinical Council covering more than one hospital).
- A Local Health District Clinical and Quality Council.
- Published a NSLHD Clinical Governance Framework 2022\_2025 that is accessible to all staff and the public.

The Chief Executive has mechanisms in place to ensure that the relevant registration authority is informed where there are reasonable grounds to suspect professional misconduct or unsatisfactory professional conduct by any registered health professional employed or contracted by the District.

Health services are required to be accredited to the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards under the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation Scheme (the AHSSQA Scheme).

**Corporate Governance Attestation Statement**  
**NORTHERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT**  
**1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023**

---



The District intends to submit an attestation statement confirming compliance with the NSQHS Standards for the 2022/23 financial year to the accrediting agency by 30 September 2023. The District submitted an attestation statement to the accrediting agency for the 2021/22 financial year.

---

### **STANDARD 3: SETTING THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE ENTITY AND ITS SERVICES**

The Board has in place strategic plans for the effective planning and delivery of its services to the communities and individuals served by the District. This process includes setting a strategic direction in a 3- to 5-year strategic plan for both the District and the services it provides within the overarching goals of the 2022/23 NSW Health Strategic Priorities. The new NSLHD Strategic Plan 2022 -2027 was launched in August 2022.

District -wide planning processes and documentation is also in place, covering:

- Detailed plans linked to the Strategic Plan for the following:
  - Asset management
    - Asset management plan (AMP)
    - Strategic asset management plan (SAMP)
  - Information management and technology – The NSLHD Digital Strategy 2021 – 2026.
  - Research and teaching – The NSLHD Research Strategy 2019 – 2024.
  - Workforce management – This includes the NSLHD People Plan 2022 – 2027, the NSLHD Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023 - 2027 and the NSLHD Leadership Strategy and Action Plan.
- Local Health Care Services Plan – The NSLHD Clinical Services Plan 2019 to 2022 has now expired, with its replacement Clinical Services Plan 2023 to 2028 currently being developed and due to be launched before the end of 2023.
- Corporate Governance Plan – The NSLHD Corporate Governance Framework 2023.
- Aboriginal Health Action Plan – The NSLHD Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services Plan 2017 – 2022 has now expired with a replacement Aboriginal Health Action Plan currently being developed and due to be launched in early 2024.
- Consumer Engagement Framework – The NSLHD Consumer Engagement Framework sets out how the District will partner with consumers and the District's community during all stages of health service planning, delivery, development and evaluation.

---

## **STANDARD 4: MONITORING FINANCIAL AND SERVICE DELIVERY PERFORMANCE**

### **Role of the Board in relation to financial management and service delivery**

The District is responsible for ensuring compliance with the NSW Health Accounts and Audit Determination and the annual Ministry of Health budget allocation advice.

The Chief Executive is responsible for confirming the accuracy of the information in the financial and performance reports provided to the Board and those submitted to the Finance, Risk and Performance Committee and the Ministry of Health and that relevant internal controls for the District are in place to recognise, understand and manage its exposure to financial risk.

The Board has confirmed that there are systems in place to support the efficient, effective and economic operation of the District, to oversight financial and operational performance and assure itself financial and performance reports provided to it are accurate.

To this end, Board and Chief Executive certify that:

- The financial reports submitted to the Finance, Risk and Performance Committee and the Ministry of Health represent a true and fair view, in all material respects, of the District's financial condition and the operational results are in accordance with the relevant accounting standards.
- The recurrent budget allocations in the Ministry of Health's financial year advice reconcile to those allocations distributed to units and cost centres.
- Overall financial performance is monitored and reported to the Finance, Risk and Performance Committee of the District.
- Information reported in the Ministry of Health monthly reports reconciles to and is consistent with reports to the Finance, Risk and Performance Committee.
- All relevant financial controls are in place.
- Write-offs of debtors have been approved by duly authorised delegated officers.

### **Service and Performance**

A written Service Agreement was in place during the financial year between the Board and the Secretary, NSW Health, and performance agreements between the Board and the Chief Executive, and the Chief Executive and all Health Executive Service Members employed within the District.

The Board has mechanisms in place to monitor the progress of matters contained within the Service Agreement and to regularly review performance against agreements between the Board and the Chief Executive.

### **The Finance, Risk and Performance Committee**

The Board has established a Finance, Risk and Performance Committee to assist the Board and the Chief Executive to ensure that the operating funds, capital works funds, resource utilisation and service outputs required of the District are being managed in an appropriate and efficient manner.

The Finance, Risk and Performance Committee receives monthly reports that include:

- Financial performance of each major cost centre
- Subsidy availability
- The position of Restricted Financial Asset and Trust Funds

- 
- Activity performance against indicators and targets in the performance agreement for the District
  - Advice on the achievement of strategic priorities identified in the performance agreement for the District
  - Year to date and end of year projections on capital works and private sector initiatives.

Letters to management from the Auditor-General, Minister for Health, and the NSW Ministry of Health relating to significant financial and performance matters, are also tabled at the Finance, Risk and Performance Committee.

During the 2022-23 financial year, the Finance and Performance Committee was chaired by Mr Andrew Goodsall - Chair and Board Member NSLHD and comprised of:

- Mr Andrew Goodsall - Board Member NSLHD
- Dr Michelle Mulligan OAM - Board Member, NSLHD
- Mr Chris Greatrex - Board Member, NSLHD

The Chief Executive and Director of Finance attended all meetings of the Finance, Risk and Performance Committee except where on approved leave.

---

## **STANDARD 5: MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT**

The District has adopted the NSW Health Code of Conduct to guide all staff and contractors in professional conduct and ethical behaviour.

The Code of Conduct is distributed to, and signed by, all new staff and is included on the agenda of all staff induction programs. The Board has systems and processes in place to ensure the Code is periodically reinforced for all existing staff. Ethics education is also part of the District's learning and development strategy.

The District has implemented models of good practice that provide culturally safe work environments and health services through a continuous quality improvement model and through its Speaking Up for Safety program.

There are systems and processes in place and staff are aware of their obligations to protect vulnerable patients and clients – for example, children and those with a mental illness.

The Chief Executive, as the Principal Officer, has reported all instances of corruption to the Independent Commission Against Corruption where there was a reasonable suspicion that corrupt conduct had, or may have, occurred, and provided a copy of those reports to the Ministry of Health.

During the 2022-23 financial year, the Chief Executive reported 29 cases to the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Policies and procedures are in place to facilitate the reporting and management of public interest disclosures within the District in accordance with state policy and legislation, including establishing reporting channels and evaluating the management of disclosures.

During the 2022-23 financial year, the District reported 2 public interest disclosures.

The Board attests that the District has a fraud and corruption prevention program in place.



---

## **STANDARD 6: INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEM**

The Board seeks the views of patients, consumers, local providers and the local community on the District's plans and initiatives for providing health services, and also provides advice to the community and local providers with information about the District's plans, policies and initiatives.

During the development of its policies, programs and strategies, the Entity considered the potential impacts on the health of Aboriginal people and, where appropriate, engaged with Aboriginal stakeholders to identify both positive and negative impacts and to address or mitigate any negative impacts for Aboriginal people.

1. The Executive, with Board involvement, provides information and advice to consumers, the community and local providers about the local health district policies and initiatives and seeks their views on the District's plans for providing health services. Information dissemination and community voice is achieved through Consumer Forums and special interest group forums such as Carers, Youth, Disabled and Mental Health Consumer forums. The District also engages with consumers and the community via its committee governance structure with the Board Consumer Committee and local Consumer Participation Committees and Peer worker committees at the facility and service level.
2. Supported by the Board, the District is committed to enabling and enhancing opportunities for input and feedback. The District also strives to improve the health, well-being and the health literacy of our community through the availability and access to information and resources about our services and health-related topics tailored to the needs of consumers. An example of exemplary practice in health literacy is the District's purchase of the EIDO Patient Information Brochure Library, a suite of plain English and pictorial brochures for the intellectually challenged that simply explain clinical procedures, their risks, benefits and alternatives, for the purpose of achieving truly informed consent. In addition, Consumers co-design information for patients and the community in electronic and hard copy form. The Consumer Tick application on these resources ensures consultation from a minimum of five consumers. The Multicultural Access Committee also includes a consumer representative.
3. The NSLHD Consumer Committee is a Board Sub-Committee established to provide Board assurance and strategic advice in relation to the consumer and carer experience of health care and to develop effective communication and engagement strategies for the District's community. The NSLHD Consumer Committee is chaired by a Board Member and membership includes eleven consumer advisors, a representative from the Aboriginal Health Service and a minimum of two NSLHD Board members, one of whom is a member of the Health Care Quality Committee (HCQC).
4. Consumers are involved in governance processes through their membership and involvement on Committees in the facilities and services throughout the District. Currently Royal North Shore Hospital, Ryde Hospital, Mona Vale Hospital, Hornsby Hospital and Primary and Community Health have Consumer Participation Committees (CPC) or Consumer Advisory Councils (CACs) which meet regularly to discuss consumer engagement and the patient experience in these facilities and services. Consumers are also involved in many other aspects of service evaluation and development including involvement as team members on service co-design and quality improvement initiatives. Currently the District has more than 50 consumer advisors providing input in this capacity, with an ever increasing demand for their involvement.
5. Mental Health Drug and Alcohol (MHDA) has a Peer Workforce Committee (previously Consumer Participation Committee) and a Carer Network. Members from these committees also sit on the MHDA Clinical Council. Consumers and carers are members of a number of key committees, at both MHDA and sector/service level, and also participate in operational planning, service evaluation, education, quality improvement and research. MHDA employs consumer

and carer peer workers to liaise with and represent consumers in key decision making, including in the development of resources, procedures, committees and working groups.

6. The NSLHD Carer Support Service has launched the NSLHD Carer Strategy 2018-2023. The Carer Strategy identifies a number of strategic goals that will support the implementation of the NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers Key Directions 2018-2020.
7. Sources of consumer feedback include complaints captured via the District's Incident Management System. Complaints are investigated and managed at the facility/service level with the support of local patient representatives. Reporting to the HCQC including reporting against target key performance indicators for acknowledgement and resolution of complaints.
8. The NSW Bureau of Health Information Patient Survey Program provides consumer feedback data to the District regarding the patient's experience of their care at a facility level. The results of the Patient Survey Program are reviewed by a number of governing committees across the District including the NSLHD Consumer Committee and at each of the local CPC/CAC meetings. Within MHDA consumer feedback is obtained using national Your Experience of Services (YES) and Carer Experience of Services (CES) surveys. Results are reviewed by sector/services and by the MHDA Service Experience Working Group and action and change processes are implemented to respond to the feedback. The District is also developing a real-time patient experience feedback surveying tool (in conjunction with the CEC). The survey went live on 1 March 2022. The District also participates in the Patient Reported Measures Program, an initiative of the Agency for Clinical Innovation.
9. A Local Partnership Agreement is in place between the Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative Limited and the District, South Eastern Sydney LHD, Sydney LHD, St Vincent's Health Network and Sydney Children's Hospitals Network.
10. Information on plans and initiatives of the Organisation and information on how to participate in their development are available to the public and staff at the internet site [www.nslhd.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nslhd.nsw.gov.au). The Board rotates its meeting sites so as to visit each hospital facility at least once per year.
11. The District's intranet site <http://intranet.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx> can be accessed by all staff.
12. The District has adopted the Australian Charter of Health Care Rights to identify the commitment to protecting the rights of patients in the health system. The District protects the rights of patients in the health system by also following NSW and national policies and guidelines including:
  - NSLHD Patient Charter of Health Care Rights Policy
  - NSW Health My Health Record Security and Access\_PD2019\_054
  - Australian Charter of Health and Health Care Rights
13. There are appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure privacy of personal and health information. The District adheres to privacy legislation by following policy and guidelines, locally implemented, about management of personal information held by NSW Health organisations. Key documents include:
  - Privacy Management Plan\_PD2015\_036
  - Privacy Manual for Health Information
  - NSW Health Privacy Internal Review Guidelines\_GL2019\_015
  - NSW Health My Health Record Security and Access\_PD2019\_054

- 
- Records Management of Electronic Messages (email) Policy & Guidelines\_PD2005\_230
  - Electronic Information Security\_PD2020\_046
  - Emergency Services Accessing Clinical Information from MHDA Services during High Risk Situations - MHDA
  - Health Care records- Documentation and Management\_PD2012\_069
  - Disclosure of unit record data by Local Health Districts for research or contractor services\_PD2018\_001
  - Social Media- NSLHD
  - Use and Disclosure of Electronic Data and Camera Surveillance Records

Information on the key policies, plans and initiatives of the District and information on how to participate in their development are available to staff and to the public at <http://intranet.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>.

The District has the following in place:

- A consumer and community engagement Framework and a Consumer Advisor Toolkit to facilitate broad input into the strategic policies and plans.
- A patient service charter established to identify the commitment to protecting the rights of patients in the health system.
- A Local Partnership Agreement with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.
- Mechanisms to ensure privacy of personal and health information.
- An effective complaint management system.

---

## **STANDARD 7: ESTABLISHING SOUND AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

### **Role of the Board in relation to audit and risk management**

The Board is responsible for supervising and monitoring risk management by the District and its facilities and units, including the system of internal control. The Board, through the Audit and Risk Committee, receives and considers all reports of the External and Internal Auditors for the District, and through the Audit and Risk Committee ensures that audit recommendations and recommendations from related external review bodies are implemented.

The District also has a Chief Risk Officer who reports quarterly to the Board.

The District has a current Risk Management Plan that identifies how risks are managed, recorded, monitored and addressed. It includes processes to escalate and report on risk to the Chief Executive, Audit and Risk Committee and Board.

The Plan covers all known risk areas including:

- Clinical care and patient safety
- Work health and safety
- Financial Management
- Governance and Performance
- Health of Population
- Legal
- People & Culture
- Reputation
- Service Delivery
- Infrastructure

### **Audit and Risk Committee**

The Board has established an Audit and Risk Committee, with the following core responsibilities:

- to assess and enhance the District's corporate governance, including its systems of internal control, ethical conduct and probity, risk management, management information and internal audit
- to ensure that appropriate procedures and controls are in place to provide reliability in the District's financial reporting, safeguarding of assets, and compliance with the District's responsibilities, regulatory requirements, policies and procedures
- to oversee and enhance the quality and effectiveness of the District's internal audit function, providing a structured reporting line for the Internal Auditor and facilitating the maintenance of their independence
- through the internal audit function, to assist the Board to deliver the District's outputs efficiently, effectively and economically, so as to obtain best value for money and to optimise organisational performance in terms of quality, quantity and timeliness; and
- to maintain a strong and candid relationship with external auditors, facilitating to the extent practicable, an integrated internal/external audit process that optimises benefits to the District.

The District completed and submitted an Internal Audit and Risk Management Attestation Statement for the 12-month period ending 30 June 2023 to the Ministry without exception.

The Audit and Risk Committee comprises 3 members, all of whom are independent and appointed from the NSW Government's Prequalification Scheme for Audit and Risk Committee Independent Chairs and Members. Two Board members attend Audit and Risk Committee meetings as observers.