Maridulu Budyari Gumal
Working together for good health and wellbeing

Position description

Independent Chair of Board: Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE)

Appointment Type:	Independent , part-time
Term	2–3 years, with eligibility for reappointment
Reports to:	SPHERE Members (via the Board)
Location:	Sydney (hybrid attendance expected)
Remuneration	A discretionary honorarium may be available, commensurate with experience and subject to Board approval

Position Summary

Maridulu Budyari Gumal, the Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research & Enterprise (SPHERE), is an NHMRC accredited Research Translation Centre consisting of four health districts and networks in NSW, four universities and 6 medical research institutes. The primary goal of SPHERE is to integrate outstanding research, education and professional practices across partner organisations to improve health outcomes, deliver better healthcare, generate economic benefits, and be a magnet for recruitment and retention of staff and investment in health and research.

SPHERE has four key objectives:

1. Strong alignment between partners that result in improved care and health outcomes for local populations.
2. Enhanced educational and learning experiences in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings.
3. Research discovery and rapid translation of those discoveries and innovations to patient and population benefit.
4. Strong relationships with industry and local communities to improve health and generate wealth.

The Independent Chair provides authoritative, impartial leadership to the SPHERE Board, ensuring high standards of governance, strategic stewardship, and effective decision-making in support of SPHERE's mission to improve health outcomes through collaborative research, translation, and education.

The Chair acts in the best interests of SPHERE as a whole, independent of any member organisation, and enables the Board to function as a cohesive, high-performing governing body across health networks, universities, and medical research institutes.

Accountabilities

Specific accountabilities for this role include:

Board Leadership and Governance

- Lead the Board to fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the SPHERE Members' Agreement, Terms of Reference, and best-practice governance standards.
- Set the tone for effective governance, integrity, and collective responsibility at Board level.
- Ensure the Board focuses on strategic priorities, system-level impact, and long-term sustainability.

Strategic Oversight

- Facilitate the development, approval, and monitoring of SPHERE's strategic direction, vision, and priorities, addressing clinical priorities, population health needs, health equity and innovation.
- Ensure alignment between SPHERE's strategy, accreditation requirements, and the needs of the health system and community.
- Support the Board to monitor organisational performance, impact, and risk.

Independence and Conflict of Interest Management

- Exercise independent judgment, free from institutional or sectoral bias.
- Lead robust identification, declaration, and management of conflicts of interest, ensuring decisions are made in the best interests of SPHERE.
- Uphold transparency, accountability and trust across a complex partnership environment with overlapping affiliations.

Board Effectiveness

- Chair Board meetings to ensure they are well-governed, constructive, and decision-focused.
- Encourage open, respectful discussion and draw out diverse perspectives while maintaining clarity and discipline.
- Ensure Board members are appropriately briefed, informed, and supported to make sound decisions.

Stakeholder Confidence and External Interface

- Act as an ambassador for SPHERE's governance credibility with members, partners, funders, and external stakeholders as appropriate.
- Foster constructive relationships across complex and diverse partner organisations, and government.
- Support effective and equitable engagement with consumers and the broader community.

Executive Support and Accountability

- Lead the appointment, support, and performance review of the Executive Director (or equivalent), as delegated by the Board.
- Provide guidance and support to management while maintaining clear separation between governance and operations.

Skills and Experience

Essential Criteria

- Demonstrated independence from SPHERE member organisations, with no current executive, fiduciary, representational, or other conflicting roles, and the capacity to act solely in the best interests of SPHERE as a collective partnership.

- Extensive experience chairing or serving on complex boards or governing bodies, preferably within health, research, education, or public-purpose organisations, with a strong understanding of contemporary governance principles, fiduciary duties, and accountability in multi-partner environments.
- Proven ability to think strategically across complex systems, balancing diverse institutional priorities with whole-of-system outcomes, and guiding organisations through growth, reform, or governance maturity.
- Demonstrated credibility and standing with senior leaders across health services, academia, research, and government, with the ability to bridge sectoral perspectives and foster collaboration without advocating for any single institution.
- High-level judgment and proven capability in managing conflict, complexity, and competing interests, with a track record of enabling principled and effective decision-making in environments with inherent tensions.
- Exceptional chairing and facilitation skills, with the ability to lead structured, inclusive, evidence-informed, and outcome-focused deliberations, enable constructive debate, manage dominant voices, build consensus, and drive clear and timely decisions.
- Reputation for integrity, fairness, and sound judgment, with the personal gravitas and authority to lead and influence senior executives and eminent academic and research leaders.
- An understanding of and commitment to UNSW's aims, objectives and values in action, together with relevant policies and guidelines.
- Knowledge of health & safety (psychosocial and physical) responsibilities and commitment to attending relevant health and safety training.

Desirable Criteria

1. Experience with Research Translation Centres (RTCs), Academic Health Science Centres, or similar partnership models.
2. Familiarity with accreditation, public-sector accountability, or government-funded research environments.
3. Experience engaging consumers or communities in governance or strategy.
4. Experience in engaging with government, industry, philanthropists, and national research bodies.

Time Commitment

- Attendance at quarterly Board meetings and additional meetings as required.
- Preparation time to ensure informed leadership of Board deliberations.
- Periodic engagement with the Executive Director and key stakeholders.

Compliance Requirements

- A registered ABN
- Conflict of interest declarations
- Police check
- Agreement to policies and codes of conduct.