**Sustainability Learnings from the NHS
Colleen Gates**

Thank you very much, Stan, and good morning everyone. It’s certainly a pleasure to be here. Sustainability is something that is close to my heart because, not only am I a board member at Western Health but I actually work as an environmental professional within a food manufacturing organisation. So, whilst sustainability is, I guess, a bit different when you’re talking about supply chain and logistics and manufacturing factories. When I turn my mind to Western Health and the role that the board plays around sustainability, for me, I think I can classify it into sort of three broad areas where I think the focus should be for our board in the space of health and, for me, that is the shell, I guess, as has been mentioned by Robert. The buildings in which we deliver the majority of our services and then it’s about the sustainable practices that are happening inside of the building and where we probably have our closest connection with our patients and our clients but it’s also about healthy communities and that’s also been touched on by David in his keynote earlier and, so, we want to be able to send people away or we want to be able to help people so they are not necessarily returning back to our facilities time and time again and, so, the reach of health services certainly is not just within the walls of the hospital.

I guess in that context there are, you know, further ways of unpacking what Western Health can influence and can lead on within those three areas and, so, to state the obvious – optimising – so, energy, water, trying to reduce waste and so forth – optimising what we’re doing within our hospitals. There’s elements of procurement that come with that around, considering sustainability as part of our procurement approach, moving forward, and the funding models that come with that. There is also the fit for purpose infrastructure, so not only just solar panels on rooves and environmental sustainability of design of the buildings then how you conduct the activities within the building that make sustainability easier to deliver and to be part of the way we work and then there’s training and research as well and I think Western Health has a very strong leadership around training and research and, in part, thanks to people like Forbes McGain and Catherine O’Shea, who are leading in the space. And, another one for me as well is the community partnerships. Community and government partnerships. Western Health wouldn’t be able to deliver everything that it does without the partnerships that we have. For example, with local government, primary health, primary care networks and other players in the space. Universities, for example, we have a very strong relationship with Victoria University and a lot of the decision-making that is happening at a board level and a lot of the consideration that’s built into our strategic plan is about how we can improve the health and the lives of people, not just inside the hospital but outside of the hospital.

A good example is our health links program, for example, which looks at patients with comorbidities and how we can work with those patients and with other health providers to improve their lives and make sure that there are no repeat visits.

Our strategic plan, our 5-year strategic plan also has 5 pillars but one of those 5 pillars is specifically focused on social responsibility and using resources sustainably. So that this area is always of the forefront of the board and I also think culture is very important as well and, in the two years that I’ve been with Western Health on the board, it became evident to me very early on that whilst there’s obviously a role for the board in setting the culture and the expectations of the organisation, the staff at Western Health are actually very empowered and provide very strong leadership. So, in some regards, they make the board’s role very easy because I think we’re already heading in the same direction, in that regard.

Advocacy is also a strong element of what the board must do and, so, in regards to some of the items that David has mentioned around policy and legislation, again, having come from an environmental background myself, I rely on legislation a fair bit in some of my role and I think it can be a very powerful way to drive change and a lot of the, I guess, there are passionate people out there who want to be more sustainable but there are a lot of people who probably need that stronger influence, if I could say, to be brought on board.

Embedding in governance also resonated with me, rather than sustainability being this thing that you have to do, it should just become natural – no different to getting your coffee in the morning or brushing your teeth at night and, also, I think just to wrap up, what does sustainability mean for me. On a very high level, the first thing that pops in my head is don’t be wasteful. So, whether you’re talking about resource efficiency – not using materials or things that you don’t need in the first place. So, don’t create the waste that’s been referred to around the amount of waste that goes into landfill but that can also be about funding and it can also be about time and this is where it comes back to the partnerships. So, we have some amazing people who are working on different technologies and different ways to create a more sustainable space within hospitals and we shouldn’t do it is silos. So, events like this are extremely important and the connections that are not only just within hospitals in Victoria but also the health profession right around the world and, thirdly, in terms of funding, I guess that comes part and parcel with the time element that we can coordinate that funding and making sure that we don’t have multiple people trying to do the same thing. Hospitals, in general, will have the same or similar issues and we should all be working together and the funding that Stan has just mentioned is a perfect example of where there is collaboration and coordination of resources to tackle in that space.

Thank you.
[Applause]