

Capital Health Network Limited

Election of Directors 2025

Candidate Statement

Candidate name (please print):	SUSAN HELYAR		
Tick the Director Position being nominated for:	E2 <input type="checkbox"/>	E4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Statement in support of nomination

I would be honoured to contribute to Capital Health Network's strategic direction as a Board Member to help shape the accessibility and effectiveness of primary healthcare in the ACT.

I offer decades of experience improving social and health services in the ACT grounded in an ethos of collaboration and a commitment to equity, inclusion, respect for diversity and cultural safety.

My career spans clinical roles in NSW Community Health and ACT Mental Health Services, policy advice in ACT and Commonwealth governments, and public policy advocacy. As CEO of ACTCOSS (2013–2019), I led the ACT community sector through significant reform and worked closely with Capital Health Network on shared priorities. More recently, I redesigned student support services at ANU, improving early intervention and crisis response. I now run a consulting business providing strategic advice and organisation development services to for-purpose organisations.

I would bring to the Board expertise in strategic communication, policy reform and service development, informed by deep engagement with consumer and workforce perspectives. I have a strong track record facilitating strategic partnerships, promoting evidence-informed decision-making and fostering high quality services and safe workplaces. I have substantial experience exercising core governance responsibilities such as financial oversight, risk management, monitoring compliance and aligning organisation investment with strategic goals. I am known for ethical, accountable, respectful leadership.

I have a Bachelor of Social Work and am a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. My governance experience includes Board roles with five ACT organisations and one national organisation between 2017-2025.

NOTE: 250 word maximum

Capital Health Network Limited

Election of Directors 2025

Statement addressing the position requirements for Director position E4

Candidate name (please print):	SUSAN HELYAR
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Statement addressing the position requirements

I've nominated for the Board to contribute my decades of experience in improving social and health services and to support the Capital Health Network to improve primary healthcare accessibility and effectiveness in the ACT. My **ability to contribute to strategic thinking** would be informed by these experiences:

- Synthesising and analysing information from diverse sources and perspectives
- Translating consumer and workforce insights into clear advice on better meeting community needs through policy reform, service reform, improved models of care and better funding arrangements
- Proactive membership engagement, stakeholder relationship development, cross-sector partnerships and strategic alliances
- Ongoing learning to grow cultural awareness, cultural competence and capacity to support cultural safety
- Strategic communication with media and in the broader public policy debate
- Contributing to development of the evidence base and leading evidence-informed decision-making
- Monitoring the landscape to gather information, assess evidence, identify opportunities for continuous improvement/innovation and discern priorities for investment
- Providing financial foresight and budget management advice
- Assessing, managing and mitigating strategic and operational risks
- Understanding organisational compliance obligations and ensuring these are met
- Managing organisation restructures and ongoing workforce development to align resourcing and delegations with strategy

My strong leadership and integrity is evident in the performance, professionalism, transparency and accountability I demonstrated in clinical, Executive and Board roles, and through organisations engaging me to provide supervision and mentoring to others in leadership roles. I have a reputation as a leader who delivers positive results, and am an ethical, honest colleague who communicates openly and respectfully.

As a Social Worker I worked in NSW and ACT hospital and community health settings, including four years in the ACT Mental Health Service in clinical roles.

Between 2001-2008 I led policy teams in ACT and Commonwealth governments in social and health service design and policy development in mental health, women's and children's health and community inclusion. In 2008-2013 I led public policy advocacy on social services and aged care in UnitingCare Australia. During 2013-2019 I was CEO of the member-based ACT Council of Social Service leading the community sector through a period of significant change.

After 20 years in policy roles, I returned to service delivery as Director of Residential Experience at ANU, leading on campus student accommodation services. I redesigned the residence-based student support services to improve early intervention, crisis prevention and critical incident responses, leading to a halving of critical incidents and a safer model of care for peer-based roles. I also managed development of guidelines, liaison with public health officials and provision of services to support student safety and wellbeing through COVID-19 lockdowns.

In 2022 I set up a consulting business offering strategic planning, operational reviews, policy advice and stakeholder engagement/consultation services.

My **governance experience** includes being a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Board Directorships in these organisations: Co-Convenor of the ACT Greens (2024-2025), Shine for Kids (2017-2024), Marymead CatholicCare Canberra Goulburn (2022-2023), Directions Health Pty Ltd (2021-2023), Care Financial Inc (2020-2023) and Legal Aid ACT (2019-2020).

NOTE: 500 word maximum



Current role

In 2022 I established a consulting firm to work with NGOs and share my distinctive mix of skills and experience and my passion for transforming. My consulting work is focused on strengthening positive social impact by centring social justice outcomes. I work with organisations on developing strategy, designing services, assessing progress and impact, strengthening the workforce and building strategic partnerships and alliances.

Statutory Appointments:

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (2023-2028)

Professional affiliations

Member, Australia Association of Social Workers

Qualifications

Bachelor of Social Work and Social Policy,
University of Sydney
Graduate, Australian Institute of Company Directors

Key capabilities

Leadership, Strategic Communication, Public Speaking, Stakeholder Engagement, Community Outreach and Strategic Alliances/Partnerships

Public Policy Analysis, Advocacy and Development; Service Design and Management; Workshop Facilitation; Industry Advocacy

Strategic Planning, Organisational Development, Workforce and Leadership Development

Career biography

Susan's career includes experience in:

- Direct practice as a social worker in health, disability employment and mental health services (1993-1999)
- Social and health service design and policy development in ACT and Commonwealth governments (2000-2008)
- Executive leadership roles as described below (2008-2024)

Executive roles

May-July 2024 Interim CEO ACT Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Association

October 2022- February 2023 Interim CEO VolunteeringACT

2019-2022 Director of Residential Experience at the Australian National University leading strategic development and operational delivery of on campus accommodation services.

2013-2019 CEO of the ACT Council of Social Service leading social policy public debate, public policy reform service redesign, stakeholder engagement, alliance building with consumer, carer, community and business sectors, and sustained productive relationships through difficult conversations and reform processes.

2008-2012 Director of Services Development UnitingCare Australia, leading member engagement across the UnitingCare network, and advocacy to the Federal Parliament and government agencies.

CONSULTING ROLES

Interim CEO roles:

- Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Association ACT (May-July 2023)
- Volunteering ACT (October 2022-February 2023)

Sector Development:

- Capital Region Community Services Senior Leadership Team development (2025)
- Volunteering ACT Election Advocacy Strategy (2024)
- Community-Based Co-Lead, ACT Sector Sustainability Program, delivering Sector Sustainability Project (July 2023-December 2024)

Service Development:

- Working with Women Alliance (2025)
- Advocacy for Inclusion (2024, 2025)
- Full Stop Australia (2024)
- Regional Community Services Alliance (2024)
- Family Relationship Services Australia (2024)
- Supported Tenancy Service (2022)
- OneLink (2022)
- GetAboutAble (2022)

Strategic Planning:

- Cancer Council ACT (2025)
- Richmond Fellowship ACT (2025)
- ACT Health Care Consumers Association (2024)
- Ronald McDonald House Charity ACT & SENSW (2023)

Strategic Review:

- Volunteering Peak Body CEOs Network (2025)
- Homelessness Australia Board Annual Planning Day (2024)
- Women's Centre for Health Matters Strategic Plan mid-term review (2023)
- UnitingCare Kippax Strategic Plan review (2023)

Executive Mentoring: CEOs in Peak Bodies and NGOs, and Senior Officers in Commonwealth Government service delivery agencies

Social Work External supervision: in ACT community-based social services

Leadership Development:

- Care Inc leadership team mentoring and development (July-Dec 2024)
- Design and facilitation of a Community Sector Managers Peer Network Program (July 2023-June 2024, February-July 2025)

GOVERNANCE ROLES

2024-2025	Co-Convenor ACT Greens
2017-2024	Board Director, Shine for Kids
2022-2023	Board Director, Marymead CatholicCare Canberra Goulburn
2021-2023	Board Director, Directions Health Pty Ltd
2020-2023	Board Director, Care Financial Inc
2019-2020	Board Director, Legal Aid ACT
2013-14	Founding Committee Member, Inner North Netball Association
2012	Chair, Majura Primary School Board

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Co-Sponsor and Panellist at screening of “UnCharitable” Parliament House February 2025

Master Class Presentation and Panellist, Philanthropy Australia Conference 2024

Guest Lecturer, University of Canberra Public Policy Graduate Certificate Program “Civil Society Influence in Public Policy” 2023, 2024 and 2025

Panellist, Salon Canberra Event “Remapping Our City” 2023

Presenter, IAP2 Canberra Branch Forum “Community Engagement” 2023

Mentor, AASW Peer Mentor Program 2023

Presentation, Australia Volunteers Conference 2023

Amplifiers Leadership Immersion Program, 2022

Chair, Asia-Pacific Student Accommodation Assoc Industry Development Committee 2021

Member, Energy Consumers Australia Reference Group 2019

Member, Australian Energy Regulator Consumer Advisory Council 2019

Co-Chair, Property Council of the ACT Social Sustainability sub-committee 2019

Co-Chair, ACT Anti Poverty Week 2018, 2019

Invitee to Institute of Global Homelessness Annual Meeting of cities committed to ending street homelessness, 2018

Chair, ACT Community Services Industry Strategy Steering Group 2017-2019

Member, Capital Health Network Community Advisory Council 2016-2019

Co-Chair, ACT Joint Community Government Reference Group 2015-2019

Employer Representative, ACT Work Safety Council 2015-2019

Member, ACT Community Sector Leaders Forum steering group 2013-2018

Member, Ministerial Advisory Council, Future of Education in the ACT 2017

Guest lecturer at ANU (2020, 2021) and University of Canberra (2014-2019, 2023-2025)

Supervisor of Australian Catholic University Social Work Students on placement in 2018, 2012, 2011, 2009, 2006, 2000 and 1999.

Practitioner presentation to Australian Catholic University Bachelor of Social Work Students, 2012, 2014, 2019

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

2025 Making the most of AI for Social Workers, Certification as a Facilitator of Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT® licensed by TCC Group), Neurodivergent Affirming Supervision: Practical Tools for Supervising Autistic and ADHD Social Workers

2024 Seminars: Community Collaboration in Disaster Recovery (AIDR), Deep Listening in Evaluation (Philanthropy Australia), 2024 Social and Economic Trends (McCrindle), Community Compass (89 Degrees East), Navigating Supervision Excellence (AASW)

2023 Supervision and Team Leadership development programs, Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW); AASW Health Symposium - Practice Innovations, Challenges and Leadership in Social Work Health Care; Seer Data and Analytics – Data Sharing for improved Outcomes and Positive Change

2022 Zoe Routh Amplifier Leadership Development Program

2017 Graduate, Australian Institute of Company Directors Company Directors Course

2016 Australian Institute of Management Introduction to Accounting

2010 Reconciliation Australia Women's Program, Garma Festival

2000-04 Australian Council on Health Care Standards: Skills for quality coordinators, Performance and outcome measurement; Australian Government Management training: Partnerships and Relationship Management, Personal Effectiveness Program, Leadership through Policy Change, Influencing Skills

1992-98 Core Accreditation Course in Health Promotion, Suicide Awareness, Grief and Bereavement, Critical incident Stress Debriefing, Aspects of Mental Health Nursing, Introduction to Mental Health intervention Modalities, Sexual Assault and Abuse crisis intervention, Narrative Therapy

1992 Bachelor of Social Work and Social Policy, University of Sydney

SENIOR EXECUTIVE ROLES

Interim CEO Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Association ACT (May-July 2023): Interim CEO services provided through the period of the CEO leaving and a new CEO being appointed. Supported internal team leaders to strengthen their contribution to leadership of the organisation, sustained advocacy voice in public debate (eg ACT Budget week), negotiated MOU and secured funding for a cross-sector collaboration project between ATODA and the Mental Health Community Coalition, Participated in national Peak activities, contributed to policy forums and government consultations, addressed organisation development needs and ensured Board confidence in team cohesion and organisation productivity through a period of disruption.

Volunteering ACT (October 2022-February 2023): Interim CEO services provided during maternity leave of long-standing CEO. Familiarised myself with the mix of Peak Body and service provision (Community Information Hub provided via an online platform and in person drop-in service). Ensured new projects, projects being initiated and ongoing work program were progressed to the satisfaction of the Board. Facilitated an organisation review, in close consultation with ongoing CEO, following changes in the staffing profile, to maximise opportunities to deploy scarce resources more effectively. Worked closely with state, territory and national Volunteering peak bodies to contribute ACT perspective, fulfilled ACT responsibilities in national shared work program, worked with Managers to meet contractual KPIs, submitted mid-year funding reports to Commonwealth and ACT Government funding bodies, advocated to ACT Government on priorities for renewal of ACT Volunteering Strategy and funding of Actions.

Director, Residential Experience Australian National University (December 2019-April 2022): I took this role to grow my experience in leading a service delivery organisation. I reported to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Student Experience. In this role I led:

- A halving of adverse incidents in on campus accommodation through redesign of the ANU residential pastoral care model to reorient it towards prevention, early intervention and effective postvention for young people experiencing the negative impacts of mental ill health, interpersonal violence, difficulties in adjusting to independence from family and general psychological distress
- A year on year substantial increase in the number of students reporting sexual assault and sexual harassment through implementation of recommendations from the independent review of ANU responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment in residential communities and contributing to campus wide redesign and implementation of improvements to support services and disciplinary procedures
- Renegotiating commercial operating arrangements to improve alignment of commercial, student satisfaction and service delivery imperatives
- Establishing and maintaining covid safe operations in on campus residences throughout the different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic including adaption of service models and development of policies and procedures to ensure service continuity in line with public health directions.
- Development and implementation of an enhanced student engagement and marketing strategy to diversify demand for, rebuild occupancy in and improve satisfaction with residences after disruptions from the pandemic
- Refined design of new student accommodation to ensure built environment supported objectives of academic engagement, social connectedness and social inclusion

- Supported wellbeing and engagement of 30 staff through the disruptions, disappointment and hardships of the pandemic, which included increased work intensity, operating beyond ordinary scopes of responsibility and needing to pivot regularly as expectations and needs changed

Director, ACT Council of Social Service (February 2013 - November 2019): In this role I led sector-wide change in a complex, politically sensitive and operationally diverse environment:

- Articulating, and mobilising contributions (financial, expertise, political capital), to a community sector wide advocacy agenda regarding affordable housing and homelessness, bringing together unusual partners from business, industry and professional organisations to support this advocacy agenda and securing affordable housing and homelessness election commitments from all parties with representatives elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2016
- Building government and non-government stakeholder consensus on the need for, securing resources to develop, leading stakeholder engagement in and chairing the working group overseeing implementation of the ACT Community Services Industry Strategy 2016-2026
- AS Co-Chair of the Joint Community Government Reference Group, I facilitated dialogue and collaboration between senior officials from all ACT Government Directorates and leaders from community organisations. The JCGRG provided the central forum to bring forward issues and discuss options to improve services and community outcomes at a systemic level.
- Co-ordinating cross sector dialogue with consumer, carer, community and business sectors to agree and articulate reform priorities
- Building alliances with CEOs and Board Chairs of health and community sector Peak Bodies and identified opportunities for partnerships to deliver on shared policy priorities
- Motivating decision-makers to take on new ideas and maintained productive relationships through difficult conversations and reform processes.
- Initiating and managing research and data analysis projects to build the evidence base to inform priorities for reform and guide strategic investment.

I strengthened ACTCOSS as an organisation during my tenure by:

- Developing and leading implementation of strategic, business and project plans, and reported to the ACTCOSS Board on strategic, financial, reputational and operational risk assessment and management
- Grew membership numbers and satisfaction with the role of ACTCOSS representing member views in public policy engagement
- Strengthened consultation and engagement to discern and progress member priorities
- Grew diversity of funding streams
- Expanded service offerings to members
- Restructured the ACTCOSS office, including managing consultations, redundancies and redeployments, new recruitment and resourcing ICT renewal that would improve productivity, reduce administrative costs and increase accuracy of data that could inform decisions and reports.

Director, Services Development UnitingCare Australia including 6 months as National Director - August 2008 – February 2013

Responsibilities included leadership of the UnitingCare Australia national advocacy agenda related to Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families, Older People, Employment Services, Housing, Costs of Living and Disability. This role provided high level analysis and strategic planning, to develop and articulate nationally agreed advocacy positions that influence policy and program reform. This included appearing at Parliamentary Inquiries as a witness and engaging with MPs and Senators to contribute evidence to parliamentary processes (eg Senate Estimates). Key skills required in this role were generating and sustaining UnitingCare network engagement in the national advocacy agenda, identifying and capitalising on unilateral and multilateral opportunities to influence reform, secretariat support to UnitingCare governance committees, information synthesis and developing and maintaining partnerships for social change.

In this role

- I led development of 42 submissions to government to inform policy and service delivery reform including policy proposals to Health, Social Service and Treasury portfolios
- I led production of 5 Federal Budget Analysis Reports for use by the UnitingCare network, and was invited to provide commentary on the Federal Budget by print and electronic media
- I led the UnitingCare Australia advocacy during 2009-2012 on aged care reform, contributing to adoption by the Commonwealth Government of the 2011 Living Longer Living Better reform package. I was appointed to the negotiation group that included union, employer and government officials that was responsible for determining the use of workforce development funds allocated in the reform package.
- I led development and implementation of the 2010 Election Campaign as Interim National Director leveraging the expertise of the team of seven staff in the national office and the collective national advocacy effort of the dozens of organisations in the UnitingCare network. I was visible in the national and local media, providing commentary on the release of the Henry Tax Review, around the Federal Budget and during the election campaign. A number of our campaign asks were adopted as election commitments and were delivered in the subsequent term of government.
- When appointed as Interim National Director I managed the budget of the organisation, including developing and getting approval for the coming year's budget, and negotiated an increase in resourcing to the national office from our member organisations.

SENIOR OFFICIAL ROLES IN GOVERNMENT

EL1 and EL2 positions in ACT and Commonwealth governments – 1999 - 2008

These roles included strategic policy advice and dialogue with Ministerial Offices, provision of written and verbal briefings to Ministers, Ministerial correspondence, media and event briefs, Budget bid development and advocacy within Budget processes, Secretariat to a COAG Ministerial Council, participation in Ministerially appointed Advisory Bodies and representation on ACT Government cross portfolio and Commonwealth/State/Territory Senior Officials groups.

I worked for three years in total in ACT Health policy roles, including as a contract manager of NGO funding agreements, in policy development positions and in accreditation preparation. Each of these roles required active and constructive dialogue with consumer and carer groups, advocacy organisations, workforce bodies and provider peak bodies. The relationships I formed in these roles have continued throughout my career and I enjoy a good working relationship with several people in current policy development, consumer advocacy and research roles whom I first met in this stage of my career.

- Manager, Social Policy and Implementation, Chief Minister's Department including 6 weeks as acting Senior Manager
- Senior Policy Officer, Community and Health Policy Unit, ACT Health
- Section Manager, Financial Well-Being Taskforce, Commonwealth Dept of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Assistant Section Manager Financial Counselling and Emergency Relief section, Problem Gambling Strategies section, Quality section, Child Care Services Branch, Community Branch, Commonwealth Dept of Family and Community Services
- Policy Officer then Acting Manager Mental Health Policy Unit, ACT Department of Health and Community Care, including a three month period as a special project officer leading a review of quality improvement in the ACT Mental Health system
- Quality Improvement, Accreditation and Policy Officer, ACT Mental Health Services

SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER ROLES

Professional Officer Grade 2 (Social Worker) – 1997 - 1999

Tuggeranong Community Adult Mental Health Service, ACT Mental Health Services

Responsibilities included therapeutic interventions with and practical assistance to consumers of the service and their significant others; participation in the multidisciplinary team; development and implementation of group programs; community education, liaison and consultation and implementation of best practice approaches to service delivery.

Employment Counsellor – 1996 - 1997

Developmental Disabilities Inc, Smithtown, New York, USA

Responsibilities included providing direct vocational support and advocacy for social and vocational needs of adults with disabilities; service development; liaison with families and other services and scouting for jobs for consumers of the service.

Professional Officer Grade 1 (Social Worker)

Psychiatry Unit, Woden Valley Hospital, ACT – 1993 -1995

Wiradjuri Health Services, Grenfell, NSW – 1992-1993