



Clinician Engagement Strategy

2019-22



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Acknowledgement

Northern Adelaide Local Health Networkrlu tampinthe Kurna miyurna yaitya yarta-mathanya Kurna yartarna-arra ngadlu warpulayinthe. Ngadlu tampinthe purkarna pukinangku, yalaka, tarrkarritya. Ngadlu tampinthe yaitya mathanya kuma parnaku tuwila yartangka.

The Northern Adelaide Local Health Network acknowledges the Kurna people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we proudly deliver health and wellbeing services. We honour Kurna Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise Aboriginal cultural authority, and the ongoing spiritual connection the Kurna people have to country.

Terminology

Throughout this document we use the term Aboriginal to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.



Message from the Governing Board Chair

Our aim is to ensure a meaningful and sustainable approach to clinician engagement is firmly embedded in everything we do



I am pleased to present the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NALHN) Clinician Engagement Strategy 2019-22 which aims to ensure a meaningful and sustainable approach to clinician engagement is firmly embedded in everything we do.

The development of a NALHN Clinician Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) has been a priority for the NALHN Governing Board (the Board) since its inception. A legislative requirement following the introduction of the Health Care (Governance) Amendment Bill 2019, the Strategy also serves to demonstrate our desire to see NALHN's clinicians excel and our dedication to ensuring consumers receive safe, high quality health care.

We also acknowledge the importance of engagement with non-clinical staff, their role in partnering with and supporting clinicians in the work of our health services, and their contribution to ensuring NALHN provides high quality and safe health services to the community. While the principles in this Strategy are applicable to all staff groups, the development of a NALHN Staff Engagement Strategy is underway and will expound on issues of relevance to all NALHN staff.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank everyone who provided feedback, shared their ideas and experience, and in so doing shaped and enhanced the Strategy. We very much look forward to seeing the benefits of its implementation.

Ray Blight
Governing Board Chair
Northern Adelaide Local Health Network



Message from the Chief Executive Officer



We will ensure effective clinician engagement consistently underpins the design and delivery of our health service

The Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NALHN) Clinician Engagement Strategy 2019-22 (the Strategy) provides clear direction for how we will ensure effective clinician engagement consistently underpins the design and delivery of our health service. It has been informed by a broad range of NALHN's clinicians who have generously and enthusiastically contributed their views and expertise.



Consultation during the development of the Strategy has revealed a strong interest among clinicians in being involved in and contributing to service improvement activities, driven by their desire to ensure consumers receive the best possible care in NALHN. This is extremely encouraging because we know that effective clinician engagement is central to higher staff morale and better, safer health services.

Clinicians also told us that we haven't always engaged with them effectively and there are a number of areas where we must improve. The Strategy provides us with a roadmap for how this will be achieved; ensuring we partner more effectively with NALHN's clinicians in all of our future organisational activities.

I am proud of the exceptional care NALHN's clinicians provide to our community and trust that this document faithfully represents their voice.

Maree Geraghty
Chief Executive Officer
Northern Adelaide Local Health Network





Executive Summary

NALHN is committed to building a stronger relationship with clinicians by promoting greater openness, transparency and involvement

Our services are at the heart of our local community and our exceptional people deliver excellent and responsive care.

The Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NALHN) Clinician Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) has been designed and developed with clinicians across NALHN and provides clear direction for engaging with our clinicians going forward.

NALHN is committed to building a stronger relationship with clinicians by promoting greater openness, transparency and involvement through appropriate, progressive and sustainable approaches.

The Strategy aligns with the NALHN Strategic Plan and, in particular, the Strategic Imperatives that will guide our organisation in leading positive change where our services are at the heart of our local community and our exceptional people deliver excellent and responsive care.



Introduction



The northern area of Adelaide has the highest population growth in South Australia

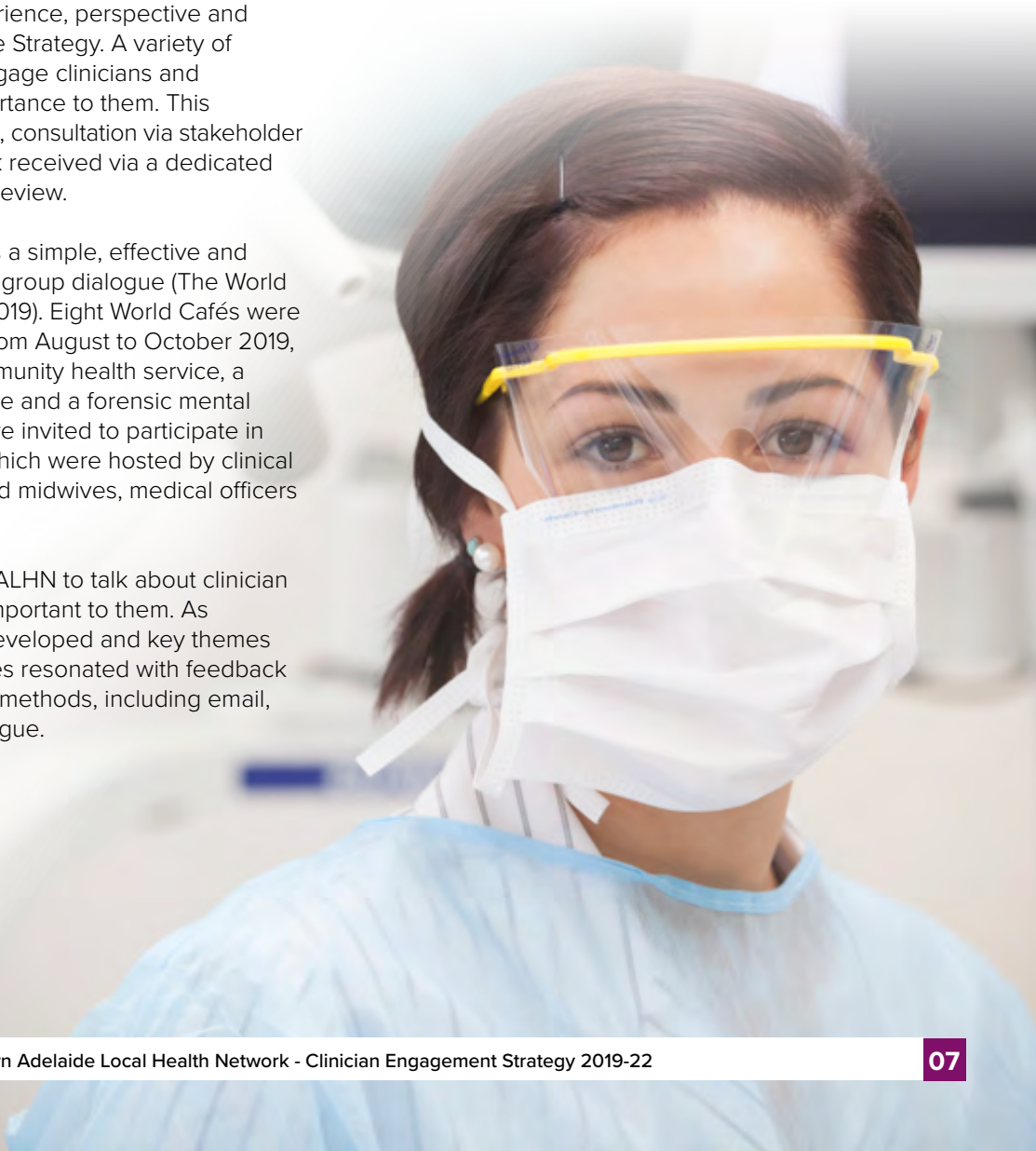
NALHN provides a range of health care services to a population of more than 400,000 people living primarily in Adelaide's north and north eastern suburbs, which is the fastest growing region in South Australia (Government of South Australia, 2019). It consists of the Lyell McEwin and Modbury Hospitals, together with a number of primary health, Aboriginal health and mental health care services.

NALHN employs more than 4,000 clinicians who have the benefit of specialised knowledge and a unique vantage point. It was therefore vital to ensure as many clinicians as possible contributed their experience, perspective and ideas to the development of the Strategy. A variety of methodologies was used to engage clinicians and identify the key matters of importance to them. This involved a series of World Cafés, consultation via stakeholder interviews, analysis of feedback received via a dedicated email address, and a literature review.

The World Café methodology is a simple, effective and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue (The World Café Community Foundation, 2019). Eight World Cafés were held across five NALHN sites from August to October 2019, including both hospitals, a community health service, a community mental health service and a forensic mental health service. All clinicians were invited to participate in one or more of these events, which were hosted by clinical leaders representing nurses and midwives, medical officers and allied health clinicians.

Clinicians united from across NALHN to talk about clinician engagement and the matters important to them. As conversations grew, patterns developed and key themes began to emerge. These themes resonated with feedback received via other consultation methods, including email, stakeholder interview and dialogue.

The conclusions and recommendations in this Strategy are based on feedback received during the consultation process and material that was collected and analysed, including best practice in different jurisdictions.





Definitions

The Strategy uses the Department for Health and Wellbeing definitions for clinician and clinician engagement

The Strategy uses the Department for Health and Wellbeing definitions for clinician and clinician engagement that were developed following a series of workshops held across SA Health in 2018.

A clinician is any SA Health staff who participates in providing clinical care to patients. This includes all clinical professions and other clinically trained staff not involved in direct patient contact. It includes staff at all levels or stages of their career.

Clinician Engagement is an imaginative, transparent and collaborative process that utilises an agreed framework and creative communication mechanisms to interact formally and informally with clinicians at every speciality and level within the system. Effective clinician engagement is necessary to determine strategic directions and goals, to design, implement, monitor and evaluate health system improvements and to enhance health outcomes.

Aims and Objectives

The Strategy outlines how NALHN will proactively engage with clinicians in any decision that will impact them and in the design, delivery and constant improvement of our health services



Our aim is to ensure a meaningful and sustainable approach to clinician engagement is firmly embedded in everything we do. This will enable us to:

> Ensure that clinicians flourish

Clinicians' work needs to be sufficiently rewarding to support them in maintaining a state of wellbeing (Jorm, 2016) and a sense of empowerment and belonging. NALHN is committed to proactively engage its clinicians and believes a supported, empowered and engaged workforce through a jointly developed Strategy will result in sustained improvement in the safety and quality of health care and consumers' experience of that care.

> Gain clinician participation in service improvement activities

There is considerable evidence to indicate where clinicians are more engaged in strategic planning and decision-making, health services perform better. Clinician engagement leads to better informed and more effective health service policy, and stronger support for policy implementation. From planning through to evaluation, clinician involvement ensures ideas are turned into something workable, relevant and effective, bringing improved outcomes for health services and consumers.

Strategic Context



Local Health Network governing boards are required to develop and publish a clinician engagement strategy

The Health Care (Governance) Amendment Bill 2019 introduced amendments to the *Health Care Act 2008*, requiring Local Health Network governing boards to develop and publish a clinician engagement strategy to promote Local Health Network (the Network) consultation with health professionals working in the Network.

The legislation requires the NALHN Governing Board (the Board) to consult with health professionals working in the Network in developing the clinician engagement strategy and to publish it in a way that allows the strategy to be accessed by members of the public. Importantly, the Board and the Network must give effect to the strategies developed and published in the clinician engagement strategy. Through achieving its objectives, the Strategy will support NALHN's implementation of the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2017), which aim to protect the public from harm and to improve the quality of health service provision.

NALHN has commenced a consultative process to inform a new Strategic Plan for 2020-25, with a vision to ensure the community who access our services have the best possible health and wellbeing throughout their life. The Board and executive team have identified six Strategic Imperatives, which are central to building on our achievements and underpin the Strategic Plan: Inclusive Culture, Service Design, Digitally Smart, Sustainability, Exceptional People and Partnering. The Strategy aligns with and complements NALHN's Strategic Imperatives.

The Strategy, which will form part of an overall staff engagement strategy, aligns with the South Australian Public Sector Values and Behaviours Framework (Government of South Australia, 2015). In particular the values of trust, respect, collaboration and engagement, and honesty and integrity resonate with the clear and consistent feedback NALHN clinicians provided throughout the consultation process.

The Strategy has been developed alongside and aligns with the NALHN Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy, with both Strategies utilising the Government of South Australia's six Better Together Principles of Engagement (2018) and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum (International Federation, 2014).

The Strategy synergises with the NALHN Aboriginal Workforce Action Plan 2019-22, which highlights the importance of recognising and reinforcing the unique knowledge and skills that Aboriginal people bring to the workplace. Effective clinician engagement will support NALHN to achieve its aim of being the employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in northern Adelaide.

Hospitals and health services in NALHN are best placed to meet increasing demand for services in partnership with primary healthcare providers. The Home Hospital pilot program and the new Priority Care Centres (SA Health, 2019) have contributed to more consumers receiving their treatment outside of NALHN's hospital emergency departments. They are evidence of NALHN's commitment to the effective coordination and integration of services between hospital and primary healthcare providers, which will be enhanced through implementation of this Strategy.



Clinicians Employed in NALHN

NALHN is committed to attracting, retaining and developing our Aboriginal workforce

NALHN employs over 4,000 clinical staff, comprised of approximately 68 per cent nurses and midwives, 19 per cent medical officers and 13 per cent allied health clinicians, including Aboriginal Health Practitioners.

Of our 4,000 clinicians approximately 47 per cent of clinicians are employed part time, 37 per cent full time and 16 per cent on a casual basis. These numbers are significant when we consider the issue of clinician engagement because we know the challenges clinicians face in keeping up to date with organisational policies and finding sufficient time to attend forums, workshops and other professional activities. These challenges are multiplied for part time and casual clinicians who often work across several sites and organisations, which may result in them being subject to numerous and sometimes conflicting policies and organisational expectations.

NALHN is committed to attracting, retaining and developing our Aboriginal workforce. Our support for the emerging clinical role and recently registered profession of Aboriginal Health Practitioner is instrumental to ensuring we realise our goal of increasing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment participation rate, enabling NALHN to play a more effective role in reducing the disparity in health outcomes for Aboriginal people in our community.



Clinician Feedback



A supportive and innovative culture can be further enhanced when NALHN leaders at all levels and expertise work together

The consultation conducted for this Strategy revealed strong interest among clinicians to contribute their expertise to service improvement initiatives, driven by their commitment to consumer centred care. They told us they want to be consulted early in the process when the decision affects them and their consumer group.

Clinicians at all levels, including those at the 'ground level', asked to be included and involved in decision-making. They want to be respected and valued for their contribution and to feel a sense of achievement for work well done.

When discussing the barriers to effective engagement, clinicians consistently referred to the difficulties they experienced in accessing relevant information from NALHN's intranet and the many, sometimes irrelevant emails they receive. Many clinicians reported not having easy access to email, or not having sufficient time to read all of the emails they receive and attend the professional activities available to them. They spoke about 'email fatigue' and reminded us that there are other ways to communicate. There was significant support for NALHN to explore the use of alternative technologies, including Apps, podcasts and videos, as ways of keeping clinicians informed.

Clinicians need time to give their feedback and be involved in service improvement activities. If we want them to contribute their expertise, clinicians told us more consideration should be given to how this can be achieved alongside their clinical responsibilities, particularly for shift and part time workers.

A psychologically safe environment was identified as a critical requirement in promoting a workplace where clinicians feel empowered and valued. Some clinicians spoke to us about occasions where their ideas and suggestions were not given serious consideration or were blocked, leading to feelings of frustration and discouragement. Clinicians shared some disappointment that there is no influential clinical body within NALHN where they can go to share views and seek support.

Clinicians want leaders to come to them without already having the answers, to listen and encourage contributions from everyone, ensuring the quieter voices are heard. In an environment of trust and rapport, clinicians feel more comfortable in sharing their opinions, opportunities for improvement, potential risks and generally contributing more broadly to conversations. They value a work environment where differences are respected, diversity welcomed and employees are encouraged to trial new ideas and talk openly.

Clinicians told us they want to collaborate more with their colleagues, celebrate each other's successes and learn from what others are doing well. Silos can be created when departments don't freely share knowledge and information. Effective communication is instrumental to breaking down these barriers and creating community.

Clinicians were also keen for executive and leadership staff to visit them in their areas of work to provide more opportunities for informal conversation where executive staff could learn more about clinicians' roles, the things they are interested in and what their concerns are.

Clinicians appreciated the opportunity to be involved and engaged in the development of the Strategy and felt the World Café methodology provided an excellent opportunity to engage with and learn from each other. Through the development and implementation of this strategy, NALHN is committed to overcoming the challenges associated with effective clinician engagement. Clinicians also identified that they have a responsibility to be proactive and get involved when their feedback and input is sought.

A supportive and innovative culture can be further enhanced when NALHN leaders at all levels and expertise work together. For the objectives in this Strategy to be realised, all NALHN leaders and clinicians must be proactive and work in collaboration.



Adoption of Clinician Engagement Principles

Engagement with clinicians can occur through a variety of methods, including surveys, information forums and working groups

Regardless of what method of engagement is selected, careful consideration must first be given to how it will be done to ensure an effective process and beneficial outcomes for both clinicians and health services.

The Government of South Australia's six Better Together Principles of Engagement (2018) provide a reference for best practice stakeholder engagement. The principles, as they will be applied to NALHN clinician engagement activities, are described below.

We know why we are engaging

We are clear about what clinicians are being asked to consider and the extent to which they can influence the decision or outcome to avoid raising unrealistic expectations. We clearly articulate time frames, processes and how decisions will be communicated.

We know who to engage

We identify stakeholders using a transparent process to ensure we promote trust in the engagement process. We ensure that clinicians at all levels have opportunities to contribute their opinions and expertise.

We know the history

We determine what we already know and research background information. Where possible, we build on previous engagement activities and identify opportunities to coordinate current engagement activities. If a new process is required, we explain why.

We start together

Meaningful engagement takes time and continued effort. We start together to build a sense of ownership and to save time and resources down the track. Clinician engagement takes place before any decision is made.

We are genuine

We are honest about our intent, and clear about our purpose and level of engagement. Our commitment to considered communication and engagement is reflected within our plans and actions. We listen to understand. We close the feedback loop and let clinicians know how they contributed to and influenced outcomes to show their voice has been heard.

We are relevant and engaging

We put our clinicians at the centre of the engagement process and make it relevant, accessible and interesting. We are creative, innovative and responsive in the various ways we engage.



Levels of Engagement

Inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower



NALHN supports the use of the globally recognised IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum to assist with selecting the appropriate level of clinician engagement for any particular activity. Each level of engagement is valid and will be appropriate for specific purposes or for use at different stages of the engagement process. For example, when reviewing a clinical procedure it is appropriate for clinicians who have expertise in the clinical area to be consulted, collaborate on the review and directly contribute to the final outcome, while clinicians whose daily work will be minimally impacted by the change may only need to be informed of the outcome.

The IAP2 levels of participation are described in the table below as they relate to clinician engagement and summarise the increasing level of influence clinicians have on the decision or outcome at each level of the spectrum.

Increasing Level of Clinician Influence				
Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
To provide clinicians with information about something that is going to happen or has happened to assist them to understand issues, alternatives and solutions.	To have a two way communication process aimed at obtaining clinician feedback to inform decision-making.	To facilitate active participation by clinicians aimed at helping identify issues and views from a range of perspectives.	To work together in partnership as alternatives and preferred options are identified to support decision-making.	To provide clinicians with opportunities and resources to directly contribute to determining the final outcome.

NALHN is committed to respecting clinicians' time. Clinicians told us when selecting the appropriate level of engagement for any given activity, consideration should be given to:

- > the Clinician Engagement Principles in this Strategy
- > the degree of potential impact the outcome will have on clinicians and consumers, with greater levels of impact requiring greater levels of clinician influence
- > any issues of confidentiality or urgency
- > the strongly expressed desire of NALHN's clinicians to be involved in and contribute to service improvement activities and other NALHN initiatives relevant to their area of work.

Our approach to improving clinician engagement in the design, delivery and improvement of our health services will require a strong commitment to our Clinician Engagement Principles and to targeting our techniques appropriately to the level of engagement required. NALHN's commitment at each level of clinician engagement is outlined below.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Clinicians will be provided with clear, timely and relevant information.	Clinicians' views will be encouraged, listened to and considered when decisions are being made.	Clinicians' opinions will be reflected in the alternatives developed and they will be provided with feedback about how their input influenced decisions.	Clinicians' advice will be sought and NALHN will partner with clinicians to improve services.	Clinicians will determine decisions that need to be made and lead solutions.



Clinician Engagement Techniques

Consideration should be given to selecting the right technique to ensure a successful engagement process

Once the appropriate level of engagement is determined, our clinicians told us that consideration should be given to selecting the right technique to ensure a successful engagement process. When selecting the clinician engagement technique for any given activity, consideration should be given to:

- > the Clinician Engagement Principles in this Strategy
- > the objectives to be achieved
- > what techniques are most suited to the level of engagement already selected
- > what resources are available to implement the technique
- > the potential impact on service provision and how this could be minimised.

Examples of techniques relevant to each level of engagement are provided in the table below:

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular written communications e.g. newsletters • Intranet • Ward / team meetings • Regular NALHN wide meetings • CEO Open Forums • Apps • Podcasts • Videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Surveys • Workshops / World Cafes / discussion forums • Web-based consultations • Ward / team meetings • Blogs • Email feedback • One-on-one interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Surveys • Workshops / World Cafes • Advisory committees • Clinician reference groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Advisory committees • Working groups • Deliberative retreats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegation • Clinician led policy development • Clinician led working groups • Representation on state-wide networks / projects / clinician groups



Continuous Improvement

The Strategy is intended to be a dynamic and living document



The Strategy has been developed through consultation with clinicians and health care staff working within NALHN and across the NALHN catchment area. NALHN will continue to explore ways of engaging with clinicians and ensuring we provide opportunities so staff can have their say on matters of importance to them and consumers. In particular, we are committed to exploring and maximising the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate collaboration and communication with clinicians, and to support clinicians in delivering quality and safe healthcare.

NALHN will support the development of a clinical representative group to be established in early 2020. We will regularly review our clinician engagement activities and methods in partnership with this group to identify areas for improvement. Our approach to evaluation will ensure that we are listening to clinicians and can adjust our path as required to continually improve.

The Strategy is intended to be a dynamic and living document. It will be reviewed and updated in 2022 and at regular periods thereafter, to reflect the evolving needs of NALHN's clinicians, technological advances, and new issues and solutions as they develop over time. Future reviews will be informed by clinician feedback received through targeted consultation processes.

Feedback on this Strategy and its implementation is welcome at any time. Feedback can be emailed to **HealthNALHNClinicianEngagement@sa.gov.au**.





Reporting and Evaluation

Regular monitoring and evaluation of clinician engagement is essential to improving NALHN services and maximising benefits for our clinicians and consumers

NALHN is committed to evidence-based practice and will measure clinician engagement by a range of methods appropriate for specific situations. This will include conducting small, focused evaluations for selected individual projects and programs, and electronic surveys when targeting larger audiences or canvassing multiple issues.

NALHN conducts regular Staff Surveys which measure levels of clinician engagement as a subset of the broader employee group. The Staff Survey allows NALHN staff to provide their views on key areas including leadership, teamwork, culture and general issues that affect job satisfaction. NALHN will formally report on clinician engagement in annual progress reports to the newly established clinical group, the Board and in the NALHN Annual Report.



NALHN's Commitment

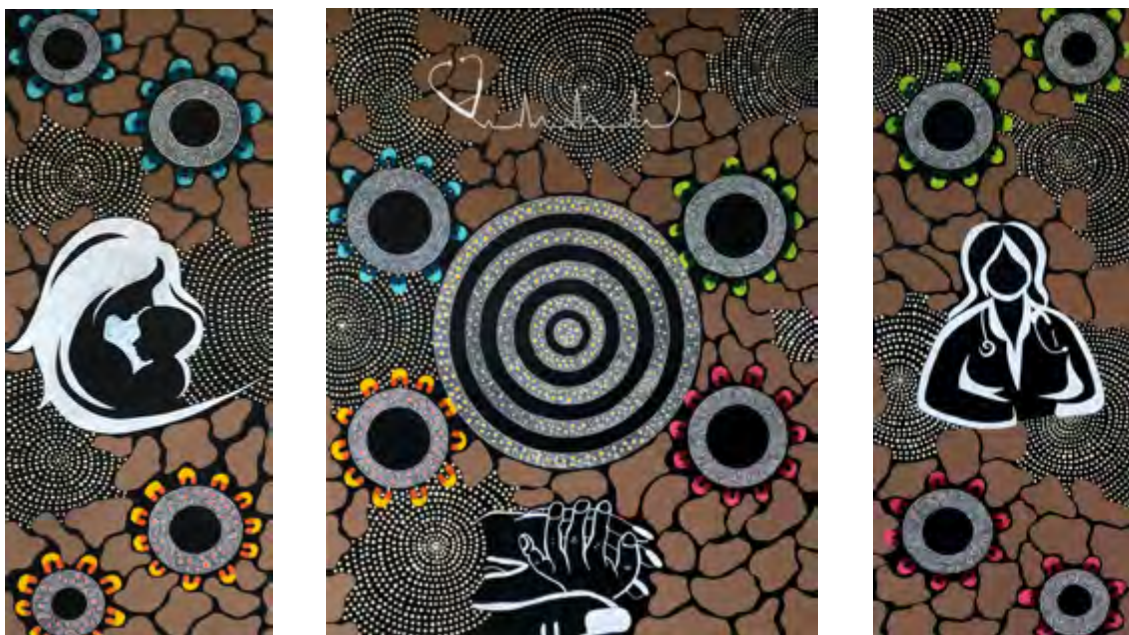
We asked, we listened, we heard and we care



NALHN has listened to our clinicians and will strive for a culturally conscious, psychologically safe workplace that empowers individuals and breaks down silos. At all stages we will acknowledge and recognise the unique contribution our clinicians make and endeavour to engage clinicians in a respectful, appropriate and timely way that takes everyone on the journey.

The Clinician Engagement Principles will be used whenever clinician engagement is required. NALHN also wants to promote opportunities for clinicians to share their ideas so we can create a truly innovative and agile workplace that is continuously learning and improving.

To achieve this, NALHN will support clinicians to design and create a clinical group that can represent clinicians across NALHN and provide opportunities for all clinicians to meaningfully engage.



This piece was created by Ngarrindjeri and Kurna artist Samantha Gollan for NALHN to celebrate the 2018 NAIDOC Week theme, 'Because of her, we can' and has a focus on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

As an artist for most of her life, Sam has artwork all over the world. She was born at the Lyell McEwin Hospital and has been the NALHN artist for a number of years now. Sam has an art page called Meiwi Aboriginal Art on Facebook.

NALHN will:

- > support clinicians to design and develop a clinical group to represent clinicians
- > consistently apply the Clinician Engagement Principles
- > regularly check with clinicians about how we are achieving our commitment to engage in a respectful, appropriate and timely way.

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Health
Northern Adelaide
Local Health Network