

Minutes

Board

21 October 2025 | 10.00am-1.30pm

Meeting Room South 8, 1 Reserve Road, St Leonards

Attendees

Nigel Lyons (Chair), Cathryn Cox, David Currow, Gayle Murphy, John Roach, Michael Legg, Tracey Maisey and Yvonne Weldon.

Apologies: Nicholas Hawkins and Irene Rusak

In Attendance: Vanessa Janissen, David Brown, Juliana Iles Mann For Item 4, Rob Lindeman For Item 5, Gayle Warnock For Item 6.

Observer: Emily Mould

Secretariat: Tanya Dunn

1.0 Welcome, Acknowledgment of Country, and Emergency Management

The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country, recognising the Cammeraygal people as the traditional custodians of the land. Respect was paid to Elders past and present, and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attendees. A welcome was then extended to all attendees.

1.1 Attendance and Apologies:

A quorum of Board members was present, and the meeting proceeded with business.

1.2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest

The Board Chair requested that all attendees declare any conflicts of interest. No new declarations were noted.

1.3 & 1.4 Confirmation of previous Minutes and Review of Action Log

- The minutes of the August Board meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record.
- The action log was reviewed, noting that most items are either included in the current agenda or progressing toward future meetings.
- The Board requested an updated action log incorporating FASS-related actions from the last meeting. Progress updates will be provided at future meetings.

2. Consumer/Customer Story

- Presented by Dr Tony Roscioli, Principal Investigator Pre Gen Project, supported by Dr Michael Buckley, Department Head of Genomics, Randwick.

- The presentation showcased the life-saving impact of prenatal genomic sequencing and targeted therapy for a rare condition. This case, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, demonstrated the global significance and clinical value of genomics in diagnosis, management, and prevention.
- The success was attributed to multidisciplinary collaboration across pathology, genetics, clinical care, and bioinformatics.
- A concern was raised about the health system's preparedness to integrate genomics into routine care, highlighting the complexity of implementation and the need for strong infrastructure and governance.
- The Board noted the importance of the integration of genomics into the draft Strategic Plan and exploring opportunities for NSWHP to leverage genomics for future service delivery.
- The Board highlighted the need for an adaptive governance framework to align with emerging therapies and technologies. Key considerations include clinical governance, equitable access, clinician education, and clear pathways for translating research into practice.
- The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) will undertake further strategic discussions on the statewide genomics strategy and report back to the Board in the New Year.
- A query was raised regarding the costs of recombinant therapies and their impact on health system funding, including comparisons with other high-cost treatments such as gene therapy for spinal muscular atrophy (SM).

Action: The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) to engage in further strategic discussions on the statewide genomics strategy and present findings back to the Board in the New Year.

3. Chief Executive Update

The Chief Executive report was taken as read with Vanessa Janissen highlighting key updates.

Key points discussed:

- Anatomical Pathology (AP) services continue to face growing demand and increasing complexity. Most processes remain manual, and the international shortage of pathologists continues to challenge service agility.
- Recruitment is progressing; offers have been made, registrar numbers increased, and the annual recruitment program completed, with an increase of 7.3 additional APs. Remaining eligible will be offered remote roles to support areas with recruitment gaps.
- Workforce planning will be integrated into the Healthcare Services Plan, including the mapping of workforce needs and refining recruitment strategies.
- A proposal was made to collaborate with Local Health District (LHD) recruitment teams for joint advertising to broaden candidate reach.

- The registrar training program has expanded; and next year's cohort is confirmed with the Royal College of Pathologists Australasia (RCPA). Advocacy continues with the RCPA to encourage other states to share training responsibilities.
- The dissection scientist program is being expanded, enabling registrars to focus on early reporting and pathologists on complex cases.
- The recent Wollongong reporting backlog was resolved through the mobilisation of specialists across laboratories, demonstrating organisational agility.
- The business case for digital pathology and remote reporting is in development, requiring alignment with technology advances and RCPA accreditation standards.
- Fusion super user training is scheduled, and well-being strategies have been implemented to support staff during transition.
- The various Awards programs were well received; NSW Health and Premier's Awards finalists were acknowledged. The Aboriginal Targeted Traineeship program was showcased at the Stepping Up Conference, with an update scheduled for the December Board meeting.
- Complaints handling performance has been impacted by batching and workflow changes following the Q Point implementation, corrective actions are underway. The current satisfaction rate is at 83%, with improvement expected.
- Initiatives to enhance laboratory performance are progressing, including manager dashboards and pilot huddles.
- Cybersecurity accreditation has been successfully achieved.

Forensic and Analytical Science Service (FASS)

- Ongoing support is being provided to Queensland Police on DNA-related issues. Achieving alignment remains challenging without introducing additional risk.
- FASS Site visits with Vince McTaggart and Kerry Chant from the Ministry of Health held. Discussion identified critical infrastructure needs, including immediate upgrades and a long-term asset replacement strategy. The Board requested visibility of the capital plan, covering both short- and long-term solutions at an appropriate time.
- External recruitment for the Director of Forensic and Analytical Science Services (FASS) will commence following Michael Symonds' retirement announcement.

The Board **NOTED** the update provided in the Chief Executive's report.

Actions Items:

- **Collaborate with local recruitment teams in regional and rural areas to jointly advertise and recruit pathology positions, using broader recruitment approaches.**

- Assess and report the impact of changes to complaints management processes, ensuring performance improvements are monitored and presented at upcoming performance meetings.
- Provide the Board with the FASS capital plan detailing the immediate critical infrastructure needs and the long-term asset replacement strategy at an appropriate time.
- Present an update on the Aboriginal Targeted Traineeship program at the December Board meeting.

4. Beyond 2030 NSW Health Pathology's Strategic Plan

Associate Professor Robert Lindeman, Director of Strategy and Transformation, presented the draft NSWHP Strategic Plan, outlining NSWHP's purpose, vision, promise, and key strategic priorities.

The Board acknowledged Nicole Tripney for her significant contribution to the plan's development and noted her departure from NSWHP.

Key Points discussed:

- The draft Strategic Plan was developed through extensive consultation with laboratories, corporate areas, and external stakeholders.
- The current version is comprehensive; a shorter version will be prepared for wider communication.
- The graphics and some content are placeholders and will be revised before finalisation.
- Five key focus areas have been identified: Connecting Services, Empowering People, Digital Transformation, Research & Innovation, and Sustainable Stewardship.
- The discussion focused on clarifying the distinction between purpose, vision, and promise, and sought feedback on whether these concepts should remain separate or be combined.

Board Feedback & Discussion:

- Board members raised concerns about potential overlap and lack of clarity between purpose, vision, and promise, highlighting the need for strategic alignment and effective communication.
- Clearly reference NSWHP RITES values (Respect, Integrity, Teamwork, Excellence, Safety) and align them with NSW Health's core values to ensure consistency with the Future Health strategy.
- Include "statewide" in the purpose statement to reflect inclusivity for regional, rural, and remote communities.
- Strengthen representation of rural priorities and workforce development within the strategic plan.
- Simplify the document and use clear, accessible language.
- Prioritise health outcomes within stewardship and clarify the research and innovation sections.
- Align NSWHP's focus areas with Future Health strategy priorities, particularly Healthy and Well and Aboriginal health.
- Undertake and acknowledge consultation with relevant professional colleges beyond RCPA.

- Increase emphasis on horizon scanning and future-readiness (e.g., genomics and omics).
- Revise terminology on patient choice, favouring “access” over “choice.”
- Share the intent and key content of the draft strategic plan with specialty leads in November, even if the final document is not yet complete.

Next Steps:

- Refine the draft Strategic Plan to incorporate board feedback on clarity, alignment, rural and regional priorities, and workforce development.
- Update graphics and prepare a shorter version for wider communication and staff engagement.
- Align NSWHP values to NSWH core values and clearly reference their connection with the Future Health strategy.
- Strengthen the focus on rural communities and workforce development.
- Acknowledge consultation with relevant professional colleges.
- Present the updated draft Strategic Plan to the Board for review at the December meeting.
- Continue consultation with leaders throughout November.

The Board expressed appreciation to Nicole Tripney and all contributors for their work on the draft Strategic Plan.

The Board **NOTED** the update provided.

Action Item: Update the Strategic Plan to reflect feedback on purpose, promise, values, rural and regional priorities, research, and training. Ensure alignment with NSW Health’s *Future Health* strategy and system-wide priorities.

5. Fusion Program and Sponsorship Update

Juliana Iles-Mann presented an update on the Fusion program, noting progress and sponsorship as implementation approaches.

Three projects are flagged at risk: Blood Bank, contractual issues are impacting timelines; eReporting, concerns about provider directory inclusion affecting testing readiness, and Billing, complex but progressing with improved structure and testing.

- The program is on budget. The system configuration has been finalised and testing underway. Phase 2 testing has been completed. Phase 3 and the Technical Dress Rehearsal scheduled for completion by 14 November. Upcoming activities include cutover and conversion preparation; end user training scheduled.
- The Tranche A Change Management Governance Committee is actively overseeing readiness. Local laboratory leaders are working through checklists and change impact assessments to clarify process changes.

- A proposal was made for a Board-hosted breakfast/town hall in Newcastle (April 2026) to support Fusion Team engagement.
- The Board noted the key risks identified: resource availability within LHDs. The simultaneous implementation of the Single Digital Patient Record (SDPR) and the new billing system may cause reconciliation and workflow challenges. Limited capacity for comparative testing between legacy and new systems. All risks are being managed by the Fusion Executive Steering Committee, the principle governance committee.
- Manual entry issues are being addressed through approved recommendations and system configuration updates. Blood specimen collection and shared workflows are being evaluated to reduce downstream impacts.
- EPIC's sequencing requires targeted clinician training, with early engagement planned across LHDs. National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accreditation preparation is underway with documentation and protocols in development.
- The standardisation of cellular workflow remains complex; with a revised approach for Tranche A. Concern raised regarding future performance reporting and comparative data analysis due to system differences; full data consistency is expected within 12–24 months post-implementation.

The Board **NOTED** the update provided.

The Board acknowledged the increasing demands on the Fusion Team and expressed their appreciation to Juliana Iles-Mann and the broader Fusion Team for their ongoing contributions.

Action Item: Enhance board visibility and engagement in the Fusion program through participation in milestone recognition events and consider a Board visit to Newcastle to meet the Fusion Team.

6. Point of Care Testing

Gayle Warnock, Associate Director, Point of Care Testing (POCT) provided an update on POCT.

- NSWHP's POCT service employs 30 staff across six major hubs, supporting 191 locations statewide, most without on-site laboratories. Approximately 1.5 million tests annually, with volumes expected to rise.
- NSWHP has maintained accreditation for 10 years, distinguishing it from other states, and achieved consistent annual growth of around 6%, driven by increased patient presentations and the integration of new services.
- Strategic Priorities for 2025-2026:
 - Strengthen rural and regional services by aligning with the Regional Health Strategic Plan and redesigning out-of-hours support.
 - Enhance ICT systems, focusing on data security, architecture, and EPIC integration.
 - Advance quality and supervision using risk-based models and tools like QPoint.

- Support a dispersed workforce through improved accessibility and clinical leadership.
- Consolidate device strategy to standardise equipment and streamline procurement.
- Operational highlights include the adoption of new technologies such as Hema Screen to support higher acuity patient management in smaller hospitals; initiatives to improve retention of young professionals; out-of-hours redesign addressing sustainability and fatigue risks for small laboratories, implementing a phased rollout focused on rural and regional sites. ICT initiatives are focused on upgrading aging infrastructure and collaborating with eHealth, supported by secured capital funding.

Board Discussion and Feedback

- It was suggested to reevaluate POCT's net cost-benefit compared to traditional laboratory testing, including financial benefits and resource optimisation.
- The Board acknowledged the strong confidence in POCT results within rural and regional facilities and highlighted the need for enhanced communication and data transparency in metropolitan areas.
- Potential for POCT to support outpatient chemotherapy and immunotherapy services, and integration into broader service initiatives, particularly in regional and rural communities.

The Board **NOTED** the update provided.

The Board acknowledged the POCT team's dedication and achievements, especially in supporting regional and rural healthcare delivery.

Action Item: Incorporate data on the value and effectiveness of POCT into service delivery discussions and community engagement around new models of care in regional and rural areas.

7. Finance and Performance Committee

The Finance and Performance Committee report was taken as read.

John Roach, Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee, provided a financial update, presented the Balanced Scorecard, and outline key points from the Committee's recent meeting.

Key Points Discussed:

- A budget adjustment has improved clarity in performance management.
- Patient revenue has increased slightly; cost realignments are underway. Several efficiency initiatives are delayed, and the forecast depends on their timely implementation.
- Activity levels are higher year-on-year but remain below first quarter targets. Billing issues are being addressed, with no significant concerns identified.
- Leave balances remain high, indicating workload pressures and potential risks of staff burnout.
- Forensic Medicine reported a higher-than-expected number of incomplete coronial cases; recruitment and appointments are in progress to address this issue.

- The financial forecast remains stable, with further clarity expected in the November report.

The Board acknowledged the Finance team for accelerating progress on the three-year turnaround strategy, noting achievements ahead of schedule. The impact of the recent HSU Award changes was also discussed, particularly the 10-hour break requirement between shifts. Cost analysis have been completed and incorporated into projections, with minimal overall impact expected.

8. Audit and Risk Management Committee

- Irene Rusak was noted as an apology. Vanessa Janissen provided an update on the Committee's recent meeting.

Key Points Discussed:

- Financial statements and certifications have been received with no significant changes; the final management letter is forthcoming. Key focus areas include the Fusion implementation and SDPR progress.
- The Auditor-General has indicated plans to conduct a performance audit of the Fusion program, focusing on the business case and benefits realisation. NSWHP has requested postponement until after March 2026.
- The external audit provider for NSWHP internal audits has been changed following a market process, the new engagement has been confirmed.

9. Quality and Clinical Safety Committee

Nicholas Hawkins was a noted apology. David Currow, Acting Chair of the Quality and Clinical Safety Committee, provided an update on the Committee's recent meeting.

Key Points discussed:

- The Board congratulated the QPoint team for completing their project ahead of schedule and underbudget, a significant achievement reflecting strong project management.
- The backlog of unreported placentas has been resolved with additional service support. Funding is being allocated to enable obstetricians to accelerate report reviews, demonstrating a proactive response to a critical issue.
- The Committee received an update from the NSWHP Public Health Pathology team on their collaboration with the Ministry of Health's Public Health team and contributions to statewide public health initiatives.

10.1 Clinical Council

No new meeting has occurred since the last Board meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for November.

10.2 Medical Staff Executive Council.

David Brown, Chair of the Medical Staff Executive Council, provided an update on the Council's recent meeting.

Key Points Discussed:

- The Council highlighted the need for clearer staff training guidance, particularly in rural areas, and ongoing discussions on Rights of Private Practice (ROPP).
- Significant work is required post-industrial action to support rural clinicians and strengthen training pathways.
- The Ministry of Health will commence a clinical consultation tour, led by John Frederic Levesque, to engage clinicians across LHDs and explore opportunities for improved support.
- The importance of internal escalation pathways was highlighted, with most concerns expected to be resolved internally before external escalation.
- NSWHP reaffirmed its commitment to strong internal escalation processes and ensuring that clinicians feel acknowledged and supported.

10.3 Medical and Dental Appointments Advisory Committee

Nigel Lyons, Chair of the Medical and Dental Appointments Advisory Committee, provided an update on the Committee's recent meeting.

Key Points Discussed:

- The Committee reviewed its Charter, which will be presented to the Board for final endorsement after minor revisions.
- Challenges remain with cross-appointments for clinical and laboratory roles due to inconsistent NSWHP involvement in LHD appointment processes. Some LHDs engage pathology proactively, while others seek support post-appointment. Improved guidelines and collaboration with LHDs are needed for consistency and clarity.

The Board **NOTED** all updates from the Committees.

11. Items without Notice

11.1 Proposed Board Meeting Dates 2026

- The proposed Board meeting dates for 2026 were endorsed.
- Plans include a meeting in Newcastle in April 2026 and a regional site visit in October 2026.
- The Board supports continuing off-site meetings at laboratory sites, recognising the benefits for both Board members and staff.

11.2 Overview Council of Board Chairs Meeting

- The Minister's presentation focused on system performance, particularly monitoring Emergency Departments and surgical services. Boards were encouraged to actively monitor service-level performance and take timely action.
- Emphasised a unified health system approach and collaboration across NSW Health.
- Discussed PMES results; NSWHP to arrange a presentation on findings in early 2026.
- Raised concern regarding the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) negotiations with the Commonwealth, affecting hospital bed availability and aged care transitions.
- Shared information on future health planning, asset management, and financial sustainability.
- The Board discussed the importance of strengthening NSWHP's integration within the broader health system and aligning the Strategic Plan with the one system direction.

12. Board Evaluation and Plans for the Annual Board Evaluation

- Board members provided positive feedback, noting strong engagement and valuable discussion on strategic initiatives.
- Reflected on whether the current balance between strategic and operational topics is appropriate.
- Suggested reviewing current Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure they meaningfully assess performance over time.
- There is a demand for more meaningful KPIs and for questions to be brought to the Board for consideration, rather than simply for endorsement.
- Board members appreciate the quality and clarity of Board papers. It was recommended that each paper clearly state what is required from the Board to guide contributions.
- Preferred concise presentations with clear requests for input over lengthy information sessions.
- Suggested adding a brief scheduled break in future meetings.
- Recommended reviewing papers to ensure all acronyms are spelled out for clarity.
- Discussed genomics and research, highlighting workforce readiness for advances in genomics and the impact of federal funding and accreditation on system preparedness.
- The annual Board evaluation survey will be distributed out of session, with results to be discussed at the December meeting.

Action Item: Distribute the annual board evaluation survey to all board members for completion.

For Information

The following committee minutes were noted for information

- 13. Finance and Performance Committee Meeting Minutes
- 14. Medical and Dental Appointments Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
- 15. Audit and Risk Management Committee Meeting Minutes
- 16. Clinical Council Committee Meeting Minutes
- 17. Quality and Clinical Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Closed

Endorsed by Dr Nigel Lyons, Board Chair, NSW Health Pathology

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nigel Lyons".

Action Log NSW Health Pathology Board

Topic	Action	Due	Accountability	Status	Update
Item 1. Consumer /Patient Story	The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) to engage in further strategic discussions on the statewide genomics strategy and present findings back to the Board in the New Year.	Feb 26	Rob Lindeman	Ongoing	Feb 2026
Item 2. CE Report	<p>Collaborate with local recruitment teams in regional and rural areas to jointly advertise and recruit pathology positions, using broader recruitment approaches.</p> <p>Assess and report the impact of changes to complaints management processes, ensuring performance improvements are monitored and presented at upcoming performance meetings.</p> <p>Provide the Board with the FASS capital plan detailing the immediate critical infrastructure needs and the long-term asset replacement strategy at an appropriate time.</p> <p>Present an update on the Aboriginal Targeted Traineeship program at the December Board meeting.</p>	Dec 25	<p>People & Culture</p> <p>Cain Byrnes</p> <p>Deanna Paulin</p> <p>Kevin Stanley Jessica Lee</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>In Progress</p> <p>In Progress</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>Feb 2026</p> <p>Included as part of the overall Asset Management Plan</p> <p>On agenda</p>
Item 5. Fusion Program and Sponsorship	Enhance board visibility and engagement through the Fusion program, which includes participation in milestone recognition events and the potential for a board visit to Newcastle to meet the Fusion team.	Apr 26	Nigel Lyons Vanessa Janissen	Ongoing	Apr 2026

Action Log NSW Health Pathology Board

Topic	Action	Due	Accountability	Status	Update
Item 4. Beyond 2030 NSWHP's Strategic Plan	Update the Strategic Plan to reflect feedback on purpose, promise, values, rural and regional priorities, research, and training. Ensure alignment with NSW Health's Future Health strategy and system-wide priorities.	Dec 25	Rob Lindeman Renee Mantle	Ongoing	Deferred to Feb 26
Item 6. Point of Care Testing (POCT)	Incorporate data on the value and effectiveness of POCT into service delivery discussions and community engagement around new models of care in regional and rural areas.	Feb 26	Gayle Warnock	Ongoing	Completed
Item 12. Board Annual Evaluation Survey	Distribute the annual board evaluation survey to all board members for completion.	Nov 25	Tanya Dunn	Completed	Completed
Item 5. FASS Update: Beyond the Scorecard	Provide a review and update on the QLD DNA Recommendation Report within 12-18 months.	Dec 26	Deanna Paulin	Ongoing	December 2026
	Initiate discussions with the Ministry of Health on critical infrastructure and capital funding needs at Lidcombe, focusing on immediate actions to mitigate safety and business continuity risks.	Nov 25	Deanna Paulin Vanessa Janissen	Ongoing	December 2025 <i>Update: Critical Infrastructure funding request scheduled for 8 December MOH CAMP ESC. Verbal outcome anticipated mid-December.</i>

Action Log NSW Health Pathology Board

Topic	Action	Due	Accountability	Status	Update
	Replace legacy systems and integrate NSW Police systems. Develop a business case for a custom-built solution, pending approval and funding.	Feb 26	Deanna Paulin Vanessa Janissen	Ongoing	Update: Detailed business case to be developed. Program Services project manager to be allocated.
	Assess workload implications and risks related to supporting critical DNA testing requests from QLD, ensuring alignment with NSWHP's commitment to quality, safety, and internal workload management.	Nov 25	Deanna Paulin Vanessa Janissen	Completed	Completed
	Include FASS and Forensic Medicine teams in statewide hub planning discussions to define scope and ensure operational needs and capabilities are reflected in future infrastructure planning.	Nov 25	Deanna Paulin Vanessa Janissen	Completed	FASS involved in weekly Statewide hub planning meetings and consultations; site visit to be scheduled.
	Develop a strategy to showcase FASS and FM services, highlighting current capabilities and innovations, and support advocacy for continued investment and sector recognition.	Nov 25	Deanna Paulin Vanessa Janissen	Completed	June 2026 TFNSW Funding and SLA formally signed. Forensic Medicine workforce review commenced. FASS Service Planning workshops commenced.

Action Log NSW Health Pathology Board

Topic	Action	Due	Accountability	Status	Update
	Organise a site tour of FASS for MoH Deputy Secretaries (Alfa D’Amato, Kerry Chant, and Vince Taggart) to provide insight into service delivery, infrastructure challenges, and funding gaps.	Nov 25	Deanna Paulin Vanessa Janissen	Completed	Completed
Item 9. Quality and Clinical Safety Committee	Email regarding complaints handling and performance decline will be circulated to the Board for review and consideration.	Aug 25	Nick Hawkins	Completed	Completed
Item 10. KPI Reporting	Revise KPI reporting format to reflect accurate change metrics and trends.	Aug 25	Craig Scowen	Completed	Completed
Item 3. 15/4/25 Research Strategy	Review the NSWHP Research Strategy to ensure alignment with the new strategic planning process and the NSW Health Research and Innovation Strategy. Revisit the NSWHP Research Strategy with feedback from the Board.	Oct 25	Tammy Boone	Ongoing	Deferred to Feb 26