

## PATHWEST Board Communiqué

*This Communiqué highlights key discussions and considerations from the March 2023 Board Meeting.*



**Image one** - PathWest Board members (Angie Paskevius, Tarun Weeramanthri, Kevin Taylor and Tony Vis) with staff from the PathWest laboratory at Geraldton Regional Hospital.

### KEY MATTERS:

#### Board Travel

The Board schedules meetings and tours PathWest facilities in regional areas to inform the Board's understanding of regional practices and challenges, necessary for the effective delivery of the Board's governance responsibilities. The March 2023 Board meeting was held in Geraldton.

Mandy-Lee Grimsley, Acting Medical Scientist in Charge, presented to the Board on how PathWest Geraldton, through important service partnerships, achieves the PathWest values of *Caring for our community* and *Excellence at all times*. This includes delivery of:

- a home phlebotomy service in partnership with the Mid-West Cancer Centre to secure improved turnaround times for routine blood tests for Chemotherapy and Palliative Care patients;
- a commercial phlebotomy contract with Greenough Prison to reduce error rates associated with prison collection of samples;
- testing for ovulation hormone tracking to support fertility treatment; and
- blood testing partnerships with hospital-based services.

Mandy-Lee also provided valuable insight into some of the key challenges faced regionally including Pathology sample turnaround times to Perth, staff training and troubleshooting for pathology equipment.

The Board met with the dedicated team of scientists, technicians, phlebotomists and a Curtin University Medical Science placement student, collectively at the PathWest Collection Centre and Hospital-based laboratory. The Board also met with Senior Medical staff and Executive at Geraldton Regional Hospital to discuss key issues relevant to Pathology services including turnaround times for Haematology samples sent to Perth; foreshadowed impacts of the development of an Intensive Care Unit, expanded Emergency Department and Mental Health unit on PathWest laboratory services; and the benefits of PathWest's recent transition to 24/7 operations on expediting blood testing services.

The tour evidenced challenges around space at the PathWest laboratory, including accommodating large-scale equipment such as analysers and access to basic support infrastructure such as storage lockers, with amenity and egress issues evident at the Collection Centre.

A number of these matters were identified in a recent audit of regional collection centres and remediation is being actioned. Steps are being taken to relocate the Collection Centre to more suitable premises.

The Board would like to take the opportunity to thank Mandy-Lee Grimsley, Lisa Tomkins (Scientist in Charge) and the staff of the laboratory and Collection Centre for taking to time to meet, and discuss matters, with the Board.

### **PathWest Revenue Streams**

Mr Sandy Kerr, Executive Director Finance, Procurement and Commercial Services and Roberta Paratore, Acting Manager, Revenue and Commercial presented to the Board on PathWest Revenue Streams, including funding received pursuant to the State Appropriation, Hospital Services, Covid-19, Medicare, Western Australia Police funded Forensic Biology services, commercial, private laboratories, clinical trials and private patients. Other matters discussed included Medicare eligibility and charging, billing challenges, and the complexity of the billing model relative to revenue streams.

### **Audit Recommendations**

Mr Liam Murphy, Manager Audit and Risk Management, updated the Board on the Audit process adopted in compliance with the Treasurer's Instructions *Internal Audit Standards*, including electronic monitoring of audit recommendations and reporting and approval processes with PathWest Executive and the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee. Liam noted a substantial increase in the volume of audit recommendations over the past 6-12 months due to the Internal Audit Program and focus by the Office of the Auditor General on high risk audits. Liam also advised that a significant number of recommendations had been closed since the February 2023 Board meeting. The Board acknowledged the substantial work undertaken by Audit and Risk Management, including prioritisation and review of audit recommendation deadlines.

The Board and Manager, Audit and Risk Management also discussed the Strategic Risk Register, specifically, that the impending release of the PathWest Operational Plan for 2023/24 will further define strategic versus operational risks. The Board requested a review by Executive and Liam of the register and prioritisation of strategic risks for feedback to the Board no later than June 2023.

### **Health Services Act 2016**

A brief overview was provided of the recent amendments to the *Health Services Act 2016* (the Act). The Act was designed to create a contemporary and decentralised governance model for the WA Health system and included the establishment of Health Service Provider Boards. The amendments are broadscale and aim to strengthen the performance of the Act by enhancing powers and addressing deficiencies identified in the Act since that time.

### **Acting Chief Executive Report**

Mr Sash Tomson, Acting Chief Executive, outlined significant progress in Information Communications Technology (ICT). This includes recruitment of ICT business unit managers; replacement of aged technology infrastructure to support the new Laboratory Information System; implementation of a new release Forensic Pathology module; and an ICT network equipment upgrade, for improved ICT performance. The Chief Executive advised that Dr Ee Mun Lim will be Acting Chief Pathologist for the next four months whilst Dr David Smith is on leave and the position of Executive Director, People, Capability and Culture is pending finalisation.

Other matters discussed included the development of PathWest's Environmental Management System and implementation processes and significant work being undertaken to improve specimen coordination, including through additional recruitment and streamlining processes.

### **COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

#### **People and Culture Committee**

The Committee reported a strong focus by PathWest on attracting and retaining more Aboriginal employees and persons with disability, including through aligning job responsibilities to the employee whilst meeting operational requirements. A presentation on the new Human Resource Management Information System for Health which will markedly improve interoperability and data access was provided, along with information on strategies to improve Performance Planning and Review processes.

#### **Safety and Quality Committee**

The Committee commended the Clinical Governance Team on delivery of a draft Clinical Governance Framework to identify and manage risks to patient safety and Key Assurance Indicators to improve

quality and safety of services. The Committee requested that Executive consider refining the structure of the Clinical and Scientific Governance Committee to refocus on safety and quality matters, including clearer identification of trends.

#### Clinical Governance Safety and Quality Forum

The Forum comprises Chairs of Health Service Provider Safety and Quality Committees. The Chair of PathWest Safety and Quality Committee noted that opportunity exists for PathWest to improve the quality of data provided to this Forum from the Laboratory Information System and present on progress on PathWest's Environmental Sustainability agenda to the Forum.

#### **MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR**

The visit to Geraldton afforded a significant opportunity for the Board to improve its understanding of strategic opportunities and challenges in the Mid-West and more broadly in PathWest regional centres, and experience firsthand the great work being undertaken by the PathWest Team. I also recently attended a Chairs meeting facilitated by Neal Fong, who has a wealth of knowledge across health services. The forum is examining educational topics to enhance governance across key health service challenges.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled Board meeting will be held in Perth on 6 April 2023



Ms. Angie Paskevicius  
**Chair, PathWest Board**  
2 March 2023