

## PRECI Board Mentorship Program Evaluation Report

January 2026

### Introduction

This report provides information about evaluation of one of the strategic activities PRECI undertook in 2025 to support the Board of Management (the board) in succession planning.

Initial succession planning activities included a board skills audit conducted in April 2025 and ongoing development of associated policies and procedures (e.g. Board office bearer policy and position statements, Board induction policy and procedure, Governance policy and procedures, Delegations policy and procedures, Confidentiality policy and procedure, and Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure).

The board mentorship program was developed as an innovative approach to succession planning in order to:

- promote a diverse and capable board composition
- provide clear leadership pathways for PRECI members
- ensure a seamless transition between board directors
- build professional and researcher capabilities in board governance
- reinforce trust and transparency with PRECI members and key stakeholders
- provide prospective board directors with an opportunity to make an informed decision about nominating for the PRECI board

A mentor program briefing paper was tabled at the April 2025 general meeting and the board approved the recommendation that the mentorship program commenced immediately. Kerry Bull (KB) and Megan Fox (MF) took the role of board mentors and developed processes and procedures for mentee recruitment and implementation of the program.

The program was conducted from July-November 2025 to ensure mentees had the opportunity to complete the program prior to deciding to nominate for a position on the board at the November AGM.

### Background

#### How did we conduct the program?

Key elements of the program included the following:

1. PRECI members were invited to contact KB to discuss their expression of interest in participating in the the board mentorship program through two consecutive member newsletters.
2. Mentees were provided with background information about the program by email and phone.

3. Mentees were matched with a mentor depending on their capacity and previous experience (KB or MF).
4. Mentees and mentors had an initial online discussion on the purpose of the program and their roles and responsibilities.
5. Mentees were provided with key documents for prereading including PRECI policies and constitution as well as directed to the PRECI website for further information.
6. Mentees were required to forward a signed Confidentiality Agreement and a copy of their Working with Children Check (or equivalent) as part of risk management.
7. Mentees observed up to four online board meetings and engaged in follow-up mentorship sessions to reflect on decision-making, governance processes, and organisational strategy. Mentees were provided with the agenda and reflective questions before meetings to guide their observations and mentoring sessions.
8. KB and MF met regularly throughout program delivery to reflect on their experiences and adjust the program in response to mentee feedback.

At the conclusion of the program, mentees participated in a 45-minute online focus group facilitated by KB and MF. This provided an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the program through the lens of the mentees experience and inform future iterations of the program.

All information is stored on the PRECI Google Drive.

## Method

### What were the characteristics of the mentees?

- Seven PRECI members participated in the mentorship program.
- Mentees came from five states (QLD, ACT, Vic, SA, WA).
- Mentees worked in for-profit and not-for-profit ECI services, universities and a research institute.
- Four mentees had previous experience on a board of management.
- Six mentees attended the focus group and one provided feedback to the questions by email.

### How did we record and analyse the information?

Following verbal permission from the mentees, the focus group was recorded through Zoom. The two facilitators also took written notes throughout the sessions.

A transcript of the focus group and the email feedback from one mentee was reviewed by both facilitators and common insights are provided below.

### What did we ask?

The facilitators focused discussion on three questions.

1. What part of the mentorship program was most valuable for you? Why?
2. How has this program influenced your understanding of board governance and decision-making?
3. If this program was run again, what changes or improvements would you recommend to make it more valuable for future mentees?

## Results

Mentee responses to the three evaluation questions are provided below.

### Q1. What part of the program was most valuable for you? Why?

Participants consistently identified the opportunity to observe board and subgroup meetings, combined with structured mentoring sessions, as the most valuable elements of the program.

Many participants highlighted the one-on-one discussions with mentors as particularly beneficial. These sessions provided space to reflect, ask questions, clarify governance processes, and explore issues in greater depth, helping participants build confidence and understanding over time.

Several participants noted that while full board meetings were informative, they could initially feel fast-paced and overwhelming. In contrast, participation in subgroups was widely regarded as especially valuable, as it offered deeper insight into how boards operate at a practical level, including decision-making, workload, accountability, and commitment. For some, this experience was more instructive than observing board meetings alone.

The provision of agendas and background information prior to meetings was also identified as an important enabler of learning, helping participants follow discussions, and understand roles and responsibilities—particularly in early meetings.

In addition, participants valued the program's openness and transparency, noting that being able to directly observe real board meetings was a learning opportunity not commonly available in similar boards. The high level of trust and respect between board directors was also noted. *"From my observations, there is an incredibly high degree of trust among members and a very clear commitment to PRECI's purpose above all else".*

Several participants also emphasised the importance of networking, including connections with board directors, mentors, and other mentees, which broadened their professional networks and exposure to the sector.

Overall, participants described the program as highly valuable for building practical governance understanding, confidence, and professional connections, particularly through hands-on exposure supported by reflection and mentoring.

### Q2. How has this program influenced your understanding of board governance and decision-making?

Participants reported that the program significantly strengthened their understanding of board governance and decision-making by providing direct exposure to real board processes, structures, and behaviours.

Several participants noted that observing board meetings helped clarify the distinction between strategic governance responsibilities and operational functions. In particular, participants gained insight into how large boards manage complexity through the use of subgroups, executive leadership, and clear delegation, in contrast to smaller boards where these functions are often combined.

Participants also highlighted the value of seeing governance principles enacted in practice. This

included adherence to organisational strategy, values, and vision, which were consistently reflected in board discussions and decision-making, particularly in relation to stakeholder engagement and strategic partnerships.

Participants observed a strong culture of open discussion, respectful disagreement, and shared expertise, reinforcing the importance of providing a 'safe' environment for collaborative decision making and collective accountability in effective governance. *"It's very clear that there's safety for people to be open and honest and share their opinions in a really respectful way. And I think the effort that goes into developing that safety, it doesn't just happen".*

The role of the Chair was identified as especially important, with participants noting the need for time management and clear meeting facilitation to enable efficient, inclusive, and focused decision-making.

Participants further noted the benefits of observing a diverse board composition, including practitioners and researchers, and experiencing online governance processes.

Overall, the program enhanced participants' practical understanding of how effective boards balance strategy, structure, collaboration, and efficiency in real-world decision-making contexts.

Q3. If this program were run again, what changes or improvements would you recommend to make it more valuable for future mentees?

Participants offered a range of constructive suggestions to further strengthen the program if it were run again, with a strong emphasis on earlier orientation, clearer understanding of board subgroups, and enhanced peer connection.

- Provide a more formalised induction at the beginning of the program.
- Provide a concise written overview of board and subcommittee functions, roles, and contacts to support understanding and engagement.
- Ensure earlier, more consistent, and 'expected' participation in a subgroup, ideally allowing mentees to attend multiple meetings of the same subgroup in order to actively contribute, and deliver a tangible outcome to the board.
- Improve opportunities for connection among mentees (e.g. facilitated group introductions, a buddy system, a closed online communication space to enable peer reflection and informal support throughout the program).
- Provide short group debriefs immediately following board meetings. These sessions would allow mentees to ask questions and share reflections, potentially reducing the demand on mentor's time while maximising collective learning.
- Formalise goal setting between mentors and mentees.
- Consider flexible or staggered intake points to the mentorship program to increase accessibility (e.g. deliver on a rolling basis over 12 months (with 4 x blocks) rather than in the 4 – 5 months leading up to the AGM).
- Ensure the length of the program continues to be individualised depending on the level of support required of the mentee and the time commitment for mentors.
- Consider themes related to governance for each reflection session. For example:
  - Board roles and responsibilities
  - Board decision-making process and conflict resolution
  - Board priorities and strategy

Overall, participants emphasised that the program was highly valuable in its current form, with suggested improvements focused on enhancing clarity, consistency, efficiency, and opportunities for deeper engagement.

## Outcomes

- Six mentees nominated for the four available positions on the board at the November AGM.
- One mentee chose not to nominate for personal reasons but expressed interest in participating through a subgroup and possible nomination for the board in 2027.
- Four mentees representing professionals and researchers from SA, Vic, ACT and QLD were elected to the board.
- Mentors built capabilities in developing and delivering the innovative program.
- Mentors and a mentee have been successful in their submission for a 'rapid-fire' presentation at the 2026 PRECI conference on the mentorship program.

Mentees indicated through the focus group and reflection sessions an enhanced understanding of board responsibilities, increased confidence in board participation, and stronger connections between mentees and board directors. Mentees reported that the program demystified governance structures and encouraged consideration of nomination to the board, while also identifying alternate avenues for active involvement in PRECI activities and further opportunities for learning and development.

## Final reflection

By way of closing the focus group, the facilitators asked the mentees to share one word to describe: a) how they feel about the mentor program, and b) how they feel about their future participation in PRECI. Their responses are provided as a word cloud below.



## Recommendations

For PRECI to:

- Continue to offer the mentorship program in 2026.
- Ensure a new PRECI director leads the 2026 program (KB has left the board).
- Adapt the mentorship program in line with the mentees feedback outlined above
- Ensure mentees that are now elected board directors have ongoing opportunity for reflection and feedback through a mentor or director 'buddy', particularly for the first 3-4 months of their new role.
- Strengthen the board induction program following mentee feedback (e.g. review in April/May 2026).
- Encourage PRECI directors to pursue training in governance and leadership in NFP organisations (e.g. [Institute of Community Directors Australia](#))

## Conclusion

The board mentorship program is an effective and innovative model for succession planning that promotes organisational sustainability by actively encouraging the participation of interested PRECI members and building leadership capabilities.

The PRECI mentors valued the opportunity as board directors to improve their understanding of PRECI members needs and develop a relationship with those who wanted to contribute to the Board. There was a significant time commitment required from the mentors to develop and implement the program. Having two PRECI mentors work together was critical to its success and will be important to consider in the future.