

# Flinders and Upper North Local Health Network Clinical Engagement Strategy 2023 - 2026









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# FOREWORD



An effective Clinical engagement strategy must provide an agreed and accessible pathway for clinicians to provide feedback on clinical services and engagement with our consumers.

This is the first Clinical Engagement Strategy for FUNLHN.

A definition of “Clinician Engagement” is the involvement of clinicians in the planning, delivery, improvement and evaluation of health services, utilising clinician’s clinical skills, knowledge and experience.

The engagement of clinicians, consumers and communities is integral to the successful development and implementation of safe, innovative, fit for purpose services for our communities. An effective clinical engagement strategy is crucial to ensuring that service changes are properly planned and effectively implemented. Clinicians must be engaged in the change process if it is to be successful.

As clinicians we often are the first and ongoing point of contact for consumers, be they clients, patients, carers/families, and communities, in hospital or community settings across the range of services.

As a Nurse and Midwife, I personally always found that the position we hold as clinicians, as one of privilege and have always held that role of patient advocate, as a high priority.

We engage with people when they are at their most vulnerable, at times of high emotion and anxiety and thankfully also times of great joy. We do have that opportunity to make a difference to the quality of that occasion of service. I acknowledge it is not always easy.

Likewise, we are also in a prime position to see when our culture including processes and systems, behaviour and our mindset don’t work well for consumers, due to a range of reasons.

In order to ensure that there is a clear pathway for clinicians to have a voice in planning, review and implementation we want your input, motivated and active participation which will only strengthen a shared understanding between Board, management and our frontline clinical workforce.

An effective Clinical Engagement Strategy is an integral component towards our vision: excellence in health care for everyone, every day, all the time.

**Geri Malone**  
**Chair of the Board Clinical Governance Committee**





**Excellence in  
Health Care for  
everyone, every day,  
all the time.**





# ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Aboriginal custodians of the land and waters within the footprint of the Flinders and Upper North Region. We respect their spiritual relationship with their country and acknowledge that their cultural beliefs are an important focus of their past, present and future.

Artist: Charmaine Wilson  
Pitjantjatjara

*Family support plays a vital role in the health journey of Aboriginal people. This artwork represents the patient, family and health professionals working together supporting the journey through the health care system. The footprints showcase walking alongside with the patients and their families striving towards better health outcomes for our community.*





## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

**The Flinders and Upper North Local Health Network (FUNLHN) supports approximately 44,000 people across almost 400,000 square kilometers of the Flinders Ranges and Upper Spencer Gulf and the Far North of South Australia.**

Health Professionals in the Flinders and Upper North provide a broad range of clinical services across a vast geographical footprint. Services include traditional acute medical, surgical, obstetric, pediatrics and mental health services as well as a broad range of community and Allied Health services. The LHN also delivers residential and community Aged Care services.

Country Health Connect provide a range of in home and visiting outreach services across the LHN.

To achieve successful clinical engagement across the reaches of FUNLHN, our strategy must be purposeful and supported by a positive culture for communication and engagement.

**Our service operates from various sites across the LHN.**

- Leigh Creek Health Clinic
- Port Augusta Hospital and Health Service
- Quorn Health Service
- Roxby Downs Health Service
- Whyalla Hospital and Health Service.
- Flinders Terrace Health Hub (Port Augusta)
- Early Years Parenting Centre Port Augusta
- Hawker Health Service and Hawker Medical Centre







### 3. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This framework will support clinicians to have a voice in the planning, implementation, delivery and review of services and strategy in the FUNLHN. To ensure that there are clear communication pathways, shared understanding and mutually beneficial influence between the board, management, consumers and clinicians within FUNLHN.

For the purpose of this strategy a clinician is defined as any Health Professional with a clinical scope of practice, this includes Personal Care Workers who provide direct patient care.

FUNLHN recognizes the contribution of all our staff to patient care, both clinical and non-clinical.







## 4. STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

### **This is the first Clinical Engagement Strategy for FUNLHN.**

FUNLHN needs a clinical workforce who are active and intentional participants in open two-way communication with all parts of the network, including consumers.

An effective clinical engagement is a priority under the FUNLHN Clinical Governance Framework 2023-2026 and is developed along with the FUNLHN Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and FUNLHN Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2026.

FUNLHN considers the engagement of clinicians, consumers and communities as integral components to successful development and implementation of safe, innovative, fit for purpose services for our communities.

FUNLHN will provide opportunities for clinicians to engage with the Aboriginal workforce, Experts by Experience consumer group to develop communication strategies that are clear and interactive to enable culturally appropriate ways of working and sharing understandings

Effective clinical engagement sits within the SA Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 - 2025 and ensures that the statewide plan is interpreted through implementing the FUNLHN Service Plan within our local context and for the health and wellbeing of our local communities.







## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CLINICAL ENGAGEMENT

All clinicians are responsible for actively participating in the process of clinical engagement.

The FUNLHN Board, Executive Leadership Team, Professional Leads and Service / Department Managers have responsibilities to their consumers & staff to support clinical engagement within the following frameworks:

### FUNLHN Strategic Plan 2021-2026

- **Consumer Focus:** To enhance safety and quality of our services, we will partner with consumers in their own care. To ensure our services meet the needs of our communities we will provide opportunities for consumers to partner in the design and evaluation of our services.
- **Aboriginal Health:** To build trust, positive and effective partnerships to ensure Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Flinders and Upper North Local Health Network enjoy the same health outcomes and life expectancy as all other Australians.
- **People:** Focused on recruitment and retention opportunities for development, leadership, management, specialist roles. We acknowledge, grow and invest in our people to achieve best service delivery outcomes.
- **Equity:** In access to services | opportunities for staff. We will deliver access to care, for every person, in every community, to meet their unique needs.
- **Quality and Safety:** Every employee and contractor in the FUNLHN is committed to the delivery of safe health care. We embed a culture that enables systems, processes, behaviours, and resources to ensure that our people can provide and receive a high standard of quality care to all.
- **Innovation:** In new clinical models of care | fostering new ideas and processes. We empower our people to embrace new technology, work practices and ideas by fostering curiosity and creativity to meet the evolving needs of our community.
- **Sustainability:** In services | workforce | financial. We will access resources to build an organization, that incorporates the best of the present and embraces innovation.
- **Finance:** We manage a viable and sustainable funding base that is flexible and responsive to deliver safe quality services that enhances the wellbeing of our consumers and the development of our people.

### FUNLHN Clinical Governance Framework 2023-2026

- Provides clinicians with agile frameworks and processes for the provision of care.
- Transparent mechanisms which support individual and collective accountability for safety and quality, including open disclosure of incidents.
- Promotion of and support of continuous improvement committees and forums which engage clinicians and consumers, working in partnership to drive best practice and quality improvements.

### SA Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2025

- Improving capability through innovative use of workforce and technology
- Establishing workforce development programs on ways to increase patient and consumer participation
- Design programs to guide clinical workforce change to a consumer/partnership participation culture of care
- Support workforce participation in research activities
- Ensure our current and future workforce is motivated and supported to provide excellent services to their community.



## 6. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

**FUNLHN recognises that clinical engagement is a function of formal frameworks and structures that are underpinned by a positive culture and healthy relationships.**

**FUNLHN supports the following clinical engagement principles:**

### Whole of network responsibility

All parts of the network will benefit from the insights that clinical staff can provide to the design, planning, implementation and improvement of services and systems.

### Two-way communication

Between all levels of the organisation and for the benefit of consumers and health care providers. All pathways for escalating information should be clear and accessible.

### Transparency

Ensuring closed feedback loops to ensure timely and clear communication on how clinical feedback is used and how decisions are made.

### Safety

Clinical engagement occurs in safe environments, where staff can speak respectfully, freely and without repercussion, and where that is not possible avenues for anonymous feedback are available.

The responsibility for upholding the clinical engagement principles lies with all FUNLHN health care providers. FUNLHN recognises that culture is continually evolving and must be supported and exemplified by the Board, management and senior clinicians. These principles drive staff experience of feeling safe, valued, heard and included.

**FUNLHN recognises that clinical engagement has a dual focus and responsibilities to the network and to consumers:**

### FUNLHN Focused

- **Network** – Clinical participation in service planning and decision-making about network-wide issues.
- **Models of Care** – Clinical participation in co-design of models of care and consumer engagement in the design of models of care.

### Consumer Focused

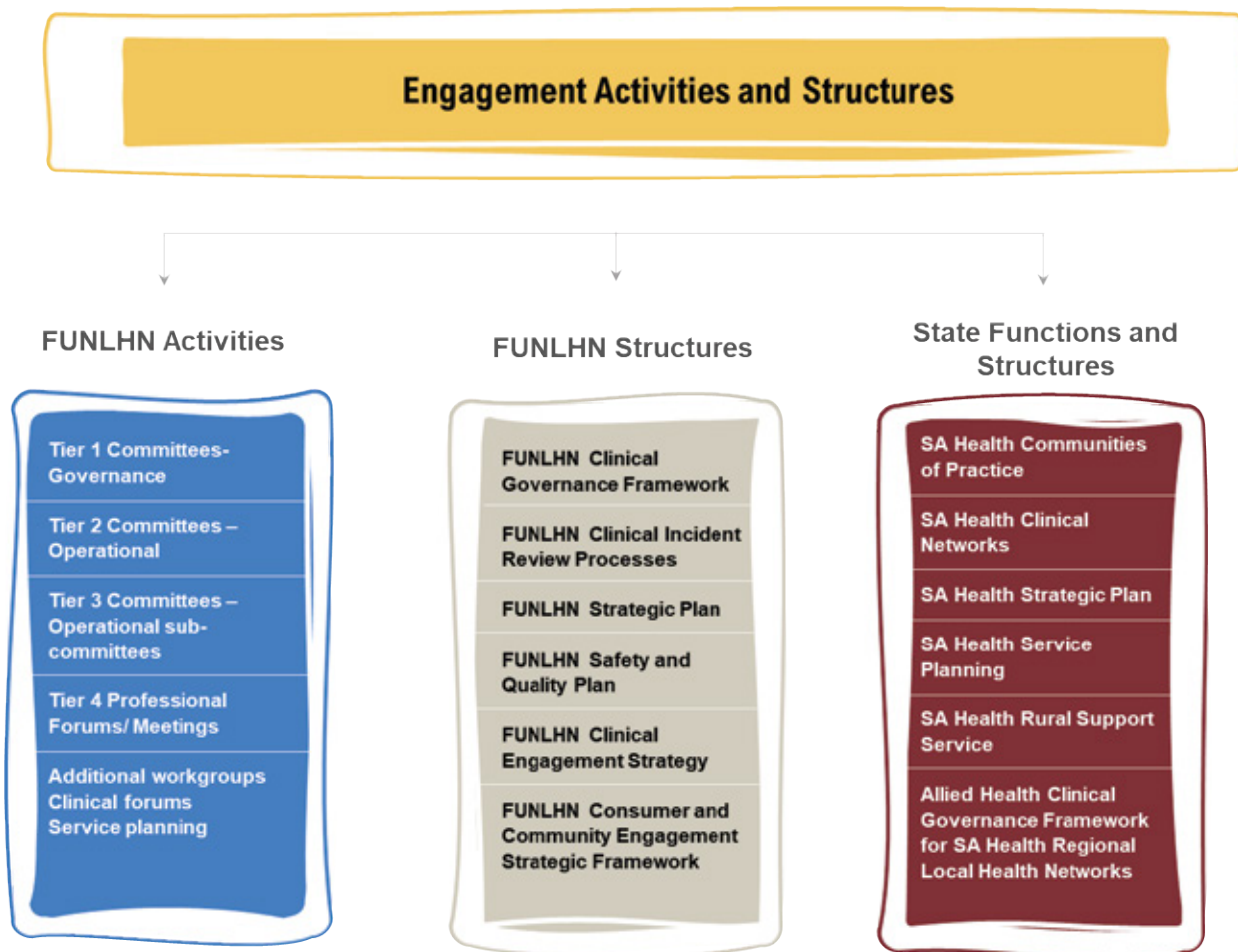
- **Service Delivery** – Culturally safe, consumer-centred care that focuses on continuity of care and an integrated consumer experience.
- **Safety and Quality** – Participation in clinical governance, continuous improvement and learning and education. Access to clear pathways to escalate issues.

## 7. EXISTING ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Clinical engagement occurs throughout the network formally, informally and across all network domains. Formal activities and structures such as frameworks, strategies and scheduled activities support clinical engagement to occur regularly, with intent and good governance.

FUNLHN will continue to pursue and develop engagement structures that are beneficial to clinical engagement.

**FUNLHN has the following formal engagement activities and structures in place to support clinical engagement:**



## 8. IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

**This strategy is supported using a range of tools and mechanisms.**

These are represented here based on the IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum which shows a continuum of levels of engagement. Clinicians will be engaged with a range and type of engagement tools and mechanisms available within FUNLHN:

**Objective**

**Proposition**

**Tools and Mechanisms**

### INFORM

**Provide clinicians with information to promote understanding**

**Clinicians are informed and aware of key issues**

- Staff induction and orientation Email Distribution Lists Intranet
- Executive and Committee communiques Printed material
- Displays
- Staff forums / Clinical Leaders Forums
- Screen savers
- Digital screens in FUNLHN
- Board/ Committee minutes
- FUNLHN QRS reports
- Email distribution lists
- QRS Regular newsletters



CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<b>Provide opportunities to discuss and ask for input from clinicians</b>	<b>Work with clinicians in determining preferred solutions</b>	<b>Partner with clinicians in decision making</b>	<b>Provide clinicians with decision-making ability</b>
Clinicians will be asked their opinion, listened to and their feedback taken into account	Clinicians will be involved to help define problems and identify solutions	Clinician's advice and recommendations are sought in determining appropriate solutions	Issues are determined based on the decisions of clinicians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Grand Rounds</li> <li>• Staff forums</li> <li>• GP meetings</li> <li>• Focus groups including service planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinician involvement in TIER 1 and 2 Committees</li> <li>• Team values and behaviours</li> <li>• Support statewide clinical engagement</li> <li>• Clinical Leaders Forums</li> <li>• FUNLHN Service Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursing and Midwifery Clinical Leaders and Combined Leadership Forums</li> <li>• FUNLHN Service Planning Program and Forums</li> <li>• Involvement in TEIR 1 and 2 Governance Committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FUNLHN Professional Lead roles</li> <li>• Appointment to leadership roles</li> <li>• Leadership and management development opportunities Provision of data and reporting to support decision-making</li> <li>• Support for change management</li> <li>• Support for decision-making for all clinicians within role and scope of practice – acknowledging that clinicians are experts in their field and are accountable for their actions.</li> </ul>

## 9. CLINICAL ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK







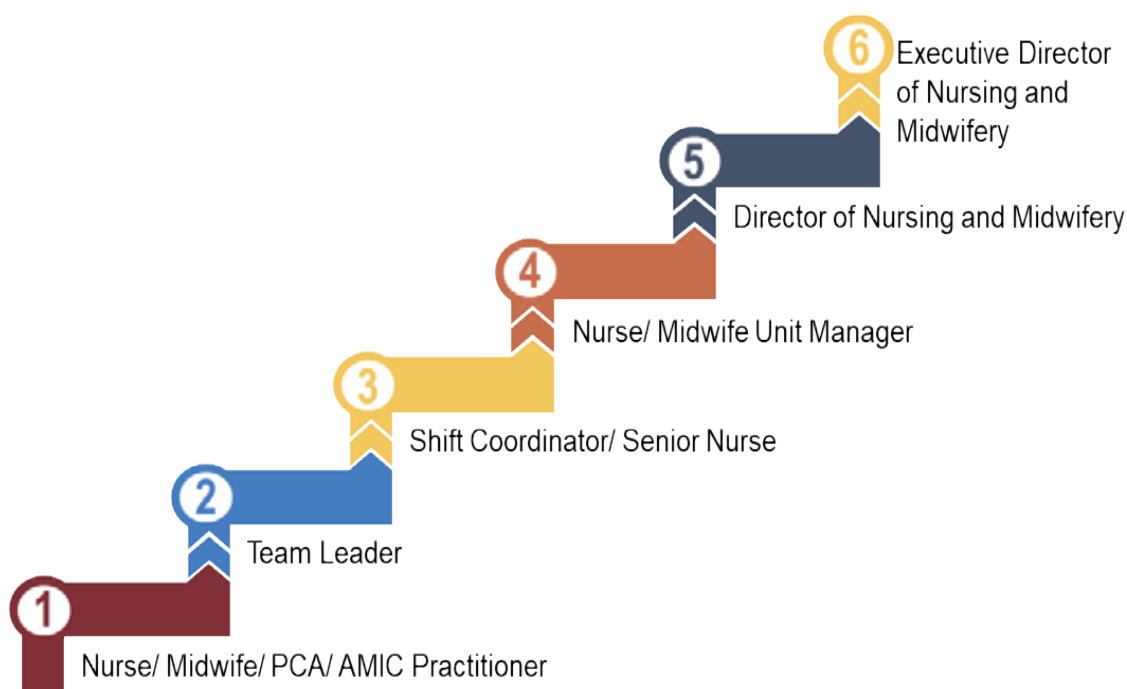
## 10. CLINICAL GOVERNANCE AND RAISING CLINICAL ISSUES

**The FUNLHN supports and encourages all staff (clinical and non clinical) to raise clinical concerns and or potential risks to patient safety.**

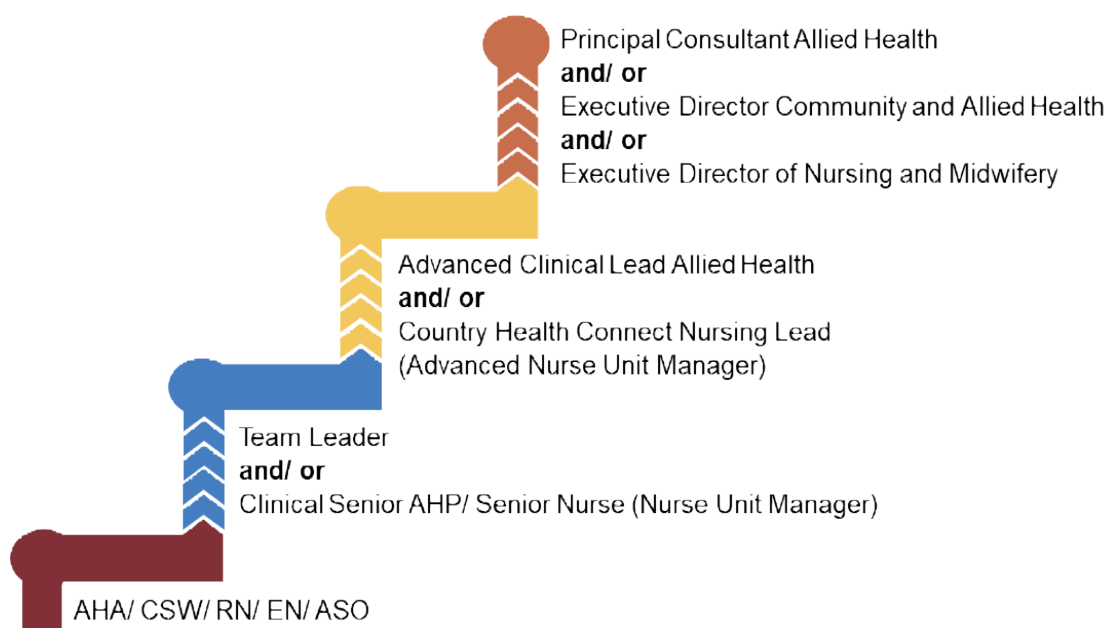
The normal pathway of escalation for clinical matters varies somewhat between clinical disciplines and departments.

The usual escalation pathways are highlighted below. We also strongly encourage interdisciplinary communication pathways and escalation.

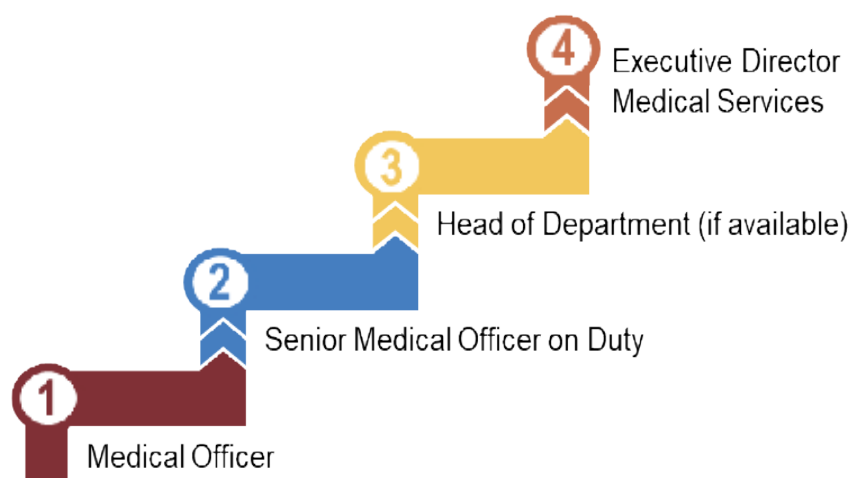
### Nursing and Midwifery / Residential Aged Care Services/ Aboriginal Family Birthing Programs



## Country Health Connect - Allied Health Professionals /Allied Health Assistants / Community Nursing and Aged Care / NDIS Services



## Medical Services





**There may be times when clinical staff feel that their concerns are not adequately addressed. In this instance clinicians are encouraged to escalate directly to the next level of management:**

- Non urgent escalation can occur in person or via email or written letter. Issues conveyed in writing should be responded to in a timely manner in writing by the person to which the escalation was directed.
- The Safety Learning System (SLS) can be used to log a patient or staff incident or near miss incident. Providing your details as part of the incident report ensures that you receive feedback from the assigned Incident Manager.
- Urgent issues with the potential to impact patient safety should be raised immediately with your line manager, professional line manager and site / service director.
- Where the response is inadequate or not received in a reasonable timeframe, the clinician can escalate the issue to the relevant Executive Director. Issues should be responded to in a timely manner by the Executive Director.

### **Formal Clinical Governance steps**

- If the response from operational management is not received in a reasonable timeframe or is inadequate, then the clinician can escalate the issue in writing or in person to the Chair of the Operational Clinical Governance Committee and or the CEO who reports to the board.
- If the response from the Chair of the Operational Clinical Governance Committee or the CEO is not received in a reasonable timeframe or is inadequate, then the clinician can escalate the issue in writing to the Chair of the Board Clinical Governance Committee. External steps
- If all channels have been exhausted, the clinician can make a disclosure about a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety through the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018. If the concern is related to a specific registered Health Professional a complaint can be lodged directly with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).








## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Flinders and Upper North Local Health Network  
71 Hospital Road  
Port Augusta SA 5700  
Telephone: (08) 8668 7500

[sahealth.sa.gov.au/flindersanduppernorthlhn](http://sahealth.sa.gov.au/flindersanduppernorthlhn)

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