

Doors swing freely in Southern NSW Local Health District

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Health service planners in SNSW LHD—do we make a difference or do we produce paper plans that are used as door-stops?

Our team

- three people—one full time, two part time
- all work from different towns—only meet face to face infrequently
- keep in touch constantly via email and phone
- share a joke, whinge, share the good and the bad.

What we do

We are the 'Planning Department' for our district with many tasks, however for this paper we will concentrate on the development of a clinical service plan.

How we do it

We facilitate a process as opposed to imposing our view:

- we provide in depth analysis of demographics, population health, activity, trends and flows, relevant policies, guidelines and frameworks to lead discussion for change
- we provide a platform to facilitate the development of new clinical service models
- we provide the avenue for all staff and community to be involved in decision making
- we articulate the ideas of staff and community into a written document.

How we are viewed

The first few meetings are always a struggle:

- staff have been 'told' to do the plan, we are not 'one of them', we are from the 'DISTRICT'

- community members are antagonistic and view us as coming to take services away
- staff see us as a nuisance and just want to tick the box and get rid of us.

But the three musketeers will not be put off. We persevere with pulling ideas from all and sundry. By end of process we receive compliments. At some point in the process the light goes on and we are seen as a great asset for improving their services.

What our planning process really does

Our planning process:

- gives staff the opportunity to voice their ideas away from their managers
- provides community members the opportunity to question why we are changing
- gives the people on the ground the ammunition to make the changes they have been thinking about but did not know how to progress
- breaks down the reluctance to change—staff love seeing their contributions in a plan and want to lead and implement the change.

Do we make a difference?

YES we do. We give staff and the community the opportunity to be involved in decision making.

And all doors swing freely in Southern NSW LHD—not a door-stop in sight.