



SMHS Board to Ward program overview 2021

Purpose

The governance and leadership role of the South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS) Board includes overseeing continuous improvement in safety, quality and service provision. Through the **SMHS Board to Ward program**, Board members conduct conversations with staff, patients and their families in relation to the care provided and received, and in doing so, make a public commitment to service improvement. Board to Ward visits also allow Board members to put a human face to the data and reports they receive in their meetings and be reflective in their Board and committee deliberations.

The SMHS Board to Ward program is not a means of detecting incidences of patient or staff dissatisfaction, but rather a mechanism to promote a blame-free culture where reporting is used as a tool for service improvement. The program allows Board members to gain an understanding of how patients, carers and staff feel about the care provided and presents opportunities to increase consumer and staff confidence in the governance role of the Board.

Hearing first-hand examples of successes, concerns and issues enables Board members to demonstrate their appreciation of the care and excellent service being provided at the various SMHS sites.

In addition, the program endeavours to reinforce and embody the five SMHS strategic priorities:

- Excellence in the delivery of safe, high quality clinical care
- Providing a great patient experience
- Engaging, developing and providing opportunities for our workforce
- Strengthening relationships with our community and partners
- Achieving a productive and innovative organisation which is environmentally and financially sustainable.

Board to Ward visits demonstrate to the Board members how SMHS staff constantly strive to exemplify the SMHS values of **care, integrity, respect, excellence and teamwork**.





Visits

During 2021, Board members participated in a total of 10 Board to Ward visits which enabled them to visit:

- The burns unit, chemotherapy, patient and family liaison, mental health, the mother and baby unit, pastoral care and the neurology inpatient ward at Fiona Stanley Hospital
- Rehabilitation and aged care at Fremantle Hospital
- Medical services and palliative care at Murray District Hospital
- The intensive care unit, the surgical ward, pharmacy and community mental health at Rockingham General Hospital
- Obstetrics and the emergency department at Peel Health Campus



Each two-hour visit was attended by a clinical and a non-clinical Board member.

These visits offer Board members an opportunity to meet with and gather feedback directly from patients, carers and staff about the patient experience and patient safety. Board members then share their feedback and discuss issues raised during their visit with the relevant Executive Director. Written reports are also provided to the site's executive team, with responses to findings and actions monitored by the SMHS Board Safety and Quality Committee.



Outcome highlights

Through the SMHS Board to Ward program's meaningful engagement with staff and patients, visiting Board members regularly note high satisfaction from our patients about the services provided and a high degree of pride and job satisfaction amongst staff.

The SMHS Board appreciates the importance of directly engaging with the community and staff to identify opportunities for improving access to, and delivery of, health services. These are highlighted in the excerpts below.

Burns Unit, Fiona Stanley Hospital

Board member comments and findings

The Burns Unit is internationally recognised for its quality of care for burns patients and research effort. It caters for almost 300 inpatients each year and over 3,500 outpatients from around WA. It has robust systems and procedures in place.

The integration of effort and teamwork between consultants, clinical staff and administrative staff within the Burns Unit appeared to be very strong. There was a significant focus on providing a very high standard of patient care. A range of services

are provided to patients throughout the State through the emergency department, inpatient unit, outpatient clinic, walk-in clinic and telehealth.

The strong focus on research in the Burns Unit is evident with staff speaking enthusiastically about current and past research projects; and discussing how innovations and higher-level collaborative research has benefited patient care and patients' future well-being. New treatment techniques include early skin grafting, new wound treatment products and specialised therapy.



Intensive Care Unit and Surgical Ward, Rockingham General Hospital

Board member comments and findings

All staff interviewed were happy working at Rockingham General Hospital, all were committed to providing excellent patient care, all would happily have family members treated at the hospital and all were aware of the incident reporting process. Many of the staff provided positive suggestions to improve patient care and staff satisfaction.

Included in those interviewed were two junior doctors and a graduate nurse and all reported that they enjoyed working at Rockingham General Hospital. All staff were pleased that the Board members had taken the time to meet with them and listen to their feedback.





Rehabilitation and Aged Care, Fremantle Hospital

Board member comments and findings

The staff were happy and loyal to Fremantle Hospital. They reported a positive culture and a keen awareness amongst all staff members in relation to safety issues which largely involved falls and medication management. Junior medical staff commented positively on the great culture and hands-on work at Fremantle Hospital. In fact, the working atmosphere was positively mentioned by all staff, with impressive reports of continuity of service amongst core medical and nursing staff.

One patient who had a chronic illness and is a frequent inpatient reported that the nurses were outstanding, always taking the time to chat with her and provide physiotherapy out of hours, and that the food was delicious. A carer interviewed said that the care that his father with dementia received is of a consistently high standard.



Medical Services and Palliative Care, Murray District Hospital

Board member comments and findings

Staff members were friendly, approachable, and happy to have a chat. Morale was good, with positive comments about the culture, feeling safe reporting issues and staff being comfortable with recommending the hospital to family and friends.

The feedback from patients and carers was extremely positive with only one or two minor suggestions for improvement. Patients and carers said that staff and the quality of care was 5-star and the introduction of palliative care has been welcomed by families. As a result of Board feedback, more group activities have been organised and patients are encouraged to eat in the dining room to increase social interactions.