



Searchlight Group

EXECUTIVE SEARCH & ADVISORY

Candidate Briefing Pack



Board Directors

Non-Executive Director appointments

July 2026

CONTENTS

- › About cohealth
- › Our purpose, vision and values
- › Our strategic direction
- › Responding to the review
- › About the Board
- › The role of Board Director
- › What we are looking for
- › Time commitment and terms
- › Safety screening
- › How to apply

Thank you for your interest in joining the Board of cohealth. This pack is designed to give you a clear picture of the organisation, the role of a Board Director, and the contribution we hope these appointments will make as cohealth moves into the next phase of its strategy.

cohealth has appointed Searchlight Group to manage this search. We would welcome a confidential conversation with anyone considering the role before they decide whether to put themselves forward. Contact details are at the end of this pack.

ABOUT COHEALTH

cohealth began in 2014 with the merger of three Melbourne community health providers and has since grown into one of Australia's largest not-for-profit community health organisations. Its mission is to improve health and wellbeing for all and tackle inequality, in partnership with people and the communities they live in.

cohealth delivers essential health care and social services across Melbourne's CBD, inner-north, inner-west and west, and the east coast of Tasmania. Its services extend well beyond traditional primary health care to include integrated medical (general practice and medical specialists), nursing, oral health, allied health, counselling, alcohol and other drug, mental health and community support services.

cohealth works directly with people who face the greatest barriers to good health and wellbeing – including people experiencing homelessness, people with a disability or mental illness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, refugees and people seeking asylum, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people who use alcohol and other drugs. It takes a human rights-based approach and works from, and promotes, the social model of health.

cohealth is a company limited by guarantee, registered as a not-for-profit charity with the ACNC and governed by a skills-based board. Its annual revenue is in the order of **\$120 million**, derived from government grants, service contracts and client fees. More than 1,000 staff deliver services from 30+ locations across 15 local government areas, in around 45 program areas, to people from over 160 different cultural backgrounds.

OUR PURPOSE, VISION AND VALUES

Vision. Healthy communities, healthy people.

Purpose. To improve health and wellbeing for all, specialising in supporting those experiencing intersecting challenges to being healthy and well.

Belief. That fundamental access to health and care is a human right, and that everyone deserves the opportunity to be healthy and well.

Values.

- **Inquiry and innovation** – we are curious and inquisitive and think outside the box; research and evidence underpin our work.
- **Respect** – we treat all people with dignity and respect.
- **Courage** – we are focused on doing our best, trying new things and speaking up for what is right, without fear or favour.
- **Social equity** – we are committed to fairness and equality, making sure rights are foremost in our thoughts and actions, and that no one is left behind.
- **Trust** – we trust each other – our knowledge, skills, experiences and motivations.

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

cohealth is guided by its Strategy 2025–2035. In 2025 the organisation set a bold ten-year aspiration: fairer, healthier communities where everyone, regardless of background, can access quality care and experience better health outcomes. cohealth aspires for its model to be accessible for all and to be an exemplar in delivering strong, place-based and people-centred primary health and social care for communities nationally, while remaining true to its core purpose of responding to disadvantage that affects health and wellbeing.

Our objectives

The strategy is organised around three objectives:

- **Demonstrate the value of the cohealth model** – prove the value of cohealth’s philosophy, approach and contribution.
- **Enhance sustainability and resilience** – deliver financially sustainable practices across the current portfolio.
- **Scale our impact** – increase reach and make a bigger difference in people’s lives.

Our enablers

These objectives are supported by the foundations cohealth needs to get right to meet its long-term aspiration: people and culture, community connection, partnerships, infrastructure, and ways of working.

RESPONDING TO THE REVIEW

In 2025 cohealth announced the proposed closure of general practice services at its Collingwood, Fitzroy and Kensington clinics. The decision, and the way it was handled, caused distress for clients, communities and staff, and prompted an independent review (led by Professor Stephen Duckett) that identified governance, leadership, communication and operational areas for improvement for cohealth to address.

cohealth has responded directly. It has accepted the recommendations directed to it and is acting on all of them – and, importantly, the clinics will stay open, with doctor and nursing care continuing at all three sites while a stronger, more sustainable model of care is developed.

For prospective directors, the more telling story is what cohealth is doing now. The organisation has moved quickly from acknowledgement to action:

- **Owning it, and rebuilding trust.** The Board has formally acknowledged and apologised to clients, staff and communities and has committed to listening earlier and engaging more openly.
- **Renewing leadership and governance.** A new Chief Executive is being recruited; governance arrangements are being strengthened; and an organisation-wide governance review is underway. These Board appointments are central to that renewal.
- **Transparency and accountability.** cohealth released the Review publicly and will regularly report on implementation progress to staff, clients, communities and government.
- **Re-engaging community and staff.** cohealth is listening more deeply to clients, communities and coworkers, with a reset program that prioritises safety, culture and lived experience, and creates genuine opportunities for people to help shape the changes ahead.
- **Securing the future with government.** cohealth is working with the Commonwealth and Victorian governments on an implementation plan to secure long-term funding and sustainability for these services.

It is worth keeping the Review in proportion. It examined the general practice services at the three clinics – around 5 per cent of cohealth’s operations, yet, as an organisation that values learning and improvement, cohealth has chosen to apply the lessons across the whole organisation. The fundamentals remain strong: revenue of around \$120 million, more than 1,000 staff across 30+ sites, and a fresh ten-year strategy.

For the directors who join now, this is an opportunity to help lead a deliberate, well-supported reset to strengthen governance, rebuild trust and shape cohealth’s next chapter rather than to inherit a problem. It is a board with a clear mandate, a candid culture, and a genuine commitment to the communities it serves.

ABOUT THE BOARD

cohealth is governed by a skills-based Board of non-executive directors, which holds responsibility for the governance of the organisation. Directors are bound by the Constitution and have obligations under the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and are expected to uphold cohealth's Board Charter and Code of Conduct.

The Board is supported by a committee structure that currently includes Finance and Audit, Quality, Governance, Nominations, and Community Advisory committees. Discussions at the Board table are respectful but robust, and the diversity of opinions and insights makes for effective, informed decision-making.

cohealth is in a period of governance renewal and is strengthening the Board's capability and composition for the next phase of its strategy. These appointments are central to that work.

Diversity and lived experience. In the context of cohealth's strategy and its commitment to diversity and cultural safety, a priority of the Board is to broaden its diversity and to elevate the voices of communities that experience disadvantage, including, but not limited to, First Nations peoples; Black, Indigenous and People of Colour; LGBTIQ+ people; and people with lived experience of disadvantage, incarceration, disability, chronic illness and/or race-based discrimination.

THE ROLE OF BOARD DIRECTOR

Within the Board's collective responsibility, each director contributes to the governance and stewardship of the organisation. In practice this means:

- Acting with reasonable care and diligence, honestly and fairly, in the best interests of cohealth and its charitable purpose.
- Contributing to the recruitment, appointment and support of the new CEO, and ensuring appropriate oversight of CEO performance, leadership culture and delivery of cohealth's strategic priorities.
- Approving strategy and budgets, and monitoring performance against strategic and financial objectives.
- Overseeing risk management, compliance, policies and internal controls, and ensuring financial affairs are managed responsibly.
- Providing oversight of clinical quality, safety and client outcomes, including ensuring that services are safe, effective, culturally safe and responsive to community need.
- Supporting transparent engagement with clients, communities, staff, funders and partners, particularly as cohealth implements the Review recommendations and strengthens trust.
- Disclosing and managing conflicts of interest and not improperly using information or position.
- Contributing actively to Board and committee meetings, and to a respectful, ethical and inclusive Board culture in which different views can be expressed and consensus built.
- Developing collaborative and supportive relationships with the Chair, the CEO and fellow directors, and supporting effective stakeholder engagement.
- Participating in induction, ongoing development, director recruitment and Board evaluation, and upholding cohealth's vision, purpose and values.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

This is board-composition work: the appointments are considered together and chosen to strengthen the Board as a whole, rather than roles filled in isolation. cohealth's Board has clarified where the priorities now sit, and is seeking directors whose capability, independence and community credibility will help the organisation move forward with confidence. The priority capability areas we are seeking are set out below.

› **Consumer and lived experience**

A director who brings authentic consumer and lived-experience credibility with the communities cohealth serves – ideally First Nations and/or Indigenous experience, and/or lived experience as a consumer of services – and the ability to bring those perspectives genuinely and constructively to the Board table.

› **Clinical and primary-care governance**

A clinical leader with a firm grasp of quality, safety and the primary-care funding environment. This director should be a registered medical practitioner, able to strengthen the Board's clinical governance and its oversight of safe, high-quality care.

› **Government and stakeholder relations**

A longstanding and well-connected leader with genuine credibility across the health, community health and primary-care landscape at local, state and Commonwealth levels. This director should bring strong networks and a respected reputation that open doors and carry weight, strengthening cohealth's relationships with departments, funders and key partners, and adding reach and influence to the Board.

› **Strategic financial management**

A senior financial leader, ideally a qualified accountant, who can strengthen the Board's financial oversight and support the Finance and Audit Committee, bringing the strategic financial judgement to help guide cohealth's long-term sustainability and resilience.

Values and attributes we value across these roles

- A genuine commitment to cohealth's mission, social purpose and values, and to the wellbeing and dignity of the communities it serves.
- Integrity, sound judgement, and a collaborative and inclusive style.
- Independence, and the willingness to form a clear view and challenge constructively while supporting a unified Board position.
- Core board skills that all directors are expected to bring – governance, risk management, strategy and financial oversight – together with the financial literacy to read and probe the accounts, and a strategic rather than operational mindset.
- Resilience and composure – the capacity to bring calm, considered judgement to a Board leading through change and scrutiny, adding strength and stability to its collective work.
- An optimistic, future-focused outlook, and a desire to help build a strong, contemporary and accountable governance culture for cohealth's next chapter.

TIME COMMITMENT AND TERMS

These are remunerated Non-Executive Director roles. Director remuneration is paid strictly in accordance with the requirements set out in cohealth's Constitution and Board policies. Directors are appointed for a term in accordance with the Constitution. Remuneration for Board Directors is set at: \$20,462 per annum plus superannuation.

The Board meets monthly between February and December – typically on Wednesday evenings, in person, predominantly at cohealth's head office in Footscray. Directors are also asked to attend strategy sessions during the year, which are scheduled on varying days and may include a weekend day. In the short term, as the Board progresses through responses to the Review, there may be additional requirements for Board Directors to attend meetings as they may arise.

Each director is expected to contribute to at least one Board committee. Between meetings the Board liaises by email and occasional teleconference, and directors are expected to attend occasional stakeholder functions and the AGM.

SAFETY SCREENING

cohealth conducts screening for all Board members, which must be satisfied before an appointment is confirmed. Screening includes:

- Completion of a Responsible Person Declaration.
- A National Police Check and a Working with Children Check.
- Reference checks.
- Verification of qualifications and professional memberships, including current registration where relevant to the role.

HOW TO APPLY

Searchlight Group is managing this appointment on behalf of cohealth. We would welcome a confidential conversation with anyone considering the role. To express your interest, please submit a current CV together with a brief covering letter (no more than two pages) outlining your interest in the role and how you would contribute to the Board. A detailed response to the criteria is not required. Upload these documents via this link: <https://searchlightgroup.com.au/jobs/board-director-4/>

Please also include the names of two referees, with a brief note of the capacity in which they have known you (we will not contact referees without your express permission), and an indication of your earliest availability.

Contact

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Applications close: **midnight on Friday 17th July 2026.**

Conflicts of interest. Please let us know of any potential conflicts of interest – for example, a current role with another health or community organisation – so these can be considered and managed transparently.

cohealth is committed to inclusion and diversity. We warmly encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability, and people with lived experience of the communities cohealth serves.

Useful links

- Website: www.cohealth.org.au
- Strategic plan: www.cohealth.org.au/about-us/our-organisation/strategic-plan
- Annual / impact reports: www.cohealth.org.au