

# TALK-ABOUT

December 2025



The official Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Newsletter



## **Metro North Health's vision**

Creating healthier futures together—where innovation and research meets compassionate care and community voices shape our services.

**Metro North  
Health**



**Queensland  
Government**

# What's inside December 2025

Contact Information .....	2
A word from the Executive Director.....	3
A word from the Acting Chief Executive.....	4
Virtual Emergency Care Services connecting care on Country ..	5

## OUT AND ABOUT

A personal thank you from Aunty Judy.....	8
Acknowledging Culture during Charlies Week at TPC* .....	9
BindiLee Painting Services .....	10
STARS Introduces Culturally Significant Yarning Stick to Support Inclusive Dialogue.....	11
Staff get inspired at the 2025 Indigenous Wellbeing Conference ..	12
Recognising R U OK? Day – No Qualifications Needed.....	12
Deadly Start Graduates Lead the Way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Excellence.....	14
Welcoming the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cadets to Health .....	15

CBS Awards recognise anti-racism policy and campaign .....	16
Advancing Women – Leading Inclusively Workshop .....	16
Metro North Health Expansion Projects recognised as runner-up .....	17

## IN FOCUS

STARS Creates a Culturally Safe Space through Aboriginal Art 19	
Co-Creating Culturally Safe Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families .....	20
Connection and Kinship recognised for dismantling barriers in Paediatric Care .....	21
Cultural training mandated for all Metro North Health staff....	21
“Don’t wait until you get sick” .....	22

## WORD OF THE MONTH .....

## STAFF FEATURE

A Day in the life of: Temiah Bond.....	27
--	----



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:

#### Mail to:

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

**Professional Lead**      **Ph: 3646 2695**

### 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**

Follow us



@bettertogether  
ourhealthourway



@ourhealth  
ourway



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



# ED Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Adj.Prof. Sherry Holzapfel



Since launching Metro North Health's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anti-Racism Policy and *Stop Racism. It Starts with Me* campaign, we've continued to build strong momentum across our hospitals and health services – raising awareness, sharing education, and working together to make sure our workplaces and health facilities are free from racism and discrimination.

We're proud to share that two key programs – the Cultural Practice Program and Identification Training – are now part of Metro North Health's mandatory training for all staff. This marks an important milestone in our journey. These programs are designed to build a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and health perspectives – helping staff strengthen their cultural capability and provide care that truly meets the needs of our people.

In mid-November, we hosted our final Health Equity Showcase for the year, taking a new approach by holding an expo-style event. This made it easier for community members to drop in at a time that suited them and connect directly with health teams and services. It was great to see our community gathering information and resources to help them and their families stay healthy and well. These events remind us why community connection is at the heart of everything we do.

We also celebrated our staff at the 2025 Staff Excellence Awards, recognising individuals and teams across Metro North Health for their outstanding work and commitment. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists – especially those acknowledged in the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff' and 'Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health' categories. It was wonderful to see our people and programs recognised for their leadership and dedication to improving health outcomes for our communities.

This year has also been one of change and reflection for Metro North Health. We acknowledge and thank our former Chief Executive, Jackie Hanson, whose leadership and advocacy helped drive our health equity agenda and the launch of our Anti-Racism Policy and campaign.

The news of Jackie's retirement left me lost for words. Jackie was a true advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, and a genuine ally who empowered me to take the actions needed and do what needed to be done – in our way – for the betterment of our people.

While I'm saddened to see Jackie move on, I deeply thank her for her contributions.

As we look ahead, we remain confident that under interim Chief Executive Nick Steele's leadership, we will continue building on that strong foundation – walking together with community towards true health equity.

With this being the final edition of the Talk-About Newsletter for the year, I want to take a moment to thank you – our community – for your continued support, trust and partnership. Your voices, feedback and involvement continue to guide and strengthen everything we do.

Take time over the coming weeks to rest, care for your wellbeing, and connect with your loved ones.

It's been a busy and productive year, and we're proud of the progress made. Together, we'll continue working towards a future where every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person feels safe, respected and well cared for in our health system.

**Adj. Prof. Sherry Holzapfel**

Executive Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

## Message from the **Acting Chief Executive**

Nick Steele



As the acting Chief Executive of Metro North Health, I have been impressed with the organisation's commitment to health equity and eliminating institutional racism. Metro North's current antiracism campaign includes the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly staff, to highlight the significant and long-lasting impact of racism and discrimination. The campaign continues to resonate with staff, patients and the community and highlights the need for a continued focus on achieving equitable health access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as ensuring representation and cultural awareness at all levels of our health service.

I had the opportunity to attend the graduation of 28 Deadly Start students who have completed their on-the-job training with Metro North Health. Now a statewide program, Deadly Start commenced in Metro North in 2019 making this our 7th cohort of graduates, and we are very proud to continue this important initiative. Supporting these trainees through their studies to graduation forms part of our strong commitment to closing the gap and achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. We have also been very happy to welcome previous graduates into a range of roles across our health service either full time or part time while they complete further education.

I am very much looking forward to attending my first Metro North Health Equity community showcase in November to meet with staff, Elders and community members and learn more about the important initiatives which are making progress to close the gap and improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Nick Steele**

Acting Chief Executive,  
Metro North Health



# STOP RACISM

It Starts with Me

There is no place for racism in our health service.

If you hear it or see it, speak up and report it.

Search '**stop racism**' on QHEPS to learn more.

## TOGETHER WE CAN STOP RACISM



# Virtual Emergency Care Services connecting care on Country

Virtual Emergency Care Services (VECS) is delivering care on Country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the State.

A high number of patients are choosing to opt-in to the service from the comfort of their home, with 14.8 per cent of all presentations identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Virtual Healthcare Services, Nursing Director, Lisa Harvey, said they see an average of 105-125 patients per day and 91.7% were treated and discharged, avoiding unnecessary trips to an emergency department. Young people were especially accessing VECS with a median age of 29.

"VECS is about making sure every Queenslanders, no matter where they live, can get safe, timely emergency care when they need it most."

"We're really proud of the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients already using VECS, and we want to see this number continue to grow as more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities feel confident choosing this service as a trusted option."

"We are committed to health equity and creating a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. One of the greatest benefits of virtual emergency care is that patients can be treated on Country, staying close to family, culture, and community while still receiving expert emergency support," said Lisa.

Respected Brisbane Elder, Aunty Florence 'Floss' Ash, recently accessed the service while she was unwell with covid. After being bedridden for 4 days, Aunty was lucky to have her phone nearby to access VECS. The service was able to prescribe medication that was picked up by a family member.

"I put my trust in them – I was too sick to worry about anything. I think more of our mob should use the service."

Aunty Floss said the service would also really help remote and discreet communities.

"It would be so much easier for our rural communities as transport is a big issue and this is one way of dealing with it. There is no need to be afraid of anything."

Lisa said that the highest number of presentations to the service were from Metro North, Metro South, Townsville and Cairns.

"Only 1.6% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients were recorded as 'Did Not Wait,' or left after treatment commenced, compared to a combined state average of 9.4% incomplete visits."

"These figures show that patients are more engaged with their care through virtual emergency services, which helps reduce unnecessary ED presentations and increases access to care closer to home and on Country."

"Patients tell us they value being able to see an emergency doctor or nurse quickly, without the stress of travelling to a busy hospital. This is especially important in regional and rural areas," Lisa said.

You can access Virtual Emergency Care (VECS) through the [Service Finder](#) or the [Healthdirect Symptom Checker](#). These tools can help you decide whether virtual emergency care is right for you, or if you should visit a health clinic or your GP instead. You can also speak with a nurse by calling 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for further advice.

Cover photo: Aunty Florence 'Floss' Ash recently accessed Virtual Emergency Care Services and had a positive experience. She encourages other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access the service.

# About lung screening

## Who is lung screening for?

Lung screening is for people who:

50-70  
years old

**Are 50-70 years old**



**Have a tobacco cigarette smoking history of 30 pack-years or more**



**Currently smoke or have quit smoking in the past 10 years**



**Have no signs or symptoms of lung cancer**

Your doctor, nurse or health worker will talk to you about your smoking history to see if you are eligible for lung screening.

## Why is lung screening important?

Having lung screening every two years is the best way to find lung cancer early.

When lung cancer first starts, it has no symptoms.

That's why it's important to get screened, even if you feel well.

Finding lung cancer early, means doctors can usually treat it and help people get better.

## Screening is for people who don't have symptoms.

Speak to your doctor, nurse or health worker about any signs of lung sickness you might have, like:

- A new or changed cough
- Short of breath (short wind)
- Losing weight without trying
- Tired for no reason
- Coughing up blood
- Chest or shoulder pain

**You might need different tests.**



The National Lung Cancer Screening Program  
is an Australian Government program



## What is lung screening?

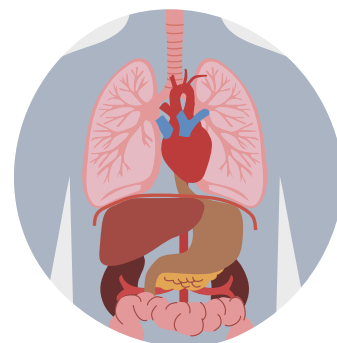
Lung screening uses a chest CT scan to check your lungs.

A specialist doctor, called a radiologist, will look at the scan for early signs of cancer.

The scan can see other parts of the body too, like the neck, chest, heart and upper stomach.

Sometimes the scan might show other things you need to talk to your doctor about.

These could be in your lungs (like emphysema) or outside your lungs.



## What do I need to do?

Yarn with your doctor, nurse or health worker to learn more about lung screening.

You can bring a **support person** to any of your appointments or scans.

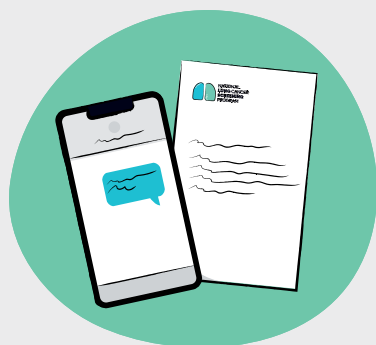
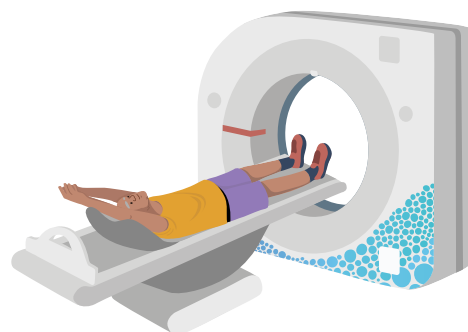
If you and your health team decide that lung screening is right for you, your doctor will give you a referral for a free scan. Depending on where you live, a nurse practitioner can also give you a referral.

## Having your scan

The scan takes about 10 minutes. It doesn't involve needles or injections and does not hurt.

Ask your clinic where you can get your free scan.

You may be able to have your scan at a radiology (x-ray) clinic, hospital or mobile screening truck if you live in a rural or remote area.



## What happens after the scan?

The radiologist will write a report and send your results to your clinic/doctor after a few weeks.

Information about next steps may come from:

- Your doctor, nurse or health worker
- The National Cancer Screening Register (letter or text message)



## A personal thank you from Aunty Judy

To all the doctors, nurses and staff from North Lakes Cancer Care Services:

*As a strong and proud Aboriginal woman, and an Elder of the Wakka Wakka, Gubbi Gubbi, Gurang Gurang and Butchulla peoples, my name is Judith Anne Cowburn. I recently underwent breast cancer treatment at your Centre and I wish to acknowledge the care and support I received during this deeply personal journey.*

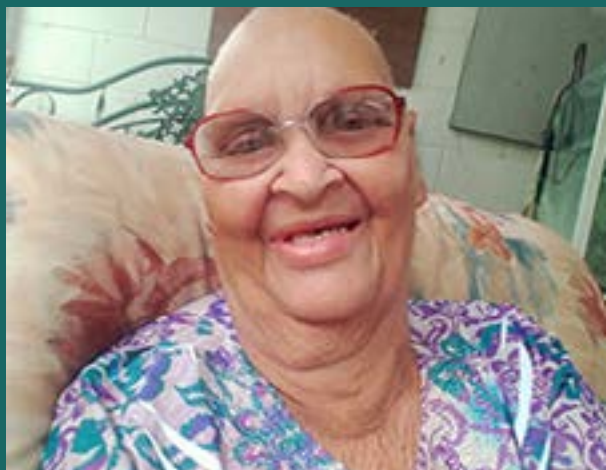
*Please accept my deepest gratitude for the unwavering dedication and compassion you bring to your work each day. Your care has helped lighten what was a challenging and emotional journey for me and my family and transformed it into one filled with strength, dignity, and hope. I am truly thankful for the support and kindness shown to me, this made all the difference.*

*As my saying goes, I hope to help more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and women all over, to help them turn their experiences into more positive ones.*

***“STAY DEADLY, STAY CLEAN,  
DON’T BE SHAME, BE GAME”***

*With my respect and appreciation, I thank you kindly for taking care of me.*

– Aunty Judy



Aunty Judy







## Acknowledging Culture during Charlies Week at TPCCH\*

This year, Charlies Week at The Prince Charles Hospital was a vibrant celebration of culture, connection and community to recognise the dedication of staff, volunteers, and community.

A highlight of the week was a captivating performance by the Sageraw-Naygay Dance Team, proudly representing the Waigana Family from Brisbane, descendants of the Saibai Island Ayth Koedal Clan — with Koedal meaning crocodile and Mygy Buway meaning small clan.

The group performed a powerful re-enactment that brought to life the arrival of the first missionaries in the Torres Strait Islands, an event acknowledged each year on 1 July, known as the Coming of the Light. This significant day marks when the London Missionary Society arrived in the Torres Strait in 1871, bringing profound cultural and spiritual change.

*Through song, dance, and storytelling, the performance honoured the resilience, faith, and enduring strength of Torres Strait Islander peoples.*



*\*Metro North Health acknowledge and support that not all Torres Strait Islander people and communities celebrate Coming of the Light.*



## BindiLee Painting Services Empowering Women, Celebrating Culture

Operating on Turrbal and Kabi Kabi Country in Redcliffe, BindiLee Painting Services is a shining example of Aboriginal entrepreneurship, cultural pride, and community impact.

Founded in 2020 by Bindi Day, a proud Quandamooka Nunuckle woman, the business has grown steadily, now serving the northern suburbs of Brisbane and the Moreton Bay region. Specialising in artwork, murals, and house painting, BindiLee Painting Services blends creative expression with professional excellence—leaving a lasting impression on both homes and hearts.

During a yarn, Bindi shared her vision for the business and her passion for empowering women in the construction industry. With decades of experience in painting and construction, she brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership to her work. Bindi spoke about her commitment to creating safe, supportive, and compliant worksites, where women feel valued, secure, and respected.

Her journey into entrepreneurship was driven by a desire for flexibility and independence. In 2020, she took the leap—and BindiLee Painting Services was born. Since then, the business has flourished, becoming a trusted name in the community.

Beyond its professional services, BindiLee Painting Services is a celebration of culture and storytelling. Through vibrant murals and meaningful artwork, the team brings Aboriginal stories to life, fostering a deeper connection to the land and its history.

BindiLee Painting Services is more than just a business—it's a platform for empowerment, creativity, and cultural expression. With a strong foundation, decades of industry experience, and a clear vision, the business is set to continue making a meaningful impact in the community and beyond.

Learn more at [www.bindilee.com.au](http://www.bindilee.com.au)

*\*Article submitted by Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and Multiculturalism*





A man with a shaved head, wearing a blue and black patterned polo shirt, blue jeans, and a watch, stands holding a long, carved wooden Yarning Stick. He is positioned in front of a large, colorful Aboriginal-style mural featuring concentric circles and dots in orange, teal, and purple. The stick he holds has intricate carvings of a pelican and its chicks.

# STARS Introduces Culturally Significant Yarning Stick to Support Inclusive Dialogue

A powerful new cultural symbol has arrived at the Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS), bringing tradition and respect into the heart of conversation. The Yarning Stick – thoughtfully crafted by Uncle Gene Blow – has been introduced to guide Yarning Circles at STARS, creating a space where voices are heard, stories are honoured, and communication is truly inclusive.

The idea emerged from discussions within the STARS Health Equity Committee, where members identified the need for a tool to enhance the quality and depth of conversations during Yarning Circles. The Yarning Stick now plays a central role in these gatherings, ensuring that communication is respectful, empowering, and culturally grounded.

In Yarning Circles, the person holding the Yarning Stick is the only one who speaks, while others listen attentively. This practice fosters a safe and inclusive environment, allowing everyone to share their thoughts and feelings without interruption.

The carvings on the stick tell the legend of the gulukan (pelican)—a totem of the Ninghi Ninghi (Redcliffe) Region. According to the legend, during times of drought, the mother pelican sacrifices herself by tearing open her chest to feed her young with her own blood. The carvings depict the pelican and her surviving chicks, symbolising sacrifice, strength, and resilience.

The STARS Yarning Stick will be held in custodianship by Henry Nona, Cultural Capability Officer, and will be used exclusively for Yarning Circles and officiated storytelling for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Community members and staff can view the Yarning Stick by visiting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hospital team office at STARS.**

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker, Lloyd pictured with STARS new Yarning Stick.*



*Metro North Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff attending the 2025 Indigenous Wellbeing Conference.*

## Staff get inspired at the 2025 Indigenous Wellbeing Conference

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from Metro North Health proudly attended the 2025 Indigenous Wellbeing Conference (IWC25), held on October 20–21 at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre. This landmark event brought together over 500 delegates from across Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), and the Pacific to celebrate Indigenous culture, community, and leadership in health and wellbeing.

The theme of IWC25, “Walking Together, Flourishing Together: Pathways to Indigenous Wellbeing,” reflected a shared commitment to Indigenous-led solutions for stronger, healthier futures. The conference was hosted by the Australian & New Zealand Mental Health Association and marked the first time the event was held in Meanjin (Brisbane).

Key objectives of the conference included:

- Empowering Indigenous youth and emerging leaders.
- Promoting Indigenous models of care and cultural practices in health.
- Strengthening community resilience through storytelling and connection to Country.
- Addressing climate change using traditional ecological knowledge.
- Exploring cultural lore and its role in shaping Indigenous legal systems.
- Fostering economic empowerment and sustainable futures.



The conference was a powerful space for learning, sharing and connection—where voices from across Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), and the Pacifica came together to showcase inspiring initiatives that are transforming Indigenous wellbeing. Through keynote panels and workshops, participants explored bold ideas and community-led solutions, united by a shared vision of healing, strength and cultural pride.

“The highlight for me was the Wellmob presentation by David Edwards, David spoke to the new tool short-listed the best online Social and Emotional Wellbeing resources from the WellMob website. David explained how his team were making it easier for time-poor workers to find credible and culturally responsive materials for use with First Nations clients,” shared Jesse Blackman, Team Leader for Indigenous Mental Health Intervention Program.

Participants engaged in sessions on decolonising health systems, weaving digital wellbeing resources into practice, and creating culturally safe spaces in non-Indigenous workplaces. These experiences aimed to enrich professional development and strengthen roles as advocates for equity and inclusion.

## Recognising R U OK? Day – No Qualifications Needed

On Thursday 11 September, we recognised R U OK? Day – a reminder of how powerful a simple conversation can be. The day encourages all of us to reach out, connect meaningfully, and check in with those who might be doing it tough.

It’s important to remember that every day is a good day to ask “Are you OK?” You don’t need to be an expert to reach out – just be someone who cares and takes the time to listen.

This year, members of the Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team shared why checking in with those around them is so important. See what they had to say below.



Use these four steps and have a conversation that could change a life:

### Ask R U OK?

*“You don’t seem yourself lately – want to talk about it?”*

### Listen

*“I’m here to listen if you want to talk more.”*

### Encourage action

*“What do you think is a first step that might help you?”*

### Check in

*“Just wanted to check in and see how you’re doing?”*





“Be kind, you never know what someone is going through. We all have our times. Even just giving someone a kind smile can go a long way.

People are good at hiding feelings. Even if they seem ok – still doesn't hurt to ask.  
– Caley



“Behind every smile there could be a story – asking 'R U OK?' shows you care enough to listen.  
– Jed



“It's not always easy to share when you're going through something. A quick check-in / R U OK? isn't about having all the answers – it's just about being there, listening, and reminding them they matter.”  
– Sam



“In our way, we look out for each other. You never really know the load someone might be carrying, and just asking 'how's things going' can mean more than you realise. Checking in is about showing respect, care, and reminding our mob that we're not walking alone.  
– Temiah



“It is important to ask everybody 'R U OK?', as people wear masks and you never know what is really going on. So asking 'R U OK?' hopefully let's them feel safe to open up.  
– Jodi



“Don't be shame, ask 'R U OK?'. It could save a life, yarnning heals.  
– Layla



“It's important to check in and yarn with those around you to break down the stigma that it is ok to not be ok and holding safe spaces to have those conversations.  
– Melita



Learn more about R U OK? by visiting their website: [www.ruok.org.au](http://www.ruok.org.au).



## Deadly Start Graduates Lead the Way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Excellence

Metro North Health recently honoured the achievements of 28 exceptional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students who have successfully completed the Deadly Start School-Based Traineeship. This transformative program supports students in launching their careers in health while still at school, and this year's graduation marks a powerful step forward in building a culturally safe and inclusive health workforce.

Beginning their journey in Year 11, the 2024/2025 Deadly Start cohort gained valuable hands-on experience across Metro North Health facilities, while also earning nationally recognised qualifications—Certificate II and III—in fields such as nursing, allied health, dental, administration, and patient support services.

At the graduation ceremony, Acting Chief People and Culture Officer Brett Bourke reflected on the deeper impact of the program.

"Deadly Start is more than just a traineeship. It's about unlocking potential, creating opportunities, and walking alongside our young people as they discover what's possible in a health career," Mr Bourke said.

"A workforce that reflects the communities we serve is vital. Programs like Deadly Start are key to delivering culturally responsive care and building a stronger future."

Since its launch in 2019, Deadly Start has opened doors for many students, with graduates continuing on to university studies and securing employment within Metro North Health. In 2024 alone, 11 trainees transitioned into ongoing roles across the service.

Among the 2025 graduate cohort is Tiffany Colley, who completed her nursing traineeship and is now qualified as an Assistant in Nursing. Her journey has already led to early university entry.

"I wasn't sure I'd get the grades to study nursing at university, but Deadly Start gave me the confidence and qualifications I needed. I've already been accepted into university, and I'm excited for what's ahead," Tiffany shared.

Adjunct Professor Sherry Holzapfel, Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, praised the program's role in shaping future leaders:

"These students are the future of health care. They will be the ones driving change and improving outcomes for our communities. We must continue to nurture and support them—there's a place for our people in every part of Metro North Health, from executive leadership to clinical care, research, and beyond."

As the 2024/2025 graduates' step into their next chapter, Metro North Health has welcomed 36 new Year 11 students into the program, beginning their own journey as part of the 2025/2026 Deadly Start cohort.

*2024/2025 Deadly Start cohort celebrating graduation of the program with Adj. Prof. Sherry Holzapfel, Executive Director of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health.*







*Some of Metro North Health's Cadets coming together for the 2025 Welcome Day*

## Welcoming the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cadets to Health

Metro North Health is proud to support the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals, welcoming 20 passionate university students into the First Nations Cadetship Program earlier this year. This marks a significant milestone, with cadet placements increasing by 80% since the program's launch in 2023—a powerful reflection of our commitment to Health Equity and workforce diversity.

To celebrate the beginning of their journey, a Cadetship Welcome Day was held at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Education Centre. The event brought together new cadets, experienced clinicians, and leaders from across Queensland Health in a vibrant space of culture, connection, and learning.

The day was designed to foster a culturally safe environment where cadets could build relationships with peers, mentors, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals. With representatives from Nursing, Midwifery, Allied Health, and Corporate Services in attendance, cadets were introduced to the wide range of career pathways available within Metro North Health.

A standout moment was the panel discussion featuring past and present cadets, supervisors, and Lauren Williams, Program Manager of the Statewide Cadetship Program. Their stories of resilience, growth, and success offered inspiration and practical guidance to those just beginning their journey. Yarning circles provided space for open conversation, encouragement, and shared wisdom.

"Welcome Day is a chance to connect deeply with our students, hear their stories, and understand how we can best support them," said Lauren Williams.

"Many are breaking new ground—some are the first in their families to attend university. It's a reminder of why this program matters and the barriers these students are overcoming."

The First Nations Cadetship Program is more than a placement—it's a holistic support system designed to help students thrive. Cadets receive:

- Cultural support through mentoring, awareness sessions, and monthly yarning circles.
- Financial support including Queensland Health wages and up to \$13,000 in study allowances.
- Placement support with supervised clinical experience and 456 hours of additional hands-on training.

Metro North Health Board Chair, Bernard Curran, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to employing cadets upon completion of their studies and registration, ensuring a clear pathway into the workforce.

Now settled into their placements, the 2025 cadets are bringing energy, curiosity, and a strong sense of purpose to their roles. Backed by a network of mentors and leaders, they are well-positioned to make a lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of their communities.

The First Nations Cadetship Program continues to be a cornerstone in building a culturally safe and compassionate health workforce—one that reflects the communities we serve and is grounded in culture, care, and connection.

## CBS Awards recognise anti-racism policy and campaign

The annual Metro North Health Corporate Business Service (CBS) awards showcase talent, innovation and commitment across the corporate business services teams.

This year a Health Equity – “The Change Maker” award was created to recognise individuals or teams for supporting efforts in achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Individuals and teams who were nominated for this category are being recognised for championing inclusive co-design practices, reduce disparities, and advance equitable health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The award went to Workforce, People and Culture Programs in partnership with Acting Capacity Development Manager Andrew Williams and the Communications Team, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team.

The judging panel commended the outstanding work delivered by A/Capacity Development Manager Andrew Williams, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communications and people and culture teams, through the Anti-Racism Policy and Campaign.

“This initiative represents a significant and impactful contribution to advancing equity and inclusion for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and communities. The depth of engagement, strategic approach, and meaningful outcomes reflect a commitment to lasting change and cultural safety,” said Sharna Dodd, Acting Nursing Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

The campaign is a clear example of inclusive co-design. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and community partners were engaged throughout, ensuring cultural knowledge and lived experiences shaped both the campaign and the Anti-Racism Policy. This approach reduces disparities by actively tackling racism as a barrier to culturally safe care and equitable health outcomes.

“By embedding anti-racism into policy, staff training, and communications, Metro North Health is addressing systemic inequities and creating conditions where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and patients can feel safe, respected, and valued,” said Sharna.

“The campaign is not only a cultural safety initiative but also a foundation for advancing health equity across the organisation.”

*Pictured above: Staff from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team receiving the ‘Change Maker’ award.*



## Advancing Women – Leading Inclusively Workshop

In July, Metro North Health signed up to participate in a pilot Advancing Women Program with People with Disability Australia (PWDA).

Participating in the Advancing Women Mentoring Program offers an incredible opportunity for both mentors and mentees to advocate for inclusive practices for women with disability in the workplace.

The program brings crucial conversations about the barriers to leadership for women with disability to the forefront. By participating in the program, mentors and mentees gain the knowledge and skills needed to influence organisational change, creating leadership opportunities not just for women with disability, but for everyone.

Metro North Health participants joined an exclusive workshop on 31 October 2025 in Brisbane with communicator, speaker, coach, writer, editor and author, Dr Michelle Hyde. A proud Gamilaraay woman and disability and neurodiversity advocate, Dr Hyde created a safe space for women to reflect on their leadership journey and discuss what a supportive management structure looks like.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, Communications and Planning Manager, Renee Simon signed up to the program after learning about the opportunity as a member of the Metro North Health Enable (Employees Navigating Access Barriers Leadership and Equity) Working Group.

*“The program enables me to be guided by a Metro North Health leader and learn supportive skills for my role as a manager.*

*“As a carer myself, I am particularly interested in the role of intersectionality of disability and race, and how I can support equity within the workplace.*

“The workshop with Dr Michelle Hyde provided practical and insightful tools on how to build yourself and others up. My main takeaways were always to listen to understand and acknowledge and thank people as much as you can in your roles,” said Renee.





## Metro North Health Expansion Projects recognised as runner-up

*Pictured right: Erin Flynn in the white dress*

Communications and Engagement Manager, Erin Flynn was a close runner-up in the award and recognised at the ceremony for her commitment to co-design as part of Metro North Health expansion projects.

Erin is a leader in championing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices through the design phase of new hospitals, ensuring opportunities for Traditional Owners, Elders, community members, consumers and staff to share their knowledge and wisdom with the design team and then following through to ensure this feedback is meaningfully incorporated.

Over the past 12-18 months, Erin has been integral in arranging three smoking ceremonies to cleanse sites before and after construction.

She has led co-design for healing gardens and building elements and has arranged five cultural consideration workshops to gather broader feedback and held yarns with Traditional Owners - Turrbal and Kabi Kabi.

Erin has followed cultural heritage protocols and has arranged an archaeologist visit to assess and identify scar trees and arranged a photo shoot with Aboriginal Artist, Uncle Carl Sampson.

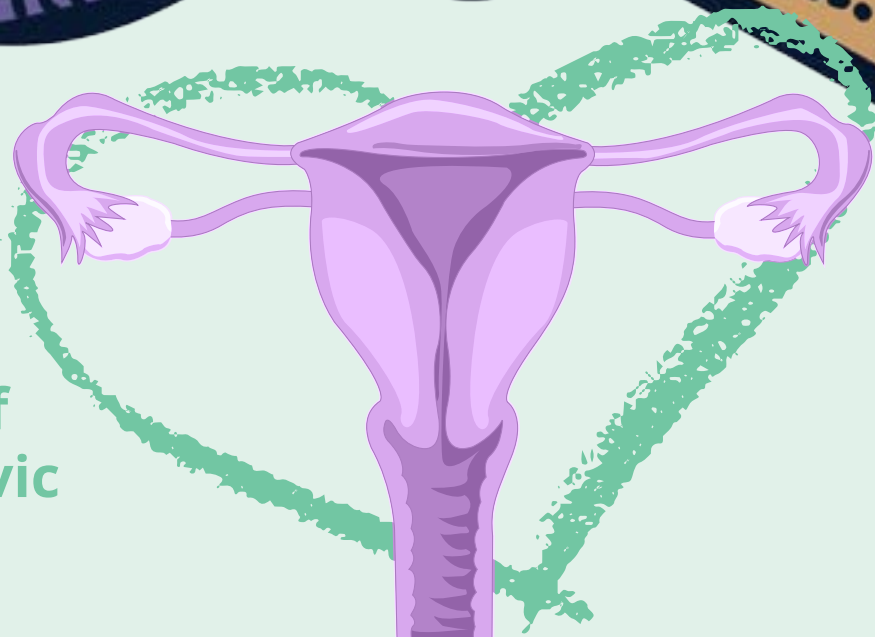
Erin's passion for health equity was noted by Turrbal Traditional Owner "You have Maroochy's blessing to proceed. Thank you for the respect that you and your team have shown in your Traditional Owner engagement. We look forward to continuing to work together".



*Pictured above: Metro North Health staff joined Dr Michelle Hyde (second from left) and PWDA Project Manager Summah McKinnon (far left) for the Advancing Women - Leading Inclusively workshop.*

# WOMEN'S BUSINESS SHARED PATHWAY

We deliver culturally safe health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women for a range of gynaecology and pelvic health conditions.



## Do you experience any of the following:

- Period worries, including Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)
- Menopause symptoms
- Pelvic pain including painful periods, painful sex, endometriosis
- Bowel or bladder leakage
- Pelvic organ prolapse
- Contraception concerns
- Other vaginal or vulval worries
- Dietary concerns for any of the above

See your GP for a referral to our service.  
For more information call or text 0476 842 686.



This initiative is supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, Metro North Health



**Metro North**  
Health



**Queensland**  
Government





*Ann Birch, Manager of Assets and Infrastructure at STARS with Henry Nona, STARS Cultural Capability Officer,*

## STARS Creates a Culturally Safe Space through Aboriginal Art

At Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS), healing goes beyond clinical care—it's about creating spaces that feel welcoming, safe, and connected to culture. Recognising that traditional hospital environments can feel cold and unfamiliar to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, STARS has taken meaningful steps to transform its physical spaces into places of comfort and belonging.

Earlier this year, stunning artwork designed exclusively for STARS by Aboriginal artist Elaine Chambers-Hegarty was installed throughout the facility, including the Level 3 entrance, carpark areas, and glass doors and windows. These vibrant designs are more than decorative—they're a powerful symbol of respect, inclusion, and cultural safety.

Ann Birch, Manager of Assets and Infrastructure at STARS, shared the thoughtful process behind the installation:

"We wanted the artwork to reflect the contemporary design of STARS while also being culturally meaningful. With guidance from Metro North's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership team and Design team, we ensured the pieces aligned with our artwork protocols and values," Ann said.

"A huge thank you to the RBWH Building Engineering and Maintenance Service team for bringing this vision to life. I'm proud of what we've achieved and hopeful that it helps more people feel at ease when they walk through our doors."

The installation also includes an Acknowledgement to Country and a Statement of Commitment to Health Equity at the Level 3 entrance—clear signals that STARS is committed to providing care that respects and uplifts First Nations people.

Henry Nona, STARS Cultural Capability Officer, welcomed the initiative.

"These visual elements send a strong message to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families—that they are seen, valued, and respected here," Henry said.

"Elaine's artwork tells the story of healing through connection—reminding us that recovery is not just physical, but also emotional and cultural."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team, Communications and Planning Manager, Renee Simon said the artworks were initially developed in 2019 to support culturally welcoming environments with esteemed Aboriginal artist Elaine Chambers-Hegarty. Oversight of the artwork production is held with the A&TSILT and Metro North Design Teams to ensure copyright and branding integrity.

"The Metro North Design Team should be acknowledged and congratulated for their role in this project. On a daily basis they support requests across Metro North Health on the development of artwork being displayed within hospital facilities. They ensure the cultural integrity is upheld in all aspects and take such care with each project."

This new installation complements the existing Australian Unity STARS art collection, which proudly features over 60% of works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

By embedding culture into the very fabric of its spaces, STARS continues to lead the way in creating environments where everyone feels safe, supported, and empowered to heal.

# Co-Creating Culturally Safe Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families

The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) Paediatric Outpatients service are working to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through a new research project - *Connection and Kinship*.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to face significant barriers in accessing health services. These include long wait times, high rates of missed appointments, and a lack of culturally safe and responsive care.

To address this, TPCH Paediatric Outpatients service aims to co-design, implement, and evaluate a new model of care that embeds community needs within the Paediatric Outpatients Department - to support families, improving access, and fostering culturally safe relationships between families and health services.

"We believe that community involvement is essential to creating meaningful change. That's why we are inviting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to participate in the project in two key ways - by completing a short questionnaire sharing paediatric care experiences and joining yarning circles with other families to share ideas and stories," said Isabel Byram, Research Assistant for Connection and Kinship Project.

The feedback and stories shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families will contribute to re-shaping and advancing paediatric care for community. Together families can build a model of care that is responsive and culturally safe - one that strengthens connection and kinship and improves health outcomes for generations to come.

Help shape the future of Paediatric Care at The Prince Charles Hospital for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Your voice and experiences can help us create a service that truly meets the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.



Complete the survey and tell us about your experience:  
<https://redcap.link/ckconpre>



## Connection and Kinship recognised for dismantling barriers in Paediatric Care



(L-R) Rebeckah Mooney - TPCH Cultural Capability Officer, Sara Winter - TPCH Allied Health Research Coordinator and Isabel Byram - Project Officer receiving staff excellence award for Connection and Kinship project.

The Prince Charles Hospital Connection and Kinship project recently received an award for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Health at the Staff Excellence Awards for The Prince Charles Hospital.

The project was recognised for their work in reshaping paediatric outpatient care, in collaboration with community, by addressing systemic inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This collaborative initiative brings together Elders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, staff across Paediatrics, consumer researchers, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service.

The new co-designed model of care is designed to embed trust, cultural safety, and community voice into every step of the care journey. By dismantling barriers such as cultural differences, cost, and transport, the project is creating sustainable, flexible, and culturally safe care pathways that improve access, equity, and health outcomes.



Metro North Health staff attending training at Brighton Health Campus.

## Cultural training mandated for all Metro North Health staff

All Metro North Health employees are now required to complete mandatory cultural training – Cultural Practice Program and Accurate Indigenous Identification.

As the main provider of health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, it is critical that Queensland Health build a culturally capable workforce.

The Cultural Practice Program is a strategy from Queensland Health's overarching Indigenous health policy framework, Making Tracks to Close the Gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders by 2033.

The mandatory training program is facilitated across Metro North Health by facility Cultural Capability Officers. Throughout this engaging and interactive training program, staff will be provided with practical advice, tools and resources to embed the four guiding principles of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework 2010-2033. These principles are Respect and Recognition, Communication, Relationships and Partnerships and Capacity Building.

The Accurate Indigenous Identification training supports the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in health data sets. This information is obtained by asking the patient, (or other person if the patient is unable to answer) the question, "Are you [is the person] of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" This question is asked verbally or in paper form.

The training supports staff to confidently ask the question and support their understanding on why the question is needed.

Both courses highlight an important step and part of Metro North Health's commitment to the *Health Equity Strategy 2025 - 2028*. New staff members will have 90 days to complete.

# “Don’t wait until you get sick”

Marissa’s story and message to mob



*(L-R) Amy (Marissa’s mum), and Marissa supported by TPCH IHLO Michelle.*

Barada Kabalbara woman Marissa, from Central Queensland, has dedicated her life to improving the health and wellbeing of her community. After returning to Rockhampton (Darumbal country) in her early 20s, she began working at Bidgerdii Community Health Service, where she now proudly serves as Chief Executive Officer.

“I’m glad to be a part of the health sector and be part of a team where we can make meaningful changes within the community,” Marissa said.

Earlier this year, Marissa’s own health journey reminded her just how important early screening and preventative health care can be.

After being admitted to hospital for an unrelated matter in February, nurses noticed Marissa’s blood pressure was unusually high. “I made a mental note of the high blood pressure to make sure I got it checked out with my GP,” she said.

A week later, she followed up with her doctor. “At the time I had a slight cough and a bit of shortness of breath (similar to having the common cold), but nothing that would have resulted in a trip to the GP if it hadn’t been for my high blood pressure.”



Her GP thought she may have developed pneumonia while in hospital and referred her for a chest x-ray. Pneumonia was ruled out, as was tuberculosis, which was circulating locally at the time. That's when doctors raised the possibility of the big 'C' (cancer).

A lung biopsy later confirmed she had stage 1B lung cancer.

"I was shocked," Marissa said. "I honestly thought the results would come back benign, because other than those mild symptoms, there was no sign of a cancerous tumour in my body."

After her diagnosis, Marissa was referred to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH), where she underwent lung capacity testing and received specialist care. She was impressed with the professionalism and kindness of the team.

She then had surgery at The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) on 30 May, where surgeons performed a lobectomy to remove the upper right lobe of her lung. Follow-up tests thankfully confirmed the tumour was successfully removed and had not spread any further.

"I'm grateful for the ongoing care I've had during my recovery, especially from Dr David Fielding, Respiratory Physician, Director of Thoracic Medicine RBWH" shared Marissa.

Marissa was also grateful for the Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officers at TPCH who supported her family. "One IHLO in particular, Michelle, would come and check on me and my family regularly, making sure my elderly mother who had travelled down with me for surgery, was taken care of with lifts to and from the hospital, and making sure she had food," she said.

Marissa knows she was fortunate to have had her lung cancer detected early, especially since she had no obvious symptoms. She now encourages others to take part in regular screenings.

"Opportunistic screening and early screenings can really make a difference, as symptoms don't necessarily start to show until those tumours or cancers have advanced, when they are then much harder to treat," she said. "Don't wait until you develop symptoms. Those preventative services are available now, and they are life changing."

Although she hasn't smoked for over 20 years, Marissa has met many others – including non-smokers – affected by lung cancer. "When I got my diagnosis, I was in a state of shock, but I was thankful at the same time, that it had been detected early so that I could be treated," she said.

Since her diagnosis, Marissa has made her health and wellbeing a priority. "I have been taking time out mentally, physically and spiritually to do what I need to do to make sure this cancer doesn't come back." This has included exploring natural approaches to healing, such as using Gumbi Gumbi (her peoples traditional medicine) and soursop, as well as visiting a naturopath.

She's also determined to raise awareness about lung cancer and promote the National Lung Cancer Screening Program (NLCSP), which began on 1 July this year.

Bidgerdii Community Health Service was fortunate to receive grant funding from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing through the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to support this important work.

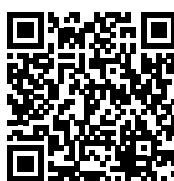
Delivered in collaboration with partner organisations, the Lung Cancer Screening Project takes a community-led, locally tailored, and culturally safe approach.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 and over, with a history of smoking and no current symptoms, are encouraged to take part in the free low-dose CT screenings.

"Doing these screenings, and taking charge of your health, is not just about looking after you, but also doing it for your mob and for your family." For Marissa, her motivation is clear – her son and her mum.

"I'm all about preventative health," she said. "If we can get our mob diagnosed early, we are more likely to see a successful outcome. I hope in some way I can make a difference, even if I can encourage one or two community members through the door for a screen, and then they can share their story with others – like a domino effect."

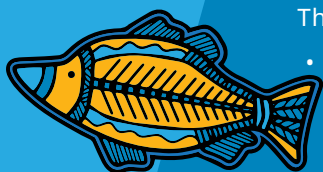
Marissa's story is a powerful reminder that taking proactive steps for your health can make a real difference – not just for yourself, but for your whole community. By participating in regular health checks and screenings, you're not only protecting your wellbeing, but also inspiring others to do the same.



You can learn more about the National Lung Cancer Screening Program here: <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/nlcsp?language=en>

## WORD OF THE MONTH

# "Lar"



## "Lar" is Fish 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).

### Brisbane Northside Elder Spotlight

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders form an integral role in the success of Metro North Health's journey towards health equity. They guide discussions, provide their wisdom and valued input, voicing the needs of their community and advocating for positive health outcomes.

Each edition of Talk-About, a feature will be provided on the Elders who guide our journey and share with you their personal profile.

We acknowledge and thank the Elders for their ongoing support and commitment.



## Uncle George Elarde Badu Island, Torres Strait Islands

### Uncle George's Story

Uncle George is a proud Torres Strait Islander man with family connections to Badu Island. He grew up on Thursday Island surrounded by nine siblings, four brothers and five sisters. His early years were shaped by the warmth of family and the lessons from his Elders, who taught him the importance of culture, respect and community.

Later, moving to Cairns, Uncle George built a life grounded in hard work and community service. As a bricklayer by trade, he practised his craft in Cairns, Darwin, Canberra, and Brisbane. His efforts weren't limited to construction — he also worked with the Cairns Legal Service, supporting Cape York communities by listening to and engaging with families and organisations to help strengthen local voices.

Sport has always been a part of Uncle George's life. He proudly represented basketball as a player, referee and coach. His love and dedication to the game fostered community spirit through sport.

Uncle George values his cultural knowledge. From a young age, his parents and uncles taught him how to prepare traditional foods, especially the Kup Muri—an underground earth oven that uses hot stones to cook and serve food at ceremonial feasts. This practice remains an important part of his identity and a way to pass on traditions to younger generations.

Today, Uncle George continues to enjoy his time with other Elders in the community. He sits on Metro North Health's Elders Yarns Groups at COH and contributes to Yarns with Sherry Holzapfel, Executive Director, alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team. His voice, experience, and cultural knowledge are helping shape better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



### Welcoming Aunty Barbara to the Redcliffe Hospital Volunteer Team

Redcliffe Hospital are honoured to welcome Aunty Barbara O'Connor, a proud Noonuccal Woman from Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island), to the wonderful and dedicated Volunteer team. Her presence brings a wealth of knowledge, compassion, and experience from an extensive career in the healthcare sector.

Aunty Barbara previously worked with the Fred Hollows Foundation in the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program, where teams of dedicated ophthalmologists, nurses, and Aboriginal Health Workers travelled across vast regions of Australia including the Torres Strait Islands to deliver essential care to some of the most remote communities in the country.

Reflecting on her time with the program, Aunty Barbara shares -

"I enjoyed working in the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program because of the dedicated professional eye health team of ophthalmologists and optometrists who were committed to servicing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the rural and remote areas of Queensland. It was a challenge due to many communities not having access to this service, but with the help of the local health workers, it made my work easier and the joy of seeing someone after their cataract was removed or receiving their first pair of glasses was unforgettable."

Through her work, Aunty Barbara witnessed firsthand how restoring and protecting sight can empower individuals, strengthen families, and reconnect people to their communities and Country.

"My experience has given me insight into the health system and led me to my volunteer work at Redcliffe Hospital, knowing I can assist the local community here in Redcliffe."

Hospital volunteers are an integral part of the health service, providing invaluable support to patients, their families, visitors, and staff. Every act of kindness whether it's a helping hand, a warm smile, or a listening ear makes a difference in someone's healing journey.

*Aunty Barbara embodies this spirit of care and connection. Her generosity, cultural wisdom, and compassion reflect the heart of what it means to volunteer walking alongside others and helping them feel supported every step of the way.*

"We are truly honoured to have Aunty Barbara as part of our Redcliffe Hospital family," said Raelene White, Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health at Redcliffe Hospital.



### Teresa Onorato: Championing Culture and Care in Health



Teresa Onorato brings heart, heritage and a wealth of experience to her new role as Senior Health Worker with Ngarrama at Redcliffe Hospital. Originally from South Australia, Teresa is a Ngarrindjeri and Narrunga woman, part of the Butterfish, Pelican mob. She moved to Brisbane two years ago to be closer to her daughter, but her connection to Country remains strong.

"When I go home, I love heading back to the station, fishing and collecting periwinkles off the rocks," Teresa shares.

[Continued >](#)

"Cooking butterfish on the coals with damper – that's my favourite. I also love eating wild turtle from Darwin—cooked lightly and quickly fried so it stays tender. They use the turtle blood as a dipping sauce, sometimes with soya sauce and eaten with rice."

With a broad nursing background covering burns, surgical wards, emergency, palliative care, and now birthing, Teresa's current focus is ensuring cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mums.

"I work closely with mums and want to make sure their cultural needs are respected," she explains. "Education and good communication are key — midwives and staff working with our families need to understand our practices and talk to health workers. We need to work together."

Teresa recently celebrated the early completion of her Diploma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Healthcare Management—a two-year program she finished ahead of schedule. Reflecting on the achievement, she shared, "It was a lot of work, but totally worth it. Learning never stops, no matter how old you are".

She is a strong advocate for recognising lived experience alongside formal qualifications.

"Mainstream health often wants a piece of paper, but they don't always value the knowledge we bring. Getting those qualifications helps validate what we already know."

Teresa also speaks candidly about systemic racism and the need for strong Black leadership in healthcare.

"We need big system changes. Strong leadership is essential for advocating for our community and staff."

Her advice is to support our managers so they can stand strong. Education helps, but we also need safe spaces. Someone who inspires her within Metro North Health is Executive Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Adjunct Professor Sherry Holzapfel.

"Sherry has made me feel safe and given me a chance to speak". She fights for us, even when she's overwhelmed and tired. We really need that kind of leadership."

Asked if she could invite anyone to sit around a campfire, past or present with her, Teresa shared "Uncle Charlie Perkins. He marched and spoke for our rights. We have lost some of that these days and we need to bring that respect and strength back into our communities."

Teresa's final message is one of resilience and strength:

"Stay strong, stay true to your values and don't let anyone change who you are."

## Maliah Bamaga: Leading with heart and cultural strength

Maliah, a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman with cultural ties to Saibai Island, Boigu Island, Warrgamay and Girramay country, has been making a meaningful impact at Metro North Health for the past four years.

"I started in recruitment at the Caboolture Riverside Hub, doing interviews and onboarding new staff, setting up their profiles. It was a short 3-4 months, but it opened the door for me into Metro North Health."

From this role, Maliah had the opportunity to join the team at Redcliffe Hospital as an Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer. Her journey has been shaped by her passion for people and deep cultural connection. Maliah loved the community bonds she made in this role and especially loved working with the dementia patients.

"Growing up with my old people and watching them go through dementia made it personal. You learn to communicate differently. It takes patience, but it feels good to help our Elders."

She has loved working alongside Nurse Navigator, Leicha Wone and past Cultural Capability Officer (CCO), Elwyn Henaway, in a diverse team, older-younger, male and female, building strong relationships with patients and staff alike.

Maliah has now started working in an acting role within the Ngarrama team at Redcliffe Hospital. One of the most challenging parts of Maliah's role is supporting families during maternity meetings involving Child Safety.

"It's hard sitting with parents who are told their baby might be taken away—especially when it's not explained properly. We're there to help families to understand and feel supported in the system."

Through her work, Maliah highlights the need for better cultural training for Child Safety staff and earlier intervention of Indigenous health workers into the conversations. These moments fuel Maliah's advocacy for clearer communication and culturally safe practices.

When she's not working, Maliah enjoys reading and journaling and tries to make time to return to Country a couple of times a year. She reads all sorts of fiction, women's development, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, and anything that makes her think deeper.

Maliah's favourite food is chicken semur, with a special shoutout to eel-tail style semur from Samoa. She also loves Mexican and Indian food, especially their homemade pistachio ice cream for dessert.

Maliah encourages other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to explore all opportunities that Metro North Health offers -

"Try everything and don't stick to just one job. Build good relationships – they make a big difference when you need to vent or debrief. Get involved in community and staff events – it helps you feel part of the team."





# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

## Temiah Bond

Social and Emotional  
Wellbeing Officer, A&TSILT



### Q1. Can you please tell us who your Mob are and where you are from?

I am a proud Juru woman with my father being a Juru man from the Burdekin, but I was born and raised in Meanjin.

### Q2. Can you please tell us a bit about the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program and what you hope to achieve in your role?

The Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Program works to improve and support the social, emotional and mental wellbeing of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across Metro North Health, by delivering equitable, accessible and culturally sensitive care and support.

I hope to be able to create and promote a safe space, where mob feel they will be listened to, and feel that they can come to me for any support they are needing around their wellbeing knowing they will be treated with dignity and respect. I hope to be able to walk alongside mob to support them to keep moving forward in their life, and help them work through any issues or challenges that may be causing a barrier.

### Q3. Why are you passionate about working in this space?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health has always been a passion of mine. Growing up thinking that the amount of Sorry Business we attended was normal, really sparked something within me that wanted to make a difference. From a young age, I have always worked in roles where I could help improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### Q4. Can you share a bit about what you have been doing in your role so far?

Over the past few months, I've really focused on learning the lay of the land and getting to know our sites, our staff, and how the SEWB Program currently operates. I hit the ground running with site visits and have been connecting with staff to build relationships and better understand their needs and experiences. I've also started running Social and Emotional Wellbeing activities across different sites to promote connection and support. Alongside that, I've been reviewing current processes as part of the SEWB Program review, looking at what's working well and where there are gaps or opportunities for improvement in how we support staff wellbeing across Metro North Health. A big part of my role so far has also been providing support to staff through whatever challenges they may be facing, and identifying ways we can strengthen cultural safety and wellbeing across the organisation.

### Q5. Can you give us a bit of background on your working career?

I started with Metro North Health in 2014 under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Unit as an After-Hours Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer. From there I moved roles and ended up with the Patient Journey team supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients who would travel to The Prince Charles Hospital from rural and remote areas.

In 2020, I started working for GIVIT (Not-for-Profit) as an Engagement Officer. This allowed to me travel to connect and support staff in government and non-government roles across the state. I am excited to be back working with Metro North Health as a Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officer!

# 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>



**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\\_TSILT\\_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:A_TSILT_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au) or phone 07 3170 4460. Produced by the Metro North and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Communications teams.



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/au/>

© State of Queensland (Metro North Hospital and Health Service)2025