



Government of **Western Australia**
South Metropolitan Health Service

SMHS Board to Ward program overview 2025

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 meet with and gather feedback directly from patients, carers and staff about the patient experience, patient safety and how they feel about the care provided.

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**.

The SMHS Board to Ward program promotes a psychologically safe space for feedback to be provided, and is committed to following up when issues are identified. Board members discuss their feedback with the relevant executive director and provide a written report of findings, with responses and actions monitored by the SMHS Board Safety and Quality Committee.



The visit to Fremantle Hospital gave Board members Karen Brown (middle) and Dr Amanda Boudville (far right) the opportunity to speak with Endoscopy staff.

Visits

During 2025, Board members participated in a total of nine Board to Ward visits:

- Rockingham General Hospital (RGH)'s emergency department musculoskeletal diversion pathway, obstetrics service and allied health
- The outpatient clinic, mental health Mother and Baby Unit and the Medihotel at Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH)
- Fremantle Hospital (FH)'s theatres and endoscopy unit
- Cockburn Health
- The Barker and Whelan wards and Emergency Department at Peel Health Campus (PHC); and
- Murray Districts Hospital (MDH)

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.



Cockburn Health

Board member comments and findings

Board members were welcomed and enjoyed the visit to the calm and inviting space. Staff members commented on the value of a dedicated women's mental health service and a much-needed eating disorders service but acknowledged this changed the acuity at FSH as a result. The presence of general practitioners and group therapy programs provides a unique, holistic model of care. Staff members commented on a good relationship with management.

Patients highlighted the calm, supportive environment and in particular the attention to their safety, including regular room checks. They felt it was a good environment and experience for family, particularly children, to visit them.

Obstetrics Department, Rockingham General Hospital

Board member comments and findings

The Board members found a positive culture within Obstetrics with engaged staff in a productive working environment. Staff felt supported in obtaining professional development and were proud to participate in "Every Week Counts", a national initiative established to empower women to make informed decisions around their pregnancy and birth. The commitment to meeting the needs of women and families in the local area was very evident.

The Board found both staff and management were very aware of facilities challenges within RGH, which was not designed to meet the demands of 2025. However, the women's clinic was noted for achieving significant activity and outcomes within limited space.

Outpatients, Fiona Stanley Hospital

Board member comments and findings

The Outpatient Department at FSH is a busy, high pressure work environment comprising eight daily clinics running at full capacity. Board members were impressed by the dedication and commitment of all staff members they spoke with who were all committed to a high standard of care for their patients.

Staff discussed challenges with high turnover of workforce, parking pressures and telehealth appointments. Senior nursing staff believe that there is capacity from a staffing perspective to see more patients, but this is currently limited by the number and restricted size of the clinics. Management routinely recommends that services review existing room allocations to ensure they are fully utilised, including evenings and weekends.

Peel Health Campus

Board member comments and findings

During this visit the Board members attended Barker Ward, Whelan Ward and Emergency Department. Staff members throughout the hospital were friendly, generous with their time, approachable, and happy to speak with Board members and share positive comments regarding the successful transition to the public system and SMHS management. The feedback from patients was also extremely positive with no suggestions for improvement.

The Board also found the new flow area in the ED was well utilised, with patients being assessed and sent back to the waiting room to wait for the results of investigations and tests. This initiative had increased throughput in ED and reduced ramping hours, and the innovation of the staff is to be commended.

Theatres and Endoscopy unit, Fremantle Hospital

Board member comments and findings

Board members noted the staff were very enthusiastic, highly engaged and generally satisfied with their working environment. The hospital's results in ongoing challenges with air conditioning, available space for storage and the constant risk of leaks and consequent damage to equipment. Despite, these challenges, the levels of staffing were noted as appropriate and morale was extremely high.

Staff retention is high and there was an evident culture encouraging innovation, excellence and safety and quality. The staff took great pride in the number of speciality teams maintained and the high level of productivity. The training culture was evident and there was a strong focus on developing staff through internal programs and support.