**Sustainability Learnings from the NHS

Dan Douglass**

Thanks, Stan. Good morning, everyone. It’s a pleasure to be here, among like-minded people and hopefully this is a part of a movement to get some real change. What sustainability means for me, a health executive role in rural areas is very broad so I was very pleased to hear David say it’s not just environmental. It’s social, it’s economic, it’s cultural, it’s a range of things and that’s how we approach it, certainly in our health service.

We also perceive differences between rural sustainability and urban sustainability. We’re very closely connected into our communities. We’re ... our community and our environment often dictates the types of services we provide, how we provide them. So, we are very much probably looking, not only in the hospital, outside the hospital, working with community and making sure everything that we do, adds value and quality of life improvements to our community.

The other challenge for us in rural areas is small scale sustainability versus large scale. So, we don’t have critical mass in many cases. So, often, the things that happen in the larger health services and metro areas, we just can’t roll them out in the rural areas. So, we look for scaleable solutions that are replicable and we can either build critical mass with other rural health services or we can roll them out, in conjunction with our community. That’s been very successful for us and it’s been a real cornerstone, with us engaging with our community.

My role, as CEO, is to provide leadership, demonstrate commitment but also to empower, to engage all of our staff, our volunteers, our contractors in exactly the same way of thinking. Sustainability is part of everything that they do and just some examples of that, for example, without sort of saying anything, our cleaning staff came up to me one day, concerned about a process that they had around cleaning detergents. They came up with a solution – I actually got them to go back a couple of times – they actually came up with a solution and they were really proud of it and those small steps just reinforce across the whole organisation – how important sustainability is. When we look at what we need to do, as a health service, we look at the community risks and we look at the opportunities. We always put a sustainability lens on it. Health is not an overly funded area, so, everything that we do, we need to make that if we invest in something, that it’s long term. That it’ll have sustainable results and something that we can look back in 5, 10, 20 years and say that was something worth doing. Rather than piece meal things that really don’t have that longevity.

The other thing, I suppose, from David’s talk earlier, we actually look at preventive stuff. So, we look at our models of care, how we deliver services and, in many ways, waste energy usage, a lot of those things can be ... it’s like a serendipitous outcome that a lot of those issues around the environmental sustainability, come when we actually start to think about how we actually deliver our services. So, that’s been a real lesson for us.

We work closely with the community. In fact, our strategic and operational plan is very much aligned to our local community plan, where part of the community governance structure and we often come up with things from the community or from the health service. We work on them together and we get a really collaborative outcome and that’s just the way we see it’s a real way for the future and Colleen mention about partnership and we do a lot of partnership. We’re part of a Smart Partnership with Latrobe Uni and Swinburne. We make sure that everything that we do is evidence-based and evaluate it. We’re part of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network. So, that’s been a real eye-opener, just to look across the world and see what other health services are doing. Not even

**what the health services in Australia are doing. So, I’d certainly encourage you around sustainability. Don’t have a narrow view, have a long-term view. It is about well-being for current and future generations. Thank you.**

**[Applause]**