

WHGNE Board Handbook

2024-2025

**WOMEN'S
HEALTH**
Goulburn North East



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Welcome to the Board of Women's Health Goulburn North East. Thank you for volunteering your time to work with us to lead change towards gender equality to improve women's health, wellbeing and safety in rural and regional Victoria.

Acknowledgements

We are intersectional in our approach and are proud to stand beside generations of great women whose work has brought us closer to equality for all.

We acknowledge the wisdom, living culture and connection of the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands on which we work, and acknowledge the profound disruption of colonisation and the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We respect Aboriginal rights to self-determination, and take seriously our responsibility to ensure our work, policies and collaborations all enable and strengthen these rights.

We believe in shared and just cultural transformation that embraces diversity, and these acknowledgements are part of the ethical principles that guide our work and conduct.

We're listening to your feedback on our work – [please let us know how we're doing.](#)



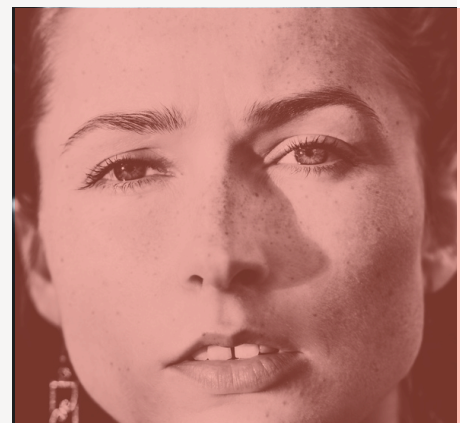
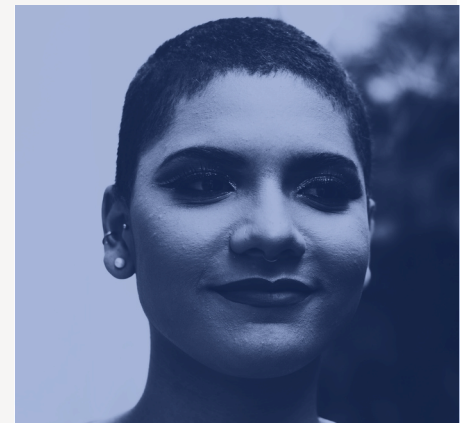
Overview

This document is designed to support new Board members in understanding their responsibilities and ensuring that the Board's process reflects good governance and operates in line with the organisation's incorporated association status.

The WHGNE Board is a small group of dedicated volunteers who provide both strategic direction and a governance function for the organisation. The executive committee of the Board are the 'office bearers' for the organisation, Board members who have been elected to take on certain responsibilities and help to steer the Board direction.

In this paper we'll look at:

- A brief introduction to WHGNE
- Key documents and information
- WHGNE vision, purpose, values and aspirations
- WHGNE Board
 - Current Board members
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Now that you're a Board member
 - Committees and Office Bearers
 - Leaving the Board



Women's Health Goulburn North East

You can read more about WHGNE on our website, but here's a brief overview of our work.

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) is a proudly feminist organisation, supporting the creation of equal, just and resilient communities that lead change towards women's empowerment, women's health, the prevention of violence against women and ultimately, gender equality, in rural and regional Victoria.

Our work addresses the harms of binary gender norms and practices to achieve long-term gender equality. We apply a gendered lens to the factors and environments that shape women's health and wellbeing in rural and regional Victoria. Our expertise is in women's economic empowerment, gender justice and climate change, gender equity, the prevention of violence against women and sexual and reproductive health.

Our experienced staff are local leaders in the field of gender equity and shared learning. We make our expertise accessible to our communities through highly regarded research, resources, and toolkits. We are alert to the political environment, and work to uphold and advance women's rights by influencing policy and planning. We work alongside women to listen to and amplify their experiences of health to raise awareness, change attitudes, and influence system responses.

We also work with community groups, organisations, and workplaces to develop and deliver practical tools, facilitate conversations/coaching, consultations, tailored training and workshops.

Familiarise yourself with the organisation, have a look through our website and if you have any questions, please contact us via phone or email. You'll find some links to key relevant resources on the next page.

Key documents and Information

- Meet our Board and staff team
- Read our 2021-25 Strategic Plan
- The WHGNE Rules for an Incorporated Association
- Review our Annual/Financial Reports to date
- Have a look at our legal standing
- Here's an overview of our services
- And if you're up for some in-depth research, you can dive into our resources
- Our policies. These are available for your review via the Board Portal, see below for how to access these.



Vision, purpose, aspirations and values

A summary of the guiding principles of the organisation.

Our vision

Rural and regional women of all ages have optimal health and well-being.

Our purpose

We are a feminist organisation leading change towards gender equality to improve women's health, wellbeing and safety in rural and regional Victoria.

Our aspirations

We achieve our vision by working towards a world that centres:

- Care
- Anti-oppression (anti-oppression leads us to achieve equity and inclusion)
- Collective Liberation
- Agency
- Solidarity

Our values

Our values are the cornerstone of our practice, guiding us to work in ways consistent with our vision and aspirations.

- Practice self-awareness and uncover and address our biases.
- Create a safe environment for authenticity, listening and continual learning.
- Listen with generosity and approach others with curiosity and a desire to understand.
- Be courageous and authentic in our work and interactions.
- Bring playfulness and creativity to work.
- Practice respectful collaboration, recognise achievements, and create space and opportunities for others to lead.
- Acknowledge individual privilege, remain accountable, and practice gratitude.

How we remain accountable as a Board

Reflect on values collectively in our Board meetings, as well as in formal reflective practice.

- Encourage personal and Board-wide critical reflection.
- Respectfully challenge behaviours that don't reflect our values.
- Reflect on our values and feminist approach in board and staff recruitment.
- Showcase values and feminist approaches and leadership in strategic planning.

WHGNE Board

Current Board Members



Trish Curtis
Chair



Bek Nash-Webster
Deputy Chair



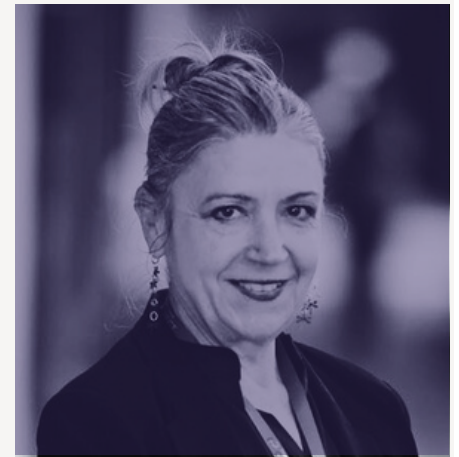
Donna Marcus
Treasurer



Katherine Allsop
Board Member



Jaqueline Eckert
Board Member



Chris McInnes
Board Member

Board Role

And Responsibilities

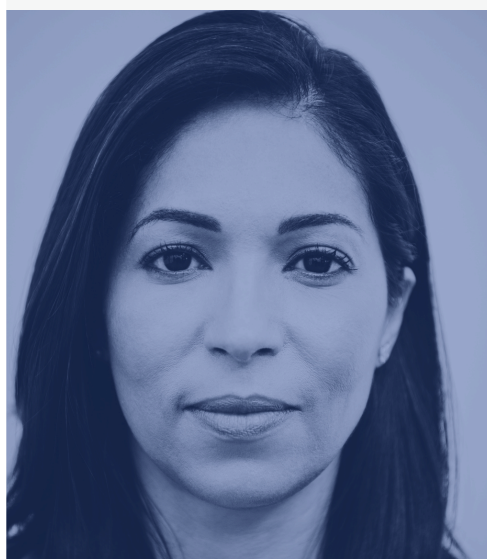
Role of the Board

The role of the WHGNE Board is to oversee and monitor:

- The overall performance of the organisation - ensuring the organisation develops and implements strategies and supporting policies in line with the constitution.
- The overall compliance performance - ensuring the organisation implements systems that comply with its legal, regulatory, and financial obligations and policies, and ensure that the organisation's assets are protected through appropriate risk management.

The WHGNE Board also has the responsibilities of:

- Driving the strategic direction of the organisation.
- Working with the CEO to ensure the organisation obtains the resources, funds, and personnel necessary to implement the organisation's strategic objectives.
- Implementing, maintaining, and refining a system of good governance
- Reviewing reports and monitoring the performance of the organisation.
- Regularly reviewing the board's structure and composition.
- Appointing and managing the performance of a suitable CEO.
- Succession planning for the CEO and Board.



Board Role

And Responsibilities cont.

Responsibilities

The Board meets monthly via an online platform. In-person attendance is only required on an ad hoc basis for special purposes. Papers are available prior to the meeting via our online secure Board portal. It is expected that members:

- Have read the papers prior to the meeting.
- Are well prepared to discuss items, ask questions and contribute to decision making as required.

Based on the monthly board meeting, members may be allocated additional tasks or be asked to participate in working/focus groups.

If the member holds an executive position, they will be required to attend 4-6 Executive Meetings per annum. In addition, the Treasurer must attend 4-6 Finance and Risk Meetings per annum. Some additional responsibilities also come with these roles.

Our Annual General Meeting is held in September each year, this is an important event on the WHGNE calendar and celebration of the year's events. As such, Board members are required to attend.

Every four years the organisation reviews the overall strategic plan. Board members play a key role in this process and are required to attend strategy days and planning sessions.

Social events, seminars and collaborations with other Women's Health Groups are held throughout the year and while not compulsory, Board members are encouraged to attend.

Now that you're a Board member

Access to Information

We'll provide you with access to our online Board portal (OurCatHerder.com) and our induction pack. There you'll be able to review previous Board papers and have access to our full set of Board policies and procedures and recommended reading.

Your Buddy

You'll also be assigned a 'buddy' on the Board who will help you with any questions you might have. You might have what you think are 'silly' questions – well first off there aren't any silly questions – and your buddy is your first point of contact.

Meeting the Staff

The CEO attends all of the Board meetings and tables a comprehensive report each month. If you'd like to though, you'll also have the opportunity to meet with the CEO to ask questions and to find out about current work being undertaken. The agenda includes the opportunity for staff to attend Board meetings and brief the members on current projects. This gives the Board and staff an opportunity to meet each other and get an understanding of each other's roles.

Attendance at Meetings

Board meetings are held online, on the fourth Monday of every month, except for September (when the Annual General Meeting is held) and December, when we have a break.

Board papers will be issued a week prior to the meeting giving you plenty of time to review them. Meetings are recorded for minute-taking purposes and if you have any actions assigned to you, you'll be emailed these soon after the meeting so you have a record of them.

For a Board meeting to be official, we need a quorum (minimum) of elected Board members attending. The CEO isn't an elected member, so doesn't count towards the quorum. The quorum for a board meeting is the presence of a majority (50% + 1) of the board members holding office (Item 63(2) of the Rules).

Missing a Meeting/s

If you're not able to be at an upcoming Board meeting, then as soon as you're aware, let the Chair know.

You're also able to take a formal leave of absence if your circumstances change and you're not able to attend the Board meetings for a period of time. Leave can be granted for up to three months, but no longer (Item 67(1) of the Rules).

Committees and Office bearers

What do the committees of the Board do?

A committee of the Board meets outside of the regular Board meetings and is focused on a particular area of the governance of the organisation. The committees consider these areas in-depth and will often make recommendations to the full Board. Currently (2021), the WHGNE Board has two committees:

- Finance and Risk

The Finance and Risk Committee is made up of the Treasurer, the Chair of the Board and one Board member. The CEO and the Finance Officer also attend these committee meetings.

- Executive

The Executive Committee is made up of all the office-bearers, the Chair, Deputy Chair, Treasurer and Secretary of the Board and the CEO attends as well.

There are terms of reference for both committees that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each. While you do need to be an elected office-bearer to be part of the Executive Committee, Board members are welcome to nominate for inclusion on the Finance and Risk Committee. You do not need to have a finance or risk background to join this committee – just be ready to participate, to learn where necessary and to ask questions.

What do the office bearers do?

- Chairperson and Deputy-Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Board is the person that steers the Board and the organisation. They hold the vision and mission of the organisation and work closely with the CEO to support the achievement of the Strategic Plan.

- Board Secretary

The Board Secretary supports the Board to ensure that Board meetings run smoothly. This includes preparing and distributing of Board papers, as well as any other tasks laid out in the Board's Policy and Procedure Manual.

Committees and Office bearers

- Treasurer

The Treasurer oversees the financial management of the organisation. They chair the Finance and Risk Committee, and they liaise with the CEO and Finance Manager to keep track of the organisation's financial progress. They also provide governance around risk-management and oversight in the organisation –ensuring that risks are identified and mitigated early and also inform decision making.

The Treasurer also ensures that the financial records are kept in accordance with the Incorporated Associations Act; and oversees the preparation of the financial statements and their certification by the Board prior to presentation at the annual general meeting (AGM).

The election of office bearers

The aim of the process for electing office-bearers - "the Executive" - is to ensure the most suitable Board members are in executive roles. This is achieved through clear policy and open communication amongst Board members. Further, this election process aims to support succession planning, through providing appropriate shadowing opportunities for interested Board members.

Self nomination

Each year at the August Board meeting, the Board will hold discussions around which members would like to nominate for an executive/office bearer position. In this discussion, Board members can self-nominate for a position. To assess suitability and dedication to the role, nominating board members must:

- Detail their interest in the position.
- Discuss their relevant skills and attributes.

If Board members have any concerns regarding the candidate moving into the nominated executive position, this can be openly discussed and resolved in this meeting.

Nomination by referral

If there are no self-nominations for a particular position, board members can nominate another member they believe has the necessary skills and attributes for a role. This can then be openly discussed, with the nominated board member having the opportunity to accept or decline the nomination. As with self-nomination, there should be open communication amongst board members with regards to suitability of nominated candidates.

Committees and Office bearers

Shadow nominations

If a member is seeking recruitment into the Executive but does not feel they have the necessary skills or experience, they can apply for a shadow role. This will allow the member to grow their skills with a view to nominating for that role in the future.

Short list

At the conclusion of the August Board meeting, a short list of candidates will be collated and circulated to the board.

Confirmation at the AGM

Because WHGNE is a member organisation, all Board members are 'casual' until they've been confirmed in their roles at the Special Meeting, held after the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of members in September each year.

The process is quite straightforward – here's how it works:

- If there are more vacancies than nominations for those roles, then the candidates; nominated are deemed to be elected! Further nominations may be received at the annual general meeting for the remaining positions.
- If the number of nominations received is equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, the candidates nominated are deemed to be elected; and
- Finally, if the number of nominations received exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, then we hold a ballot.

Reappointment to the Board

So, you've served your first two years, and you'd like to continue for another two. At the July meeting of the Board, you'll be asked if you'd like to continue on the Board – if so, that needs to be declared at the Board meeting.

Leaving the Board

There are several ways to leave the Board, and item 56 of the Rules outlines these.

These include:

- A board member may decide to finish up with the Board prior to their term of office coming to an end. To do this, they can resign from the Board by giving written notice addressed to the Board.
- A person must be a member of the Association, so if they cease to be a member, they also automatically cease to be a Board member.
- And if a Board member fails to attend 3 consecutive board meetings (other than special or urgent board meetings) without leave of absence (see rule 67 discussed above), she'll also cease to be a Board member.
- A board member may decide not to re-nominate for a Board position, and that's simply a matter of declaring this at the August meeting.

We're always looking to improve how we work when you leave the Board for any of these reasons, we'll ask you to attend an exit interview (ideally) within two weeks of leaving. We have some standard questions, and this is your opportunity to provide feedback on your experience.



Still have questions?

For further information with regards to the WHGNE Board please contact: the Board Chair via executive@whealth.com.au or visit our website <https://www.whealth.com.au>

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