



Samuel Coutts (middle) and his father Lawrence (right), pictured alongside RBWH Acting Nurse Navigator and Ophthalmology Staff

# Samuel’s courage and faith guides his recovery to get his vision back

(Content Warning – The following article contains graphic details of an injury which some readers may find triggering)

It’s not every day that you hear a patient say, ‘Every time I have a hospital appointment I can’t wait to come’. For Lama Lama and Gugu Yimithirr man and Palm Island resident Samuel Coutts these are his exact words, and the ordeal that led him to feel this way is as equally unbelievable.

What began as a kind gesture of helping to fix a friend’s car quickly turned into something from a horror movie when Samuel ended up accidentally piercing himself in his right eye with his pocketknife while attempting to cut some zip ties loose from a valve on the motor of his friend Zina’s vehicle.

*“At first there was no pain, I was in shock. I didn’t believe this was happening,”* said Samuel.

After standing around dazed for a few minutes, Samuel soon came to realise what was happening, and that he did in fact have a knife lodged in his eye. Samuel’s mate Pauly, and brother to Zina, raced inside to his sister to call for help.

By the time Pauly and Zina rushed back over to Samuel, he had already removed the knife from his eye and tossed the knife to the ground. Overwhelmed by the shock of what had just occurred, and the pain he was experiencing, Samuel was unable to open either of his eyes and was carefully led inside by Zina.

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## Give us feedback

We welcome your feedback, contributions, story ideas and details on any upcoming events. Please contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team at [A\\_TSIHU\\_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au) or phone 07 3139 3235.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team

If you have any feedback regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team services, programs and initiatives, you can contact the following:

#### Mail to:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, Building 26, Chermide Community Health Centre, 490 Hamilton Road, Chermide QLD 4032.

#### Email to:

[A\\_TSIHU\\_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au)

*Metro North Hospital and Health Service would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which our services are located.*

*We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and future and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state.*

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this publication may contain images or names of people who have passed away.*

## Contact information

### Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer Ph: 3646 4154 / 0428 861 888

After hours PH 3647 4183 / 0428 861 888

### The Prince Charles Hospital

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer Ph: 3139 5165 / 0436 690 306

After Hours Ph: 3139 6429 / 0429 897 982

### Redcliffe Hospital

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer Ph: 3049 6791

After Hours Ph: 3049 9734

### Caboolture/Kilcoy Hospital

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Office Ph: 5433 8249

After Hours Ph: 5316 5481

### Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS):

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Office Ph: 3647 6044

### Community Indigenous Primary Health Team

Indigenous Community Health Team Ph: 3631 7379

### Indigenous Sexual Health Team

Clinical Nurse Consultant Ph: 3631 7379

### Indigenous Mental Health

Professional Lead Ph: 3646 2695

### Ngarrama Maternity Services

Caboolture Ph: 0439 732 970

Redcliffe Ph: 0407 251 890

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Ph: 0428 404 875

### Forensic Mental Health Service, Indigenous Mental Health Intervention Program

Forensic Mental Health Team Ph: 3234 0800



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## A word from the Executive Director



**Sherry Holzapfel**  
Executive Director, Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander  
Health

**On February 13, we recognised the 15-year anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations whose lives had been blighted by past government policies of forced child removal and assimilation.**

The exact number of children who were removed may never be known but there are very few families who have been left unaffected — in some families children from three or more generations were taken. The removal of children broke important cultural, spiritual and family ties and has left a lasting and intergenerational impact on the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We pause and reflect on this day for the hurt and suffering caused and stand in solidarity with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Some of Australia's most vulnerable people, many Stolen Generations survivors have kept their stories and experiences secret for decades.

I encourage you to take the time to listen to their stories, like Aunty Julie Black, a 64-year-old Barkindji woman, who was taken from her mother shortly after birth. Aunty Julie's story is heart breaking and courageous and reminds us that behind the Stolen Generations policies there were people, and children, who are still alive and in need of support - <https://healingfoundation.org.au/apology-2/>

Through hearing the resilient stories of Stolen Generations survivors there is now a willingness for Australians to join in on the healing journey.

At Metro North Health, we are proud to continue to share the voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for truth telling and solutions for the future towards greater reconciliation and health equity.

One such way is through our Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). In 2018 our first plan was launched by Community and Oral Health, and I am pleased that each area across Metro North Health continues the journey towards reconciliation with the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS) and now Caboolture, Kilcoy and Woodford launching their localised plans in 2022.

We are at our greatest when we listen, learn, and work together with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and this is evident with the actions outlined as part of the RAPs to create meaningful relationships, shared respect, and future opportunities for reconciliation.

I am pleased the RAPs will work parallel with the recently launched Metro North Health Equity Strategy to create a healthcare system and environment that provides care that is tailored to the individual needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Until next time, stay safe and deadly.

Sherry Holzapfel  
Executive Director, Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander Health

# My healthcare rights

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to:



## Access

- Healthcare services and treatment that meets your needs
- You and your family have the right to get healthcare that meets your/their needs

## Safety

- You and your family have the right to get safe and high quality healthcare
- Care in a space that is culturally safe and respectful

## Respect

- You and your family have the right to get respect when using a health service
- Your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander culture and identity is recognised and respected

## Partnership

- You and your family have the right to yarn and be involved in your/their own healthcare
- Family is great support, and if you wish, make sure you include family in on the yarn with healthcare providers
- You have the right to choose who you want involved in your care planning



If you need help, ask to speak to the Indigenous Health Liaison Officer.

## Information

- You have the right to get information about your health to make informed decisions and give consent
- Get information about your health. This includes cost, wait times and services
- If you don't understand any information, make sure you ask for help so the information you are getting about your health is clear and easy to understand
- Get as much information before you give consent or say yes to any treatment, test or procedure
- You must be informed about every aspect of the healthcare that is being provided to you, for e.g. what is involved in a procedure or test, what happens after, what is done to ensure your safety and importantly be told if something goes wrong with your healthcare

## Privacy

- Healthcare staff must respect you and your family's privacy
- Healthcare staff must keep your information safe and confidential

## Give Feedback

- You and your family have the right to give feedback
- This can be a complaint or a compliment
- Healthcare staff must listen to what you have said and address your concerns in a respectful, open and timely way
- Feedback from you and your family helps to make the healthcare better for other families in our community. We all work better together to keep ourselves, our family and our community all healthy and healthy

This resource was adapted from the second edition of the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights.

These rights apply to all people in all places where health care is provided in Australia. The Charter describes what you, or someone you care for, can expect when receiving health care.

For more information: [safetyandquality.gov.au/your-rights](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/your-rights)

Adapted from The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights, developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC). ACSQHC: Sydney 2019.



Supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership team.

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# A word from the Chief Executive



**Metro North Health is committed to health equity and closing the gap in healthcare outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In addition to our Health Equity Strategy launched last year, we developed Reconciliation Action Plans for each of our hospitals.**

We are also committed to increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare employees. This year, Metro North Health is very pleased to support the expansion of the Deadly Start education to employment program across the state. This great employment pathway program provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students an opportunity to establish meaningful careers in health by undertaking studies and employment through Year 11 and Year 12.

The expansion has seen more than 185 student enrolments across the state in areas between the Gold Coast and Cairns including Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Sunshine Coast. With the overwhelming interest in the Deadly Start School Based Traineeship, we envision regional and remote areas across Central West, South West and North West Queensland will engage in the program in 2024.

Students in Metro North are undertaking training in administration, oral health, nursing, and allied health roles. The Board has also committed to offering Metro North Deadly Start graduates with ongoing employment as they move into university or higher education studies.

Metro North Health wishes all the students the best of luck for the remainder of their training and into their careers in healthcare.

Last year Metro North and BreastScreen Queensland launched the Sistas Shawl for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women having a breast screen through the service. Regular screening is essential to catch breast cancer early and start treatment as soon as possible. Since we introduced the Sistas Shawl in October, we have seen more than 155 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women present for breast screening. Women over 40 can access free breast screens through BreastScreen Queensland services and women over 50 should have a screen every two years.

This year we will open the new clinical services building and carpark at Caboolture Hospital as part of the hospital's major redevelopment. The redevelopment has included extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure a culturally inviting and supportive environment. The new carpark features beautiful artwork including a bunya pine on the exterior.

Kind regards,

**Jackie Hanson**  
Chief Executive  
Metro North Health

*Bunya pine artwork by Elaine Chambers-Hegarty.*



Continued from page 1 >

Sitting on a chair inside the house, Samuel waited for the ambulance to arrive. Zina's son, and godson to Samuel, Ataevias, had come into the room to see what was going on. Despite the immense pain Samuel was experiencing, he courageously held himself together and put on a brave face in front of Ataevias.

"I was worried if I showed him the pain I was feeling that I may traumatise him. I asked him to place his hand on my shoulder and told him that I was going to be ok," said Samuel.

In what felt like forever, Ataevias helped to distract Samuel from the pain he was feeling and was Samuel's strength through what he has described as the most agonising pain he has felt in his life.

Once the ambulance arrived and Samuel was on his way to the Townsville Hospital, he expressed to the paramedics the unbelievable pain he was in, who then immediately provided him with pain relief.

He immediately went to emergency surgery at Townsville Hospital, with doctors reassuring Samuel they will do all they can to save his eye, however they also told Samuel what they would need to do if they couldn't.

A devout Christian who attends church every Sunday, Samuel told the doctors that he had faith in them, and that he believed everything would work out fine and that he would wake up with his eye intact, which is exactly what happened.

After coming out of surgery, his eye now stitched up, Samuel was advised that he would need to be flown down to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) to undergo further surgery.

The next day Samuel boarded the plane, alongside his father Lawrence who has been by Samuel's side every step of the way. Upon touching down safely in Brisbane and arriving at the RBWH, Samuel was admitted and taken immediately for more surgery.

Coming out of his second surgery, Samuel was placed in the Ophthalmology ward, alongside other patients who were also in recovery.

*"I have never received care like they provided me at the RBWH. I'm in the room and they're just caring for me, constantly checking up on me,"* said Samuel.

Samuel said the support he received from the Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officers (IHLO) and the Nurse Navigator, and his willingness to stay in hospital and receive the care he needed was instrumental in his recovery.

*"I was made to feel so comfortable and cared for,"*

Samuel said.

"Caleb [IHLO] took me to the shops and back, that stuff is unheard of in other hospitals. You would have to do that by yourself. Being away from your community and your comfort zone, and to get that type of help, it was such a blessing".

As Samuel's recovery was during the height of COVID-19, visitor restrictions meant his father Lawrence could only visit him at certain times during the day.

"Yashni [Nurse Navigator] organised for my dad to get a special pass that allowed him to visit me," he said.

"I was feeling really alone, so to have my dad be able to just sit there and yarn to me eased my mind and my pain. Things like that, she [Yashni] just helped out, she knew I wanted my father there and she just basically made it happen. Yashni is a legend."

Yashni would often check in on Samuel to see how he was going, and supported Samuel in obtaining medication when he was in immense pain. The medical staff caring for Samuel in the Ophthalmology ward also made his time at the RBWH one to remember.

"Everybody cares for you. Whether it's a different nurse who is taking over, they just care for you. I honestly felt really cared for and loved, and felt like I was an actual person, and not just a patient," Samuel said.

"If I wanted extra blankets, because I wasn't used to the cold, and it was winter, they would give me extra blankets and pillows so that I was comfortable. It was like I had a motel room in a hospital, and my father was the butler, who would do anything for me."

Samuel rated the care he received at the RBWH a 15 out of 10.

"Honestly, from my point of view, I can't really put a number on it. For us Indigenous people, we don't really like going to hospitals because we feel frightened, and don't like getting rejected. The care I received at RBWH was beyond anything I thought hospitals do," said Samuel.



(L-R) Lawrence Coutts, Samuel Coutts and Acting RBWH Nurse Navigator Cathy Maher.

Due to his need of ongoing medical treatment and plans to have a lens inserted into his eye to improve his vision, Samuel will continue coming to the RBWH for another year or two to receive care.

"'You're looking good to get your vision back', that's what the doctors said to me. To me that is hope. That keeps me going," said Samuel.

His shining positivity through such a traumatic time in his life is nothing short of inspiring, and Samuel hopes by sharing his story he will encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access health services and hospitals and seek health care when they need to.

"Don't be frightened to go to this hospital [RBWH], and don't be frightened to ask for help, because you will get help. Somebody will help you. And if they don't, I will ring my girl Yashni up, and she will be able to fix it up," said Samuel.

To this day Samuel says when he enters the front doors of the RBWH and heads up the escalator, he feels like he is treated as if he is someone special.

"I would like to thank all the staff that ever helped me, even if they pushed me up to the room or operating theatre, I want them to know how grateful I am of the care they showed me," said Samuel.

*"That hospital has honestly won my heart over. I will vouch for that place. The RBWH has been an absolute blessing."*

# OUTandABOUT

## TPCH staff and community acknowledged for their commitment towards achieving health equity

In late December 2022, The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) held their inaugural TPCH NAIDOC and Reconciliation Excellence Awards at the Birrunnga Art Gallery as part of their TPCH Charlies Week celebrations.

Metro North Health Board Members, TPCH executives and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff came together to celebrate the achievements of fellow colleagues and community members.

The awards recognised the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, community members and non-Indigenous staff who work towards achieving a culturally safe, appropriate, and respectful healing experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing care at TPCH.



### We are pleased to announce the following award recipients:

#### **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owner Award**

Songwoman Aunty Maroochy Barambah

#### **Elders Award**

Aunty Merle Cashman and Uncle Alex Davidson

#### **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Aleacha Hopkins, Team Leader, Indigenous Hospital Liaison Service, TPCH

#### **Cultural Governance Award**

Michelle Pieper, Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer, TPCH

Samuel Tochtermann-Talbott, Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer, TPCH/STARS

#### **Clinical Excellence towards achieving Health Equity Award**

Carl Francia, Physiotherapist, Allied Health, TPCH

#### **Rising Stars of First Nations Health Award**

Samuel Tochtermann-Talbott, Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer, TPCH/STARS

#### **Community Partnership Award**

Kurbingui Youth and Family Development

#### **Equality and Equity Award**

Kevin Clark, Nursing Director, Internal Medicine Service, TPCH

#### **Race Relations Award**

Cherie Franks, Director of Nursing, TPCH

#### **Reconciliation Unity Award**

Hayden Beilby, Office Manager, Indigenous Outreach Programs, TPCH

Patsi Mawn, former Indigenous Project Officer, Indigenous Outreach Programs, TPCH

Dearne Dodd, Indigenous Project Officer, Indigenous Outreach Program, TPCH

Donna Mason, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Indigenous Outreach Programs, TPCH

Prof Kwun Fong, Thoracic Physician, TPCH

Mark French, Clinical Nurse, Chest Pain Assessment Service, TPCH

#### **Institutional Integrity Award**

Dr Philip Masel, Thoracic Physician, TPCH



# OUTandABOUT

## Award recipients continued...

### Truth Telling Award

Tami Photinos, Executive Director, TPCH

The evening provided an opportunity for TPCH executive team to acknowledge the commitment staff display each day in their roles, and their tireless efforts toward achieving health equity and bettering the health outcomes and experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



(L-R) Metro North Board member Dr Robert Franz presenting award to recipient Carl Francia, Physiotherapist, Allied Health, TPCH.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians providing entertainment for the night.



(L-R) Candice Meaghan, TPCH staff member enjoying awards night with her mum.



Metro North Board and executive members celebrating achievements with staff.



Aunty Merle being presented with her award by Board Member Bonny Barry.



# OUTandABOUT

## Acknowledgement of commitment

As Metro North Health moves forward in the health equity journey to creating a culturally safe and responsive health care service, Sherry Holzapfel, Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, has recognised and acknowledged all the great and hard work that hospitals and community health services are already doing in this space.

To show her support and appreciation, Sherry recently visited hospitals and health services across Metro North Health and presented each directorate with a framed Health Equity statement of commitment, thanking everyone for their continued hard work and commitment towards improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Each Executive Director received their framed statement of commitment with pride ensuring that it will be hung up in a special place to be on display, serving as a reminder of their dedication to continuously work towards providing better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Caboolture/Kilcoy Hospitals / Woodford Corrections



Community and Oral Health Services



Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital



Redcliffe Hospital



Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS)



The Prince Charles Hospital

# OUTandABOUT

## Raising awareness for bowel cancer



*Tinus Dorante from Balaman Wellness enjoying the days festivities.*

**The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and Oral Health team, in partnership with Cancer Council Queensland and the Metro North Better Together Health Van, have come together to raise awareness of men's bowel cancer within community.**

By holding the Men's Bowel Cancer Awareness Day at Brighton, the aim was to create a culturally safe environment to discuss men's business and provide a place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men within the community to feel comfortable discussing the uncomfortable.

Bowel cancer is one of the most common cancers impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with an increased risk as you get older, but is often the cancer no one likes to talk about or often feel shame to test for. Regular screening can help detect the early signs of bowel cancer and if found early, 90 percent of bowel cancers can be successfully treated.

The Men's Bowel Cancer Awareness Day was held late last year at the Brighton Wellness Hub with approximately twenty men in attendance, yarning in a safe and relaxed environment to discuss bowel cancer, signs and risk factors, and the Bowel Screening Program.

Guest speakers included clinicians, Health for Life, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men from Metro North Health and community. The event also included free men's haircuts by Balaman Wellness, lawn bowls, free resources and kits, and a special BBQ hosted by the Sandgate and District Men's Shed.

If you would like to learn more about the Bowel Screening Program and how to access the easy at-home test kit visit: <https://www.cancer.org.au/bowelscreening/first-nations-communities#why>

## Excelling in Health Equity

The Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team worked tirelessly throughout 2022 creating a Metro North health equity strategy that reflected the voices of their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

After a year of hard work and dedication, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team attended the annual Metro North Health Staff Excellence Awards where they were recognised for their incredible achievements over the past 12 months.

The team cleaned up on the night winning two awards, First Nations Staff – Advocacy for health equity and better outcomes for First Nations people, and Improving First Nations health.

Team members Layla Scott, Manager for Health Equity, and Ricko Abednego, Health Equity Key Lead and Manager for Capacity Development, were also recipients of highly commended awards for their ongoing commitment, hard work and dedication to the Metro North health equity agenda.

Metro North Palliative Care Equity Working Group and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital - Women's Business Service were also recognised for their continuous hard work contributing to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health by receiving highly commended awards.

The two new First Nations award categories were introduced at the 2022 Metro North Health Staff Excellence Awards as part of Metro North Health's dedication to supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and encouraging health equity across all health services.

Staff in attendance enjoyed a special night of celebration recognising colleagues' achievements over a two-course meal and ending the night showcasing their deadly moves on the dance floor.

The team were overwhelmed by the recognition and praise they received by other colleagues, who showed their appreciation for all the work that has been achieved on the journey towards creating a culturally safe and inclusive health service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

If you would like to view the Metro North Health Equity Strategy 2022 – 2025 visit: <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/health-equity>



## Racial Equity Cards



**Let's talk about...**

**RACIAL EQUITY AND  
Respect**

**VALUES  
IN ACTION**

**We uphold our commitment to racial equity through our Values in Action.**

- Invite conversation
- Speak up for listening
- Be mindful

**Respect • Integrity • Compassion  
High performance • Teamwork**

**Metro North Health** |  **Queensland Government**

Metro North Health made the decision in 2018 to make our values more than words, putting our values into action every day and at every opportunity. Our values represent who we are and what we care about: respect, integrity, compassion, high performance, teamwork. Values in Action is our way of working - delivering better experiences for those who use our services and creating great places for our staff to work.

Metro North Health People and Culture, alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, have recently introduced racial equity cards, to evaluate staff understanding of racial equity, and the impacts racial trauma may have as a barrier to our values in action.

The racial equity cards, split into five categories to align with each of the five existing values in action, will be used as a supporting tool for staff to provide their views, perspective, and feedback on racial equity, contributing to ensuring organisational values are equitable. The addition of the racial equity cards will ensure all staff uphold and display the behaviours of; invite conversation, speak up for listening and be mindful.

These behaviours will ensure Metro North Health staff are fostering safe and comfortable working environments, which will then enable staff to effectively contribute to ensuring the delivery of high-quality person-centered care that is culturally responsive, empowers self-care and choice, and is designed to improve the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Metro North Health is proud to be a values-driven organisation where promoting behaviours that support our values, and that hold us accountable to our actions, are integral to looking after the wellbeing of our staff, whilst also finding ways to promote fun at work, even during the most challenging times.

The first of the five racial equity cards to be released, in line with the first value, is 'racial equity and respect'. As Metro North Health continues their commitment and dedication towards sustaining a culturally equitable and safe network across their health service, that encourages authentic, safe, and generative for conversations about race, it is imperative that conversations continue to be led about race that are intentional, effective, insightful, and compassionate – aligning to the five values in action.

# OUTandABOUT



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and MATSICHs Strathpine staff attending a breast screening morning at BSQ Chermerside clinic.

## Sistas Shawl sees screening rates soar

The launch of the Sistas Shawl, a collaboration between BreastScreen Queensland (BSQ) Brisbane Northside Service and Metro North Health, has led to a significant increase in breast screening rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on Brisbane's Northside.

The Sistas Shawl, featuring 'A Woman's Dreaming' artwork by Aboriginal artist Sharon McAvoy, is given to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who present for a breast screen at a BSQ Brisbane Northside Service clinic, to provide a culturally appropriate experience.

BSQ Brisbane Northside Service has confirmed that an astonishing 132 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women attended for a breast screen between October to December 2022, a 5.5% increase in screening rates compared to screening rates recorded between October to December 2021.

On 22 November 2022, the BSQ Chermerside clinic hosted a special breast screening morning specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and clients of the Moreton Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (MATSICHs).

Banding together on the day, 18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and women were supported by staff from the MATSICHs Strathpine clinic to attend their breast screening appointment and participate in this very important health screening measure.

The feedback BSQ Brisbane Northside Service received on the day by MATSICHs Strathpine clients indicates that the group screening day was a success, and that we're likely to see the screening rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on Brisbane's Northside continue to climb, thanks in part to the introduction of the Sistas Shawl.

*The shawl is very beautiful and also made me feel comfortable when having the screen done.*

*Having the connection to culture made it more comfortable coming in. Plus, staff were amazing.*

*What a beautiful gesture and a treasured token. Thank you*

*Beautiful. Great initiative. Will make people feel safe.*



# BreastScreen Queensland



*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Women's Sistas Shawl*

**Get your  
free Sistas  
Shawl!**

## Stay healthy and strong for your Mob

BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service would like to invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to book their free breast screen.

We offer breast screening to women aged 40 and over. Breast screening is most effective for women aged 50 to 74.

A Sistas Shawl will be given to women attending their breast screen, which can also be used as a privacy wrap. The Sistas Shawl aims to provide a sense of safety and comfort for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

## Brisbane Northside Locations:

- Chermside
- Brisbane City
- Indooroopilly
- Keperra
- Redcliffe
- North Lakes

To find out more or to make an appointment call us on **13 20 50** or go to **[breastscreen.qld.gov.au](http://breastscreen.qld.gov.au)**



**Queensland  
Government**



## Showcasing health equity

**Chief Executive of Metro North Health Jackie Hanson, and Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Sherry Holzapfel have committed to conducting annual showcases presenting exceptional services and initiatives delivered with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as part of the Metro North Health Equity Strategy.**

In December 2022, Metro North Health held the first Metro North Health's Journey to Health Equity - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Showcase. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community members, staff and executive were invited to attend this yearly event to learn and hear about some key initiatives and services Metro North Health are delivering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The initiatives on showcase are designed to support and increase positive health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as align to at least one of the five key performance areas outlined within the Metro North health equity strategy:

- 1. Eliminate racism** – Actively eliminating racial discrimination and institutional racism within the service
  - 2. Access** – Increasing access to healthcare services
  - 3. Culturally safe and responsive system** – Delivering sustainable, culturally safe and responsive healthcare services
  - 4. Social determinants of health** – Influencing the social, cultural and economic determinants of health
  - 5. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** – Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations to design, deliver, monitor and review health services
- Everyone in attendance came together to enjoy a day of networking, watching live entertainment, traditional dancing and singing by Tribal Experiences and Torres Strait Islander Urban Family Dance Group, and listening to some of the amazing initiatives happening throughout Metro North Health.
- Some of the initiatives presented at the showcase included:
- Health Equity Strategy Implementation Plan
  - Targeting Racial Equity in Metro North Health
  - Health Equity in Recruitment processes
  - Key Health Equity Communications and Planning activities
  - Community and Engagement activities/events
  - Clinical Strategy and Innovation
  - Urban Indigenous Respiratory Outreach Clinic (UROC)
  - Mental Health Consumer, Community and Staff Engagement activities
  - Caboolture, Kilcoy and Woodford Reconciliation Action Plan
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community of Practice, Community and Oral Health
  - Sistas Shawl, BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service
  - Deadly Opportunities – Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS) journey towards health equity
  - Ngarrama maternity and Strong Start to Life
  - Deadly RED – Redcliffe Hospital
- If you would like to learn about any of these programs, please email the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team at [A\\_TSIHU\\_MNHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:A_TSIHU_MNHS@health.qld.gov.au).



(L-R): Natasha White, Manager of Systems and Performance A&TSILT and Aurora Hodges, PEPA Manager

## Kam Biman Project supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders on their Returning to Spirit journey

Late last year Metro North Health staff attended the launch of the Kam Biman project. Kam Biman, which means ‘cover’ in Gubbi Gubbi language, offers beautiful blankets to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Metro North patients who are on their Returning to Spirit (palliative care) journey. Intended to provide warmth and comfort when accessing palliative and end-of-life care in hospital. Families are encouraged to keep the cover as a symbolic token of their loved one after they have returned to Spirit.

Sorry Business Consultant and former PEPA Queensland Indigenous Project Officer Eliza Munro was inspired to develop and deliver the project by her Aunt and Gamilaroi Elder Mary Munro, who hand-crocheted a blanket to cover those who had returned to Spirit and were being viewed by loved ones in the Armidale hospital mortuary on Anaiwan Country.

The project was funded by a grant from the Metro North Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team to PEPA (Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach) Queensland and had enthusiastic support from Aurora Hodges, PEPA Queensland Manager.

“It was wonderful to attend the launch of Kam Biman,” said John Haberecht, Palliative Care Queensland Interim CEO. “Cultural aspects of end-of-life care can often be overlooked, and initiatives such as this help connect communities with care and break down barriers which may have previously prevented patients and families seeking care.”

“We believe passionately that everyone should have access to quality care regardless, and initiatives such as Kam Biman should be applauded as they will make a genuine and positive difference. On behalf of Palliative Care Queensland, I would like to congratulate Aurora and Eliza on the launch of the project and Metro North for their leadership through their support of Kam Biman,” said John.



## Yarning with Maddy and Jamie

We recently caught up with Ngemba woman Maddy, and Kullilli and Butchulla woman Jamie, graduates of the Metro North Health Deadly Start school-based traineeship program.

The Deadly Start program provides a culturally supportive pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students to kick start a career in health through a Certificate II and III traineeship. In an effort to achieve health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Metro North Health have committed to offering ongoing employment to all Deadly Start graduates upon successful completion of their traineeship.

Read on to hear more about Maddy and Jamie's journey since graduating from the Deadly Start program and becoming employees of Caboolture Hospital.



### Maddy Wiggs

Allied Health Assistant, Physiotherapy

#### Why did you apply for Deadly Start?

I chose to apply for Deadly Start as I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, but I knew I was interested in healthcare.

#### Now that you have completed your Deadly Start traineeship, what are you doing?

I am studying a Bachelor of Physiotherapy fulltime at Australian Catholic University, whilst continuing to work as an allied health assistant (AHA) in the physiotherapy department at Caboolture Hospital. I am also in the process of commencing a cadetship as a physiotherapy assistant through the Metro North Health Allied Health Indigenous Cadetship program.

#### What do you like most about working as an AHA at Caboolture Hospital?

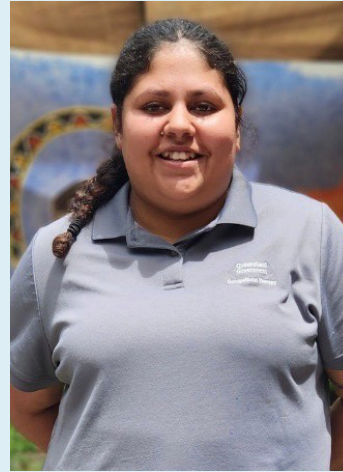
I like seeing the progress patients make physically and mentally in their health care journey, and the trust they build in us as staff supporting them.

#### Has there been a career highlight for you since working as an AHA at Caboolture Hospital?

Providing physiotherapy support to patients in the intensive care unit (ICU) and seeing their progress has been a highlight for me. It has been rewarding to provide care to ICU patients and to learn more about ICU.

#### How has the Deadly Start Program helped you?

I wouldn't be where I am today without the Deadly Start program. I didn't even get the right ATAR to get into the university course I am currently in. Completing the Deadly Start program provided me an alternative pathway into university. Everything I learnt during my Deadly Start traineeship helped me a lot at university, it gave me a head start.



### Jamie-Lee Black

Clinical Assistant, Occupational Therapy

#### Why did you apply for Deadly Start?

I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but I knew I really liked helping people. When I heard that the Deadly Start Program offered a traineeship in social

work, I decided to apply. I ended up doing my traineeship in occupational therapy (OT) which I really enjoyed.

#### What does Occupational Therapy involve?

We help patients to get back to their 'normal', or as close as we can. I often help with personal care activities like bed side grooming. This includes encouraging and supporting patients to do everyday tasks like brushing their teeth and combing their hair.

#### What are some ways you care for your wellbeing after an emotionally challenging day at work?

I like reading, I read a lot. That's one way I make sure to give my brain a break, as well as listening to music. Discussing how I feel with the other OTs helps too. I feel better when I talk about it, and not allowing it to build up.

#### What has been a highlight for you in your role?

I had this one patient who was quite lonely and down. I tried to lift his spirits, but he didn't seem too interested in engaging with me. Eventually he agreed to let me take him out for a walk in his wheelchair which he ended up enjoying. A few days later I heard a man shout out 'Hey Jamie!' from a room on the ward. It was the same man, he had moved rooms and asked where I had been as he had been waiting for me to take him out for another walk. It warmed my heart. Seeing the positive change in him was really rewarding.

#### What would you say to high school students who are considering applying for a Deadly Start traineeship?

I encourage them to apply. It gives you a head start in your career, and you learn a lot of new skills. The Deadly Start program provided a supportive environment for me to learn in and an opportunity connect with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students who were on the same journey as me.



# IN FOCUS

## Opportunistic Bowel Screening Program commences at STARS

The Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Opportunistic Bowel Screening Program (OBSP) has commenced at Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS), aiming to offer eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hospital inpatients the option for an alternative pathway into the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program to increase bowel screening rates.

Bowel cancer has been recorded as the second most common cause of cancer related deaths in Australia on the National Cancer Register (2022), however early detection of bowel cancer can result in improved rates of survival and quality of life.

It has been identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lower bowel screening participation rates in comparison to Non-Indigenous Australians, which is believed to be due to embarrassment, lack of knowledge, lack of trust in health services, and lack of culturally appropriate bowel screening education resources available.

The Metro North Health OBSP will be led by the Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officers (IHLO) within Metro North Health facilities, delivering culturally appropriate bowel cancer and screening information to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inpatients.

IHLOs will dispense a free bowel testing kit to all eligible inpatients that agree to participate in the project, with all inpatients offered support and privacy in completing their bowel screening test during their admission.

The project has been established to promote community knowledge and encourage involvement in the bowel cancer screening program to improve detection, intervention, and health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

By empowering and supporting participation in bowel screening, the OBSP project aims to increase knowledge and awareness of bowel cancer, and the importance of bowel screening, with the hope that information inpatients receive is then shared with their family and community upon discharge from hospital.

Please contact [MN\\_OBSP@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:MN_OBSP@health.qld.gov.au) for further information.

## WORD OF THE MONTH

**“Gaire-le”**  
is People in Meriam Mir language.

**Meriam Mir (also written as Miriam Mer) is the Language of the Eastern Islands of the Torres Strait. Linguistically, it is connected to the Papuan languages of the Austronesian family of languages. There are two regional dialects:**

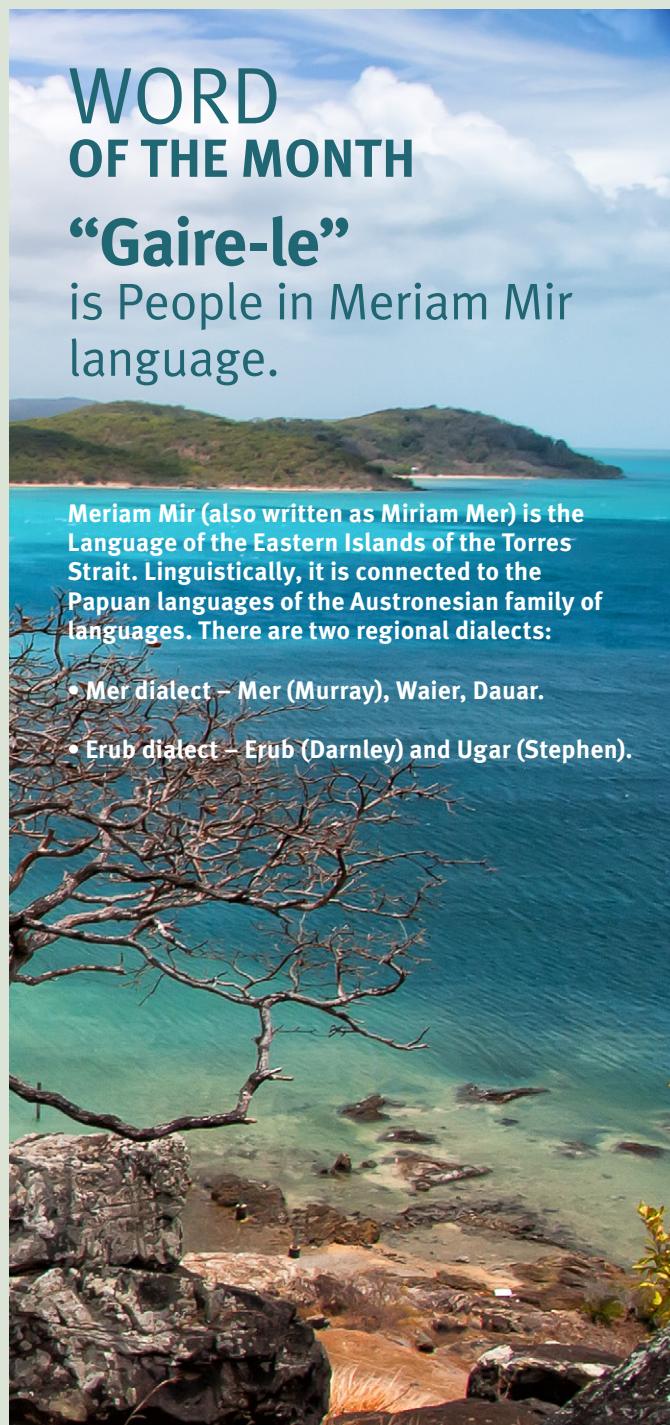
- Mer dialect – Mer (Murray), Waier, Dauar.
- Erub dialect – Erub (Darnley) and Ugar (Stephen).



“It’s a very simple test that can give a lot of peace of mind”.

- Simone,  
Awabakal Country

**Stay healthy and strong.**



# STAFF PROFILE

## A Day in the Life of: Dakota Ellington

### Project Support Officer, Deadly Start Traineeship Program

#### Q1. Tell me about your family history and where you come from.

I am a proud Kuku Yalanji, Kuku Nyungkal, Saibai Island and South Sea Island woman. I was born in Mackay but grew up in the small mining town of Glenden. We would often be on the road visiting family between Mackay and Mossman, Far North Queensland.

#### Q2. What is your role within Metro North Health, and what does a typical day look like for you in your role?

I am a Project Support Officer in the Deadly Start Traineeship Program. My role consists of case management and building relationships with the young person themselves, and the different stakeholders in their life. I focus on taking a person-centred approach and tailoring my work to suit each individual young person and their support needs.

#### Q3. What inspired you to pursue a career in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health?

I have recently transferred into this role from having worked in youth work with young mob. My focus is empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to be the best version of themselves and ensuring they have the tools and skills to build confidence and resilience in different aspects of their life. To do that within the Indigenous Health sector is important as we are helping young people to close the gap, advocate for themselves and their health, and taking care of their community also. My grandmother was a leader within Indigenous health in her community and I often think of her contribution that she made throughout her life.

#### Q4. What has been a career highlight for you?

Being able to see the growth in young people when they know they can trust their advocates and build confidence within themselves.

#### Q5. What do you hope to achieve in your role over the next six months?

I'm wanting to build security and safe spaces for our students.

#### Q6. Why are you proud to identify?

It's who I am, it's my identity. Growing up we always knew who we were, where we were from and to be proud to be us.





# Better Together Medication Access

## Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Origin?

Better Together Medication Access will cover all out of pocket expenses for prescribed discharge medication for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people discharging from a Metro North Health Service.

Better Together Medication Access is only available through Metro North Health Pharmacy Services.

### How it works



You will be asked 'Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Origin?'. Health Service staff must ask you the question, we cannot assume upon appearance.



If you identify, regardless of age, you will be eligible for Better Together Medication Access.



Better Together Medication Access is Metro North Health Service wide and will be available from 1 October 2020.



Talk to Staff caring for you for more information.

By identifying you will receive support from culturally appropriate services including our Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officers to assist your healthcare journey and recovery back to community.

For further information, contact your local Metro North Hospital and Health Service Pharmacy Team.



**Metro North Health**

# Better Together Health Van

The Better Together Health Van is a free community service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on the North Side of Brisbane (from Brisbane River to Kilcoy), providing access to:

- Health promotion and education
- Opportunistic health screening
- An avenue to yarn with a health care provider to provide feedback on hospital experience and healthcare journey
- Opportunity to co-design healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and supporting health staff.

## How to access the Van?

Visit our website for up-to-date locations of the Van  
[metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/better-together-van](http://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/better-together-van)

Follow our Facebook Page @ BetterTogetherHealthVan for information on locations, upcoming events, important health information and community stories.

## Make a booking

If you would like to request the Van visits your community or event, contact the Metro North Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team to make a booking on (07) 3139 6621 or email [Bettersogetherhealthvan@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Bettersogetherhealthvan@health.qld.gov.au)

The service is owned and operated by Metro North Health. The Better Together Health Van will be utilised as an extension of Metro North Health in creating engagement activities and developing partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers, families and community organisations.

We welcome your feedback, contributions, story ideas and details on any upcoming events.

Please contact the Manager, Communications at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team on [A\\_TSIHU\\_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au) or phone (07) 3139 3235.

