

JANET CLARKE HALL COUNCIL REVIEW



Strengthening higher education governance through insightful Council reviews

> THE CONTEXT

Janet Clarke Hall (JCH) was founded in 1886 and is the oldest residential college for women in Australia. It pioneered college education for women in the country and is now part of the University of Melbourne. The College upholds values of equality, academic excellence and social awareness. JCH provides a diverse, inclusive community with strong academic and intellectual support and a commitment to empowering students from various backgrounds and beliefs. JCH commissioned a Council review to ensure effective governance and identify potential areas of improvement.

> THE BRIEF

JCH is governed by a Council, to which the Principal reports on day-to-day operations. Positive Solutions was engaged to conduct a Review to ensure effective governance, identify areas for improvement, and align with the College's goals. Feedback from Council members would help refine decision-making processes and enhance overall Council performance.

> OUR APPROACH

The review began with a briefing with the Council's Chair and the Chair of the Governance and Nominations Committee to confirm the methodology and identify key issues for the future. The review process included an assessment of governance documentation which focused on the constitution, organisational structure, decision-making processes, council sub-committees and their Terms of Reference, existing policies, and documentation for council meetings.

A self-assessment survey was distributed to Council members, covering topics such as Council composition, strategic planning, financial management, risk, and leadership. The survey was followed by one-on-one interviews to clarify responses and gather additional insights. An interview was also held with the Principal (CEO) of the College to explore aspects of the Council-CEO relationship.

The findings from the surveys, interviews, and governance documentation were presented in a report that highlighted Council members' perspectives on effectiveness across various functions. A follow-up workshop was conducted with the Council to review the results and consider actionable recommendations for future direction.

> THE RESULTS

The consultation process, report and workshop highlighted the strengths of the Council as a well-functioning body. The process also identified a short list of improvements for the future. A prioritised Action Plan was agreed with the Chair of the Council for consideration at a forthcoming Council.

SEE ALSO:

- > [Saint Kentigern Trust Functional Design Brief](#)
- > [Operational Planning for Schwarzman Centre at the University of Oxford](#)
- > [NIDA Governance and Board Review](#)
- > [State Library of Queensland \(SLQ\) Board Review](#)
- > [City of Sydney Recital Hall, Review of Future Management and Governance Models](#)