

TALK-ABOUT

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The official Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Newsletter

Metro North
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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_TSILT_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au or phone **07 3170 4460**.

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:

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team
Level 4, Chermside Galleria, 831 Gympie Road, Chermside QLD 4032

Email to:

A_TSILT_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au

Metro North Health 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 / 0429 897 982**

After Hours **Ph: 3139 6622 / 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 5157**

Senior Health Worker **Ph: 5316 5390**

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

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Ngarrama Maternity Services

Caboolture **Ph**

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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Executive Director



Happy New Year! I hope you all had a wonderful and restful break over the festive period. I shared the joy of my first Christmas with my grandson Henry and making special memories with my family.

Thank you to our dedicated frontline staff for continuing to work over the Christmas period and provide essential care services to the community.

This year our leadership team will focus on relationship building. I intend to get out and about across Metro North Health to work in collaboration with staff, patients and consumers, and stakeholders to ensure culturally appropriate programs and projects meet the diverse needs of our community.

We have an extensive calendar of events to support our engagement opportunities in 2025 (enclosed), I encourage you to keep an eye out for more information on upcoming events via our Better Together – Our Health, Our Way social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn), and we hope you can join us.

A key focus in 2025 will be the redevelopment of our *Metro North Health Equity Strategy 2025 – 2028* in partnership and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community and key stakeholders. We will look at key priorities currently in progress from our 2022 – 2025 strategy and focus on how we can continue to deliver and improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team will continue to support efforts to influence systems and governance within Metro North Health to provide innovative and culturally responsive service delivery.

Another important measure will be the ongoing development of culturally appropriate screening tools, referral pathways and community linkages in priority areas, ensuring accessibility for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals.

The Better Together Health Van plays a significant role in improving access for services and more focus will be driven towards our hard to reach and vulnerable communities. I am pleased we are currently recruiting to a Program Manager Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker to be attached to the Better Together Health Van, further increasing our outreach capacity and service delivery across Metro North Health.

Patient feedback is an important measure to continuously improve, expand and grow our services. Thank you to Aunty Hazel from Bribie Island for sharing her positive experience at Bribie Island Satellite Hospital (Yarun) and other ways we can improve communication, access and care across our organisation.

If you have any feedback to share or requests for support, please contact our team on [A TSILT_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:TSILT_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au)

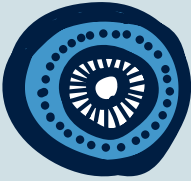


Until next time, stay safe and deadly.

Adj. Prof. Sherry Holzapfel
Executive Director,
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Health

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team 2025 Calendar Events

*Please note: the below dates are subject to change

MONTH	EVENT	DATE
February 	A&TSILT Wellbeing and Planning Day (Internal)	Wednesday 26 February
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Gathering (Internal)	Thursday 13 February
	Anniversary of National Apology Day On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the National Apology to Australia's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the injustices of past government policies, particularly to the Stolen Generations.	Thursday 13TH February
March 	Metro North Close the Gap Day Event (External)	Thursday 20 March
	National Close the Gap Day National Close the Gap Day, observed on the third Thursday in March, raises awareness and seeks to close the gap with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, educational and employment outcomes between Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and non-Indigenous Australians.	Thursday 20 March
April 	Health Equity Community Consultation – Session 1 (External)	Thursday 10 April
May 	SEWB Staff Wellness Expo (Internal)	Thursday 1 May
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Gathering (Internal)	Thursday 8 May
	National Sorry Day National Sorry Day provides an opportunity for people to come together and share the journey towards healing for the Stolen Generations, their families and communities.	Monday 26 May
	1967 Referendum The 1967 Referendum was a landmark achievement following decades of activism by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people, where more than 90 percent of Australians voted in favour of amending two sections of the Australian Constitution.	Tuesday 27 May
	National Reconciliation Week National Reconciliation Week celebrations commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey- the anniversaries of the successful 1967 Referendum and the High Court Mabo Decision.	27 May – 3 June
June 	Mabo Day celebration event (External)	Tuesday 3 June
	Mabo Day On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia overturned the principle of “terra nullius” or “nobody’s land” as claimed by the British when they first arrived in this country. The decision has paved the way for Native Title legislation.	Tuesday 3 June

MONTH	EVENT	DATE
July 	NAIDOC Week and community events/celebrations	Sunday 6 July – Sunday 13 July
	Health Equity Showcase - Session 1 (External)	Tuesday 1 July
	Coming of the Light The Coming of the Light is celebrated annually by Torres Strait Islander peoples. It marks the adoption of Christianity through island communities during the late nineteenth century.	Tuesday 1 July
	NAIDOC Week NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia to celebrate history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	6 – 14 July
August 	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Gathering (Internal)	Thursday 7 August
	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about the crucial impact that community, culture and family play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.	Monday 4 August
	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples On this day, people from around the world are encouraged to spread the United Nation's message on the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous peoples.	Saturday 9 August
September 	Health Equity Community Consultation - Session 2 (External)	Thursday 11 September
	Indigenous Literacy Day Indigenous Literacy Day is a national celebration of culture, stories, language and literacy. This day raises awareness of the disadvantages experienced in remote communities and advocates for more access to literacy resources.	Wednesday 3 September
	Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007.	Saturday 13 September
October 	Queensland Mental Health Week	5 – 13 October
	Women's cultural gathering day (Internal)	Thursday 30 October
	Men's cultural gathering day (Internal)	Thursday 23 October
November	Health Equity Showcase - Session 2 (External)	Thursday 20 November
	Men's Health Gathering (Movember Day) (External)	TBC
December 	End of Year – Elders Luncheon (External)	Wednesday 3 December
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Gathering and Deadly Awards (Internal)	Thursday 11 December

A word from Metro North Health Chief Executive



Metro North Health has a strong commitment to improve health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To ensure our community receive services, cultural support and care the right way, our staff must ask everyone presenting to our hospital and health services *'Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?'*

Patients and consumers can be asked this question either verbally or on a form multiple times throughout their healthcare journey. By sharing this important piece of information with us we can better plan and improve health services across our organisation, and work to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are receiving equitable healthcare. Our staff should not make assumptions based on a person's appearance. All information collected is protected by Metro North Health Privacy Policy and Privacy Laws.

This year marks the third year since the commencement of our Metro North Health Equity Strategy 2022 - 2025. We are pleased with the progress we have made in our commitment to Health Equity and we are looking forward to our next phase, where we continue to improve life expectancy parity for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples by 2031.

As an organisation we have been tracking progress against key priority areas outlined in the strategy which has been co-designed in partnership with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community and stakeholders. In line with the Health Equity Strategy, we have achieved fantastic outcomes and led the way across Queensland in improving system changes to bring innovative and culturally responsive health service delivery for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.


We still have a long way to go, and as part of our planning, we are having impactful conversations with Elders, community and key stakeholder on our next phase of Health Equity planning. We are working on a 2025 – 2028 strategy which will be launched later this year.

This year we will focus heavily on both mental health and women's and children's health. In April, a community consultation session will be held to focus on these themes and further enhance our efforts for the community. It is important that we work with not only our community, but also with non-government and government organisations to ensure we get the design and delivery of services right. The sessions will be facilitated by staff and consumers, and I look forward to sharing more details soon.

This year is shaping up to be an exciting one as we elevate our commitment to Health Equity. I can't wait to share our goals for the next few years following this important engagement activity.

Kind regards,

Adj. Prof. Jackie Hanson
Chief Executive,
Metro North Health

A portrait of Tara Denaro, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a dark blazer over a patterned top. She is standing in front of a grey wall with vertical panels.

New role brings change for First Nations women, children and families

In December of last year, Metro North Health made history by establishing the first-ever Nursing and Midwifery Director, First Nations Women, Children, and Families (Identified) role in Queensland. This significant milestone represents a commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Proud Mununjali woman, Tara Denaro (pictured), was appointed to this inaugural position in a powerful step forward to ensuring that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families across the Metro North catchment are heard, and that their needs are met through culturally appropriate and holistic care.

Having grown up in the southside of Brisbane, Tara was surrounded by a strong and proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, which has deeply influenced her commitment to health. With over 20 years of experience in both Queensland Health and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health sector, Tara brings a wealth of knowledge and a personal connection to the work she does.

Tara is a registered nurse, midwife, and child health nurse with experience in both hospital and community settings. She is a strong advocate for holistic healthcare that addresses physical wellbeing as well as the cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing of families and communities, whilst respecting and honouring the unique needs and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“I am very grateful for the opportunity to put a focus on the importance of supporting the health and wellbeing of women, children, and families.

As a mother myself I want to see a health care system that values our little people and their significance in our lives,”

said Tara.

A mother of three daughters, Tara has experienced the transformative impact of the Young Women’s Program during her first pregnancy, and knows firsthand the positive impact culturally safe and responsive maternity care can make, not only for women but for the whole family.

“I strongly believe that improving maternity care, and care for our children and young people will improve longer term health and wellbeing outcomes as people get older. Women, children, and families need to have their voices, their wants, and needs, heard and respected.”

One of Tara’s top priorities in this newly established role is to ensure that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, women, and children are reflected in the new Ngarrama Maternity Service at Redcliffe Hospital. This service, set to be introduced in early 2025, will provide a continuity of care Midwifery Group Practice model covering the antenatal, birthing, and postnatal journey, initiated through the Growing Deadly Families Strategy funding of \$4.1 million for a period of 5 years.

As well as focusing on the new service at Redcliffe Hospital, Tara is committed to bringing together the three Ngarrama Maternity Services within Metro North Health to unite as one strong team, focused on the same goal of providing high-quality, culturally informed maternity care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Throughout her career, Tara has worked extensively within community-controlled health services, particularly supporting women, children, and families. Her passion lies in empowering families, helping them to recognise their strength, and that they are the experts in their own lives.

“I look forward to working with families to create new pathways for women and families who are not receiving care with Ngarrama and starting to work with services that work with our children.

“Our young people are the next generation who will continue our culture into the future, who will be sharing this with their children and grandchildren. I am excited to share the beauty in how we love and cherish our children and how our families and communities provide for our children when we are strong and connected to our culture and each other,” said Tara.

Tara’s dedication to midwifery, child health, and the wellbeing of her community, combined with her extensive experience, makes her well equipped to take on the inaugural role of Nursing and Midwifery Director, First Nations Women, Children, and Families, undoubtedly having a lasting impact and creating positive change that improves the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families for generations to come.

OUTandABOUT

Staff Excellence Awards

The 10th Annual Metro North Health Staff Excellence Awards were held in late November 2024 as an opportunity to celebrate excellence and an active commitment to organisational values.

The event included 14 award categories in total, with two categories dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health – First Nations Staff and Improving First Nations Health.

Last year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and services were recognised not just in the two dedicated categories, but across several of the others as well.

Congratulations to the winners for being recognised for their outstanding commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and the health equity journey.



Uncle Elwyn Henaway.

First Nations Staff

This award recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who continue to advocate for First Nations people, ensure culturally appropriate services are upheld with integrity and strongly contribute to ensuring community are represented in the best interest of better care and outcomes.

Winner: Uncle Elwyn Henaway, Cultural Capability Officer at Redcliffe Hospital.



Advanced Audiologist, Implantable Devices Program Manager, Alice Pender.

Improving First Nations Health

The Improving First Nations Health award recognises staff and services who continue to demonstrate advocacy for system change, lead quality improvement to improve patient safety and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is at the forefront of discussions.

Winner: Improving detection and management of hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adults, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

Highly Commended: Strong Start to Life, Metro North

Excellence in Integrated Care

Excellence in Integrated Care recognises individual or team that collaborate with healthcare partners to better connect care for community, identifying and addressing community health needs through partnership and building new and innovative partnerships to ensure best possible healthcare.

Winner: The Persistent Pain Service: A Caring Pathway for Mob and SPAN-PHN programs, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital



Jodi Dyer, Aunty Phillipa Cole, and Tara Denaro from the Strong Start to Life Team.

Non-clinical Excellence in Operations

This award recognises operational superstars who run a tight ship and ensure the best patient experience. The recipient displays unwavering dedication towards their team and facility, fostering a culture of collaboration and seamless delivery of service.

Winner: Ry Abel, Administration Officer for Deadly Feet, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital



Above: Ry Abel, Deadly Feet Team.

Below: Staff from the Persistent Pain Service.



Better Together Staff Gathering and Deadly Awards



Better Together Staff Gathering attendees.

A key priority for Metro North Health is delivering sustainable, culturally safe and responsive healthcare services as part of the Health Equity agenda. To do this Metro North Health is committed to growing the size, capacity and capability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's public health sector workforce and being the employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team (A&TSILT) have established ongoing Better Together Staff Gatherings to continue building and strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and services, and their relationships.

The aim of the gatherings is to disseminate information to and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and services related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, health outcomes and future planning that will assist in Closing the Gap and health equity. This event also provides an opportunity for attendees to network and collaborate.

The December 2024 Better Together Staff Gathering was the largest gathering to date and focused on end of year celebrations and acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff achievements across the organisation in an awards ceremony.

The Metro North Health Deadly Awards recognises and celebrates the great work staff and services are doing to improve health outcomes and achieve health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Congratulations to the 2024 Deadly Awards recipients.

High Performance – 'Trailblazer'

Celebrating an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individual, service or team who drive transformative change in cultural practices, promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and leadership within the organisation and community.

- Winner: Strong Start to Life Team, A&TSILT
- Runner up: Sharna Dodd, Clinical Nurse Consultant, A&TSILT
- Highly commended: Surgical Treatment And Rehabilitation Service (STARS) Culturally Sensitive Endoscopy Pathway
- Highly commended: Ry Abel, Administration Officer, Deadly Feet Program

Teamwork – 'Strength in Unity'

Recognising collaborative efforts that honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working together, highlighting shared successes and the importance of community in achieving goals.

Right: Staff enjoying the photo booth.

- Winner: Sarah Gbewonyo, Support Officer, A&TSILT
- Runner up: Lauren Williams, Program Manager, Indigenous Cadetship Program
- Highly Commended: Sharna Dodd, Clinical Nurse Consultant, A&TSILT

Integrity – 'Community Grounded'

Celebrating individuals who demonstrate unwavering commitment to cultural integrity, standing firm in their values and advocating for ethical practices that honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

- Winner: Angel Sellars, Ngarrama Health Worker, Redcliffe Hospital
- Runner up: Shantel Morris, Community Engagement Officer, Kallangur Satellite Hospital
- Highly Commended: Andrew Williams, Manager for Capacity Development, A&TSILT





Left: Staff enjoying the photo booth.

Health Equity – ‘Driving Change’

Recognising Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals or services/ teams who demonstrate exceptional commitment to advancing health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through innovative initiatives, advocacy, and strong community partnerships, to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and practices.

- Winner: First Nations Training Pathway
- Runner up: IHLO Service, Redcliffe Hospital
- Highly Commended: Sharna Dodd, Clinical Nurse Consultant, A&TSILT

Compassion – ‘Heart of the Community’

Celebrating those who show deep care and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, providing support through culturally appropriate actions and initiatives that uplift community spirit.

- Winner: Kiarna Smith, Ngarrama Midwife, Caboolture Hospital
- Runner up: Jeleacha Hopkins, Health Worker, Mental Health
- Highly Commended: Naomi Waigana, Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer (IHLO), The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH)

- Winner: Community and Oral Health (COH) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Team
- Runner up: Kitty Synot, Identified Nurse Navigator, TPCH Emergency Department
- Highly Commended: Sheringa Minniecon, Indigenous Cadetship Program

Capacity Building – ‘Empowerment Champion’

Recognising efforts to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and communities through education, skill development, and resource sharing, fostering self-determination and growth.

- Winner: Sandra Burton, Nurse Unit Manager, Caboolture Hospital
- Runner up: Jesse Blackman, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officer, A&TSILT
- Highly Commended: Henry Nona, Cultural Capability Officer, STARS

Executive Director Award

Recognises an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individual or service/ team with outstanding commitment to the Health Equity agenda and improving services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the reflection of Metro North Health Values.

- Winner: Metro North Health Deadly Start Program
- Winner: Professor Peter Hopkins, Clinical Director Transplant TPCH and Heart Outreach Program for Health Equity (HOPE) Program
- Winner: First Nations Training Pathway

Respect – ‘Cultural Guardian’

Acknowledging those who ensure culturally safe environments, respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions, and advocate for the recognition of cultural heritage within services.

- Winner: Maya Gaston, Physiotherapist, Royal Brisbane and Womens Hospital (RBWH)
- Runner up: Deadly Feet Program
- Highly Commended: Ty Cleary, Identified Health Worker, Caboolture Hospital

Access – ‘Pathway Advocate’

Acknowledging Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals or services/ teams who break down barriers to health care access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ensuring equitable opportunities for health and wellbeing.

Below: Staff enjoying the photo booth.



OUT and ABOUT



Songwoman Maroochy Barambah leading staff as she blesses the office.

New office blessing celebrates culture and connection

Thursday, 12 December 2024, marked a special occasion for the Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team and Digital Metro North Team, with the official blessing ceremony of the new office accommodation. Valued Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, who have been pivotal in our journey towards achieving health equity, were invited to attend the significant event, emphasising the importance of cultural respect and community. The ceremony began with a Welcome to Country and blessing ceremony, led by Songwoman Maroochy Barambah, an Elder and Songwoman of the Turrbal People. Aunty Maroochy explained the cultural significance of a Welcome to Country and blessing ceremony, before guiding the group through the office, blessing the space as she went.

To pay respects to Torres Strait Islander culture, Reverend Professor Rodney Wolff, Minister for the Torres Strait Islander Anglican congregation at Holy Trinity Parish in Fortitude Valley, was invited to conduct a Torres Strait Islander blessing. This blessing aimed to bring abundance and positivity to the office as the teams moves forward.

Following the cultural proceedings, Metro North Health Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Sherry Holzapfel, shared a few words with attendees, emphasising the importance of the day and the cultural significance of these ceremonies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“This was important as a team. We celebrated our new space with respect of the cultures of the community we serve. By providing a balance of ceremonies to support and cleanse our new beginnings and our new office environment, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff were respected,” said Sherry.

To close out the special occasion, attendees were invited to gather for lunch, providing an opportunity to come together, reflect and connect. The gathering allowed attendees to build relationships and a gain deeper understanding of the cultural traditions that were shared during the event. The day highlighted the ongoing importance of cultural connection and respect within the workplace.



Reverend Professor Rodney Wolff conducting a Torres Strait Islander blessing.

A heartfelt Christmas Appeal to support remote communities



Aunty Phillipa Cole, Maree Ruge, and Sherry Holzapfel standing proudly in front the donations.

Last Christmas, the Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, alongside the Digital Metro North Team, came together to organise a special Christmas Appeal and Shoe Drive, in an effort to spread holiday cheer to those in need.

Generous staff donations included essential toiletries, sanitary products, non-perishable food, toys for children, and numerous pairs of shoes, all intended to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in regional, rural, and remote communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people traveling from regional, rural, and remote communities to receive urgent medical care often lack appropriate footwear for the journey. The shoes collected through the shoe drive will help ease some of the difficulties individuals and families face while seeking essential medical services in urban areas.

This initiative not only helped to spread some Christmas cheer and provide support to those in need, but also strengthened the relationship between the two teams involved, fostering a sense of unity and compassion. It served as a reminder of the power of kindness, care, and community, especially during the holiday season.

OUTandABOUT

Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in healthcare



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ELP graduates.

Each year, Metro North Health offers a unique opportunity for senior staff to participate in the Executive Leaders Program (ELP). The program is designed to identify, develop, and retain senior leaders with the ability, engagement, and aspiration to progress into Executive Director roles within the health sector.

Senior leaders, who are identified as having the potential and aspiration to be successful in an Executive Director role within a 2-3-year period, are nominated to participate in the program, which provides them with the tools and knowledge needed to excel in future leadership roles.

In November 2024, a significant achievement was reached as 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members from Metro North Health were nominated to join the program. This cohort marked the largest group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates from the ELP to date.

The program offers a comprehensive suite of developmental opportunities, including individual assessments, face-to-face workshops facilitated by healthcare experts with real-world experience, executive coaching, mentoring, networking events, and inclusion in the ELP Alumni Program. These resources equip participants with valuable leadership knowledge and skills, preparing them to make a successful transition into executive roles and meet the current and future Queensland Health leadership needs.

The success of the 2024 cohort highlights the growing strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership within healthcare, in particular within Metro North Health. Congratulations to all the 2024 ELP graduates for their dedication and hard work in achieving this significant milestone.



Patient Experience: Deadly Feet Clinic, Cherbourg

Rayna Cowburn pictured alongside Gutho at the Deadly Feet Clinic.

The Deadly Feet service, in collaboration with the Better Together Health Van, recently conducted a clinic in Cherbourg, where Community and Engagement Officer Rayna Cowburn and Acting Content and Engagement Officer Mellissa Malley travelled for the day to provide support.

During the clinic, Rayna reconnected with a friend from her time in Canberra who was there for a foot check-up.

Matthew Malone, also known as 'Gutho,' is a resident of Cherbourg and has ties to the Gungalou, Jagalingou, and Wangan peoples. He was on his way to Cherbourg Hospital, unaware that the Deadly Feet Clinic was taking place that day.

"As I am a diabetic, and I have never had a podiatry check before, it was a good opportunity, so I took it on the spot."

"I felt supported all around. The health team was friendly and chatty and made you feel really comfortable. The specialist and team were also very informative," Gutho said.

Gutho encouraged other mob to get their check-ups.

"It's up to us, we got to look after ourselves! Don't be afraid, go get your check-ups done."

Catching up with an old friend made the clinic experience even more special, as Rayna and Gutho reminisced about their time in Canberra and shared stories from the past.

Follow us on Social Media!



Scan the QR code or look up:

<https://www.facebook.com/bettertogetherourhealthourway>



Scan the QR code or look up:

<https://www.instagram.com/ourhealthourway>



Scan the QR code or visit:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/better-together-our-health-our-way>



Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, good news stories, jobs for mob, health initiatives and more!



This initiative is supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team

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Metro North Health Equity Showcase

Late November 2024, Metro North Health hosted the second Health Equity Showcase for the year at Norths Leagues and Services Club in Kallangur. With close to 300 attendees turning up to show their support, the event highlighted the ongoing efforts, partnerships, and achievements that are working towards advancing health equity across Metro North Health.

The event brought together a diverse audience, including Metro North Health staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community members, partnering organisations, and key stakeholders, all with a genuine commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The day included a Welcome to Country ceremony, featuring traditional Aboriginal dancing, performed by the Undumbi Dance Group, and a traditional song and dance performance by Wagga Torres Strait Islander Dance Company. One of the highlights of the event was the powerful staff and consumer panels, which provided attendees with invaluable insights into the progress and momentum behind the health equity agenda, as well as the achievements we've made so far as a healthcare service.



Wagga Torres Strait Islander Dance Company performing traditional song and dance.

The testimonials shared from community members emphasised the importance of patient-centred care and how crucial it is for services to be responsive to the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as the value of being cared for by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team were excited to launch the 2024 Year in Review publication at the event, showcasing the progress made in closing the health gap and highlighting the significance of partnerships, education, and ongoing improvement in building more inclusive healthcare environments.

To ensure we capture feedback from attendees on the day, Executive Director, Sherry Holzapfel closed out the event proceedings with the Message in a Coolamon activity. This is where attendees are invited to share their feelings, thoughts, concerns, or ideas with Metro North Health. This activity encourages reflection and connection, and ensures all attendees feel heard, and their input valued.

Opportunities for networking and informal connection throughout the event helped to build and strengthen relationships between Metro North Health and the community. Following the event proceedings, an afternoon tea session provided a relaxed environment for further discussion, leaving attendees with a sense of inspiration, connection, and shared responsibility as we continue our journey to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Metro North Health Equity Showcase is a powerful demonstration of the collective action needed to address health inequities. The event highlights not only the cultural richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but also the shared commitment of healthcare professionals, community members, and leadership to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to high-quality person-centred care that is culturally responsive, empowers self-care and choice, and is designed to improve health and wellbeing.



Undumbi Dance Group performing Welcome to Country.



Metro North Health staff and Elders connecting at the event.



Aunty Hazel shares positive patient experience at Bribie Island Satellite Hospital (Yarun)

Aunty Hazel

Aunty Hazel Cowburn has lived on Bribie Island for 47 years. She is a proud Wakka Wakka Elder with connections to Kabi Kabi, Goreng Goreng and Butchulla tribes.

As a Bribie Island local, Aunty Hazel has expressed her excitement at having a dedicated Satellite Hospital on the Island.

“A lot of us locals don’t like travelling so if we can stay this side of the bridge, it’s good.”

The Bribie Island Satellite Hospital (Yarun) offers a range of services based on the health needs of the community and incorporates outpatient community-based healthcare services and the Minor Injury and Illness Clinic.

Aunty Hazel’s family has engaged with the new service and found both experiences to be positive.

“When my grandsons’ partner, Taya, was pregnant I went with her to the Bribie Island Satellite Hospital as her support person.

“Her heart was racing, and she had a fever, and felt no movement with the baby.

“The workers outside greeted us, they were just beautiful. We didn’t have to wait long.

“They asked are you Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and the worker was there straight away to support us.

“The female doctor was amazing, she spoke clearly, asked all the right questions. The doctor was thorough, monitored her, checking heart, blood pressure and baby. She organised the ambulance to take her to Caboolture Hospital.

“The doctor made sure we had everything before we left, the preparation for blood tests, urine, and paperwork. We felt really prepared.

“The ambulance was there quickly with two beautiful ladies. We went straight up to the ward in the bed with no waiting.

“I felt secure as her grandmother and the nurses made sure she was comfortable.”

Taya was suffering from Influenza, a scary experience as a first-time mum-to-be.

“When you’re pregnant, you’re scared and want to make sure the baby is ok.

“My experience at Bribie Island Satellite Hospital was good and I’d recommend it to anyone. The staff and doctors were nice. It was quick and I really enjoyed my time there,”
Taya said.

The two times Aunty Hazel and Taya have visited the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker has been out to greet them.

“Belinda spotted us in the waiting area, sat down with us and asked what she can do to help. We need this, especially for our young ones, black faces to help,” Aunty Hazel said.

Aunty Hazel’s daughter has also visited the satellite hospital with foot pain and had a positive experience with the doctor.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Hub at Bribie Island Satellite Hospital (Yarun) provides services to people of all ages who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin and their immediate families (including babies, children and non-Aboriginal or non-Torres Strait Islander partners) who reside within the Metro North Health region.

The new hub is led by nurse navigators and caters for people who have complex health conditions. The service also includes Ngarrama Maternal Health, which is a community-based home midwifery group practice offering outpatient care delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternal and infant health care workers. Additionally, it provides perinatal mental health support, a nurse-led community service that focuses on the emotional health and well-being of individuals and their families during the perinatal period, from conception to one year after the birth of a baby.

Yarun is centrally located next to Bribie Island State school (103 First Avenue, Bongaree). The Minor Injuries and Illness Clinic is open 7 days a week (8am – 10pm) while other services and outpatient clinics are available Monday to Friday (8am – 4.30pm). Referrals and walk-ins are accepted. Phone: 3410 2800.



Virtual Emergency Care Service

Patients across Queensland have access to an online Emergency Department, reducing wait times and providing essential care in the comfort of your home.

Virtual Emergency Care Service Clinical Director, Dr Kim Hansen, said the Virtual Emergency Care Service is like an emergency department, but online.

“You see an emergency nurse and are triaged. You then have a video consult with an experienced emergency doctor.

“What we find is 90 per cent of patients don’t need to be transferred on.

“What we can do online is pretty amazing. We’ve talked parents through reducing a pulled elbow. We can do prescriptions for patients if they need and send it to their phone. If a patient needs blood tests or scans/x-rays, then we can organise and follow-up.

“We’re really just like an emergency department but online for all the non-life-threatening problems.”

The service has partnered with the Deadly Red Program at Redcliffe Hospital helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients who either did not wait to be seen in emergency or they left after treatment commenced.

“Our nurse or doctor will ring them and just see how they are and if we can meet their needs at all. Sometimes what they need is a consultation with an emergency doctor online. We will be able to give them the advice and treatment they need.

“Most of the time they won’t need to go back to the hospital.”

Kim said the service was particularly helpful for parents and families.



“You can call up on behalf of your aunty, uncle, or Elders. You are able to get some advice from home, using your phone, laptop or desktop computer. You have the consult with the doctor and then you know what to do next.

“We are really trying to meet the needs of the community and do know that other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have used us and had a good experience.

“I would encourage you to use us if you think you do have a non-life-threatening emergency and you need an emergency department. Think of us first.”

The service is available from 8:00am to 10:00pm, 7 days a week.

Consider the **best** **care option for you**



Pharmacy



GP



Urgent Care Clinic



**Minor Injury
and Illness
Clinic**



**Queensland Virtual
Hospital Virtual
Emergency Care Service**



**Emergency
Department**



Visit the healthdirect Symptom Checker to get the recommended care for your health concern.



In an emergency, always call **Triple Zero (000)**



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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 and outpatient prescriptions, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seen by a Metro North Health service.

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

**NOW
INCLUDES
OUTPATIENT
MEDICATIONS**

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.



If you decided to opt-in, your medication prescription can be taken to a Metro North Health pharmacy, where your medication is supplied with no out of pocket cost.



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 Health Pharmacy Team.

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IDENTIFICATION:

IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO A

HEALTHIER LIFE

WE ARE HERE TO HELP WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE JOURNEY

**Are you of
Aboriginal and/
or Torres Strait
Islander origin?**

- ✓ Receive culturally appropriate care and support
- ✓ Receive the right health care and services
- ✓ Health Service staff must ask you the question
- ✓ Metro North Health are here to help with your health care journey

Further information visit our website
www.metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/better-together-van or



Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/better-togetherourhealthourway>



Instagram:
<https://www.instagram.com/ourhealthourway>



LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/better-together-our-health-our-way>

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Participants from the group program.

Persistent Pain Clinic celebrate first year milestone at MATSICHS clinic

The persistent pain clinic partnership at The Moreton Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (Moreton ATSICHS) recently celebrated its first year of outreach care with 75 patients accessing the service for management of chronic pain.

The service has helped save 10,000 kilometres of travel for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, who normally would need to travel into the city at The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) to access the care.

Director of the Tess Cramond Pain and Research Centre at RBWH, Paul Gray, said since the service has been introduced there has been a reduction in over 200 days for category three patients being seen in the clinic.

“What we know with persistent pain is that it can be very difficult to treat and for some people it’s hard to take away that pain completely. What we try to do at the pain centre is to provide support to patients to cope with and manage their pain better than before.”

The centre provides care to people with persistent pain and includes a multidisciplinary team of physiotherapists, occupational therapy, nursing, psychologists, pharmacists, social workers and pain medicine specialist, who work together to provide care and management plans for people with chronic pain.

“Most of those people are really well cared for in the community by their GP and community health practitioners, but there are some people who, despite all of that good care, continue to suffer. Our service provides care for those people.

“This includes making an assessment and developing a management plan. That can be an individual assessment, or we also run group programs to try and support patients together.”

The service wanted to create a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and teamed up with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) at Caboolture to provide care closer to home.

“Currently we have an outreach clinic at Moreton ATSICHS in James Street and hopefully in the future we’ll have more outreach clinics.

“Patients are referred to the clinic by their GP. Our Nurse Navigators then support the patient journey.”

Patient feedback has been positive, with over 98 per cent of participants surveyed sharing they had a positive experience, felt well cared for and found the clinic to be culturally safe.

Referrals are sent to the Tess Cramond Pain and Research Centre via the Central Patient Intake Unit. Further information regarding referral processes and clinical advice services can be found at https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/specialist_service/refer-your-patient



Caboolture clinic in action.



Consumers at the Persistent Pain Clinic at Caboolture.



Staff at the collaborative design workshop.

Metro North Staff commit to courageous conversations about race

Record numbers of Metro North Health staff are putting their hand up to participate in training around race and racial equity.

The important discussions are being led in partnership with Courageous Conversations South Pacific as part of the Health Equity commitment to creating an environment free of racism and discrimination.

The training creates a space that is authentic, safe, and generative for conversations about race that are insightful and compassionate through the Virtual Courageous Conversation: The Experience™ (VCC).

Acting Capacity Development Manager, Andrew Williams, said addressing unconscious bias and actively eliminating racial discrimination and institutional racism within the service is at the forefront of our organisation's priorities.

"Metro North Health is committed to addressing unconscious bias and actively eliminating racial discrimination and institutional racism within the service.

"Virtual Courageous Conversation: The Experience™ provides a safe and supportive environment to address hard conversations, and together with colleagues, explore race in our lives and the lives of others."

Andrew said Metro North Health Chief Executive, Jackie Hanson, and Executive Directors across the organisation have also completed the training leading to a commitment at the highest level.

The online learning workshop consists of 2 X 2.5 hour and 1 X 3 hour online sessions across the 2 days, plus a 1.5 hour online 'Unpack and Coaching' session 2-3 weeks following the initial experience.

Metro North Health staff interested in participating, can search 'Virtual Courageous Conversation: The Experience' via TMS to enrol in an upcoming class.

All participants make the pledge to:



I am committed to creating an environment free of racism and discrimination.

I have the tools necessary for respectful and meaningful conversations and understanding.

I hold accountability to challenge and support a racially equitable, diverse and inclusive work environment.

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Health Equity films showcase co-design achievements

Metro North Health's commitment to health equity is across the entire health system and working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations.

A film highlighting the success of co-designed projects with community-controlled organisations has been created and was recently launched at the November Health Equity showcase.

The film includes short interviews with key Metro North leads on the programs, how community can access the services and the main highlights since being introduced.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team Communications Officer, Tamika Birch had the pleasure of producing the films alongside Torres Strait Islander videographer Lewis James Bin Doraho.

"It was a great opportunity to learn more about the work happening across Metro North Health for our community and to share these important updates.



Consultant Cardiac Scientist, Tiffany Roberts, providing an update on the HOPE Program.

"The films have been published on our website and shared across our Better Together – Our Health, Our Way, social media platforms for broader awareness." Learn more by visiting the health equity website - <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/health-equity/stakeholders> or scanning the QR Code.



Clinical Director, Virtual Emergency Care Service, Dr Kim Hansen sharing an update.

WORD OF THE MONTH

“Yamani”

“Yamani”
(Yah-mun-ee)
is Rainbow
in Dyirbal
language.

The Dyirbal language is spoken in North Queensland along the Tully River and Johnston River Catchments. There are several dialects or related languages across the language Nation including Ngadjan, Waribarra Mamu, Dulgubarra Mamu, Jirrbal, Gulngay, Djirru, Girramay and Walmalbarra. Walsh (1981) further distinguishes Dyirribarra Mamu and Gambilbarra Dyirrbal.

Dyirbal is also written as Jirrbal, Djirbalngan, Jirrabul, Dyirbaldyi, Djirbal, etc.

STAFF PROFILE

A Day in the life of: **Belinda Jackson**

Senior Health Worker, Bribie
Island Satellite Hospital (Yarun)



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

Cairns/Yarrabah is where I call home, as this is where I grew up. My mother's family were taken to Yarrabah from different locations in North Queensland. I am KuKu Yalanji and Wakaman on my mother's side, and Birri Gubba on my father's side.

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 Senior Health Worker at Bribie Island Satellite Hospital (Yarun). I offer and provide cultural/clinical support, advice, education, and brief intervention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending the Minor Injuries and Illness Clinic, and during follow up phone calls and walk in services.

Q3. Before joining Metro North Health, where did you work and what did you do?

Before joining Metro North Health, I worked at the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service as an Advanced Health Worker in the Medical Outpatients Clinic. My role involved performing basic observations, providing cultural support, education and brief intervention to patients attending the specialist clinics.

Q4. What or who inspired you to pursue a career in health?

I decided on this path after witnessing firsthand, the deterioration in health of close family members. I am inspired by the strong women in my life, both past and present.

Q5. What has been a career highlight for you?

A career highlight for me has been obtaining a Diploma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care. But what keeps me in this field is hearing the 'good news stories' and contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of our people.

Q6. What do you hope to achieve in your role over the next six months?

I hope to be able to provide and maintain a culturally safe space here at the Bribie Island Satellite Hospital (Yarun), where the community feel welcome and comfortable enough to come in and yarn about their health care needs.

Q7. What do you like to do outside of work?

Outside of work I like to watch footy, listen to country music, go out for breakfast, but mostly spend time with family and catch up.



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.

Follow us on social media

Follow us for information on locations, upcoming events, important health information and community stories.



@bettertogetherourhealthourway



@ourhealthourway



@better-together-our-health-our-way



If you would like more information, or to request the Better Together Health Van visits your community or event, contact the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team to seek availability via phone 0439 475 437 or email Bettertogetherhealthvan@health.qld.gov.au

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 or phone (07) 3170 4460



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