

Insync Boards framework series

From clinical risk to quality and safe care

Applying the **CLEAR** framework to
strengthen clinical governance committee
oversight on behalf of the board.

Clinical governance now sits firmly at board level. It affects quality of care, patient safety, regulatory exposure, organisational reputation and community trust.

Boards are not expected to oversee clinical practice in detail. They rely on clinical governance committees to provide disciplined oversight, clear insight and assurance that care is safe, effective and continuously improving.

For many organisations, the clinical governance committee is the primary mechanism through which the board gains confidence in quality and safety. The CLEAR framework provides a structured approach to assessing and strengthening the effectiveness of clinical governance committees in supporting board oversight.

When boards begin to question their clinical governance

Clinical governance reviews are rarely triggered by failure alone. More often, they begin with uncertainty. Directors may receive detailed quality and safety reporting, yet still lack clarity about the organisation's true performance. Metrics are presented and dashboards reviewed, but the discussion does not always provide clear insight into emerging risks or patient outcomes.

Service delivery may expand, complexity may increase, or regulatory expectations may evolve, while committee structures and oversight practices remain largely unchanged. A serious incident, near miss or external review may prompt reflection – not simply on clinical processes, but on whether the committee and board had clear visibility of deteriorating performance or systemic risk.

Quality and safety may be referenced in strategy and risk appetite, yet their influence on decisions, prioritisation and resource allocation is not always evident.

Committees may be active and management diligent, yet boards can remain unsure whether clinical governance oversight is proportionate to the organisation's scale, complexity and risk profile. These conditions do not necessarily indicate weakness. They often reflect growth, service expansion and rising expectations.

But they do raise important questions:

Is quality and safety being governed effectively through our committee structures?

Does the clinical governance committee provide the board with clear insight and assurance?

Are we confident in our visibility, oversight and continuous improvement of care?

Clinical governance as a core governance discipline

Clinical governance is not simply a clinical or operational issue. It is a core governance discipline. Boards are responsible for governing the quality and safety of care.

Clinical governance committees play a critical role in enabling this by:

- providing structured oversight of quality and safety
- ensuring risks are clearly identified, escalated and understood
- supporting informed challenge and discussion
- strengthening accountability across governance layers

Clinical governance is not about clinical detail. It is about structured oversight and confident stewardship.

When clinical governance committees operate effectively, boards benefit from:



Clearer visibility of care quality and safety



Greater confidence in reporting and oversight



Stronger integration into strategy and decision-making



Improved assurance and continuous improvement

Introducing the CLEAR framework

The CLEAR framework provides a practical, inclusive and evidence-informed model for assessing and strengthening clinical governance committee effectiveness across health, aged care and disability settings.

It helps committees move beyond compliance to purposeful oversight, strategic insight and consumer-centred action.



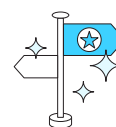
Committee purpose, role and composition

Whether the committee has a clear mandate, appropriate scope, relevant authority and the right mix of skills and experience to oversee quality, safety and consumer outcomes.



Leadership, dynamics and operations

Whether committee leadership, meeting disciplines, relationships and ways of working enable focused discussion, respectful challenge and effective oversight.



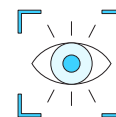
Excellence in quality and safety

Whether the committee effectively oversees quality, safety, incidents, risks, audits, improvement activity and learning across the organisation.



Assurance of workforce and practice

Whether the committee has sufficient visibility of workforce capability, credentialing, conduct, training, practice standards and workforce-related risks that affect care quality and safety.



Respecting consumer voice and rights

Whether consumer experience, feedback, rights, dignity, inclusion and lived experience are embedded in committee oversight, decision-making and continuous improvement.



Together, these domains provide a disciplined structure for assessing whether clinical governance committee oversight is clear, aligned and proportionate to organisational risk and service complexity.

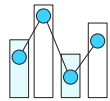
What a clinical governance review is – and is not

A CLEAR review provides an independent, structured assessment of how effectively the clinical governance committee supports the board in governing quality and safety.

It evaluates whether:



Accountability is clear and consistently applied



Clear, proportionate committee role, mandate and reporting



Quality and safety embedded and escalated appropriately



Reporting enables forward-looking insight and challenge



Assurance provides confidence in risk and care quality

It does not assess clinical practice in detail and is not a compliance or accreditation audit.

Instead, it focuses on how effectively the committee supports the board's oversight, strengthens clarity and enables better governance judgement.

Rather than producing extensive action lists, the review focuses on a small number of practical insights that strengthen effectiveness.

Key questions for boards and committees

Boards and committees do not need to be clinical experts, but they do need confidence that quality and safety are being governed effectively.

Directors may wish to consider:

Do we clearly understand our most material quality and safety risks?

Does the clinical governance committee provide clear and actionable insight?

Is quality and safety embedded in strategy and risk discussions?

Are governance roles and accountabilities clearly defined?

Are incidents, risks and improvement actions well understood and followed through?

If these questions prompt uncertainty or differing perspectives, a structured review can provide clarity.

How we work

Our approach is structured, proportionate and tailored to the organisation's scale, service complexity and clinical risk profile. A review typically includes a confidential clinical governance committee assessment, supported where appropriate by board and executive perspectives.

We undertake independent analysis and synthesise findings into clear, practical insight focused on a small number of high-impact recommendations. We are experienced governance advisers with the judgement and credibility to operate at board and committee level and handle sensitive matters with discretion.

Our particular strength lies in distilling diverse perspectives into clear insight – highlighting where oversight, alignment and accountability can be strengthened to deliver meaningful improvement.

Part of a broader governance architecture

Clinical governance does not sit in isolation. Board effectiveness is strengthened when oversight disciplines are aligned across the board, its committees, the CEO and the executive team.

Insync Boards supports organisations through a structured governance architecture built on proprietary, evidence-based frameworks.

These include:

- WhatWhoHowDo** - Board effectiveness
- DRIVE** - Director effectiveness
- SCOPE** - CEO performance
- SOLID** - Executive effectiveness (individual contribution)
- ALIGN** - Executive forum effectiveness
- THRIVE** - Risk governance maturity
- SECURE** - Board cyber governance
- CLEAR** - Clinical governance committee effectiveness

Together, these frameworks provide disciplined insight across every layer of governance – strengthening how organisations oversee quality, safety and performance.

Strengthening clinical governance with confidence

Strong organisations do not wait for incidents to test their governance. They periodically assess whether clinical governance committee effectiveness remains aligned with strategy, organisational complexity and service delivery risk.

A structured review provides boards with clarity on how effectively their clinical governance committee is supporting oversight, visibility of potential blind spots and confidence that governance arrangements remain fit for purpose.

If your board would value a disciplined, independent perspective on its clinical governance committee effectiveness, we would welcome a confidential discussion.

Independent clinical governance reviews and advisory



Insync Boards
Nicholas Barnett
Executive Chair
0407 175 551
nbarnett@insyncboards.com



Australian Institute of Health Executives
Prof Luis Prado
Chief Academic Officer
0413 601 455
luis.p@aihexec.com

insyncboards.com

Governance. Elevated.

