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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.

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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_TSILCommsMNH@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_TSILCommsMNH@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.

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The Prince Charles Hospital	
Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer	Ph: 3139 5165 / 0429 897 982
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Redcliffe Hospital	
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Caboolture/Kilcoy Hospital	
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Forensic Mental Health Team	Ph: 3234 0800

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A word from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Executive Director

Adj.Prof. Sherry Holzapfel



It is with great sadness that I acknowledge and pay respects to the passing of Turrbal Traditional Owner and highly respected Elder, Songwoman Aunty Maroochy Barambah.

Aunty Maroochy's contributions to community and to Metro North Health have left a lasting legacy. Her presence, knowledge, and cultural authority have guided and strengthened our community for decades.

Aunty Maroochy was a long standing advocate and supporter of Metro North Health, contributing significantly to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health across our organisation.

Our organisation honours Aunty Maroochy's life, her leadership, and the legacy she leaves in the hearts, minds, and work of so many. She will also be remembered for her lifetime of cultural and artistic contribution, a legacy that will continue to live on through her family, her community, and throughout Metro North Health's hospitals, services, and facilities.

Already this year we have seen such significant loss within our community. This is a reminder and reaffirmation on why we must continue to drive and advocate for better health, safety and wellbeing outcomes for our people, now and for generations to come.

For me and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, this work is deeply personal. Every loss is felt across our families, our teams and our communities — and it strengthens my commitment to ensuring our services show up with the respect, care and cultural understanding our people deserve.

This year, our Health Equity agenda places a strong emphasis on early intervention and the health and wellbeing of children and young people. We know that the foundations for lifelong health are built early through culturally safe, coordinated and community-informed care.

In 2026, we will continue strengthening initiatives that support families from the earliest stages of life and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are actively engaged in shaping the services that impact them. By focusing on early support and youth wellbeing, we are investing in stronger futures for our communities.

In March, Metro North Health will hold our first Health Equity Community Consultation for 2026, delivered in partnership with Children's Health Queensland (CHQ). This collaboration marks a significant milestone in our Health Equity journey, as it is the first time we have come together with another hospital and health service to listen to community and plan for better outcomes, side by side.

The upcoming consultation will focus on strengthening collaboration and deepening engagement around priority areas, including early intervention and improving outcomes for children and young people.

Working in partnership with CHQ reflects our shared commitment to integrated care across the health system by ensuring children and families experience coordinated, culturally safe support across services.

Another key piece of work underway is our July–December six monthly Health Equity progress reporting. This reporting is an important part of our accountability under the Metro North Health Equity Strategy.

Every six months, we review the actions we have committed to, track our progress, and identify both the challenges and the areas where we need to place more focus. This helps ensure we stay transparent, stay accountable, and continue moving forward in partnership with community. For community, this means:

- Transparency about what we said, what we would do and what has been achieved.
- Clear tracking of improvements across cultural capability, service access, workforce representation and community partnerships.
- Honest reflection on areas where more work is needed.

Health equity reporting ensures that our commitments translate into real, measurable change. It allows us to remain accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ensures our actions align with community priorities.

As we move into this new year, I invite each of you to stay connected, stay engaged and continue walking alongside us.

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

A word from Chief Executive

Nick Steele



Dear colleagues,

Metro North continues to strengthen its commitment to health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We hold a unique position as the first hospital and health service in Queensland to develop our Health Equity Strategy, having launched the strategy's next phase in July last year, which will guide activities for the next three years.

Since joining Metro North last year, I've had the opportunity to attend a number of community events highlighting the importance of meaningful engagement in co-designing culturally safe, appropriate and accessible services.

I commend our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team for their ongoing work in building strong and trusting relationships with our Elders, consumers and members of the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

These connections are key to how Metro North continues to help close the gap and create services that genuinely improve the outcomes and experiences of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

One of the key priority areas within our Health Equity Strategy moving forward, is improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This year, we will continue to strengthen initiatives that support families and ensure that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are reflected in the services that impact them.

One of these initiatives is Metro North's upcoming Health Equity Community Consultation to be held in partnership with Children's Health Queensland. Coming together with another hospital to listen to our community, represents important progress in our health equity journey. It allows us to focus on priorities with greater intensity and expertise, and identify opportunities for how we can work together better across the health network to achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

Creating a work environment where individuals can develop and thrive is a key focus of Metro North, especially with such as a large and diverse workforce. Health equity among our Metro North workforce continues to be supported by our anti-racism campaign – Stop Racism. It Starts with Me. This campaign, accompanied by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander anti-racism policy and formal reporting mechanism, empowers everyone to see racism, challenge it and stop it – creating a more equitable and inclusive workplace where people can be and do their best.

This ethos is also reflected in our statewide Deadly Start Traineeship Program which provides valuable on-the-job training for young members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to gain valuable work experience in a healthcare setting and help inform their future career decisions. We have seen some great success with graduates going on to become full time employees or take up university degrees in healthcare.

This year, Metro North will welcome a new cohort of trainees, marking the eighth year of the program's successful operation, and our ongoing commitment to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all parts of the organisation.

I look forward to another productive year in our health equity journey.

Regards,

Nick Steele
Chief Executive,
Metro North Health



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Protecting cultural heritage at Redcliffe Hospital

Redcliffe Hospital has strengthened its commitment to protecting and honouring Aboriginal cultural heritage, with the Redcliffe Hospital Expansion project team working closely with Kabi Kabi Traditional Owners to guide the respectful management of any cultural heritage found during construction. This partnership ensures the project moves forward in a way that acknowledges, protects and upholds the cultural significance of the land.

Cultural heritage is valued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as an ongoing connection to their history, traditions and Country.

In late-January 2026, Redcliffe Hospital's Cultural Capability Officer, Will Muckan, worked with the Redcliffe Hospital Expansion project team to organise the first of a series of Kabi Kabi cultural heritage inductions, ensuring it was delivered prior to in-ground works commencing on the multi-storey car park expansion project.

Kabi Kabi Traditional Custodian, Kerry Jones, delivered the cultural heritage induction and shared his cultural knowledge with the project team about the impact construction activities can have on cultural heritage and the need for construction teams to understand their duty of care and responsibilities for protecting local Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The induction included a display of Aboriginal artefacts, including stone tools, flakes, shell artefacts and grinding stones, which allowed the Redcliffe Hospital Expansion project team to learn how to identify these items during earthworks and excavations and ensure cultural heritage compliance and environmental management throughout the construction project.

The Kabi Kabi cultural heritage induction was an important step towards building the Redcliffe Hospital Expansion project team's knowledge of Kabi Kabi culture and identifying opportunities to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and connection to the built environment.

This activity highlights Redcliffe Hospital's contribution to Metro North Health's Health Equity commitments and reconciliation journey.

Staff members of Redcliffe Hospital looking through the display of Aboriginal artefacts - stone tools, flakes, shell artefacts and grinding stones.



Celebrating our workforce at Metro North Health: A deadly end of year gathering

In December 2025, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from across Metro North Health came together for an end of year celebration at the Albany Creek Community Centre.

It was a special day to pause, reflect and honour everything staff and services achieved throughout the year — the wins, the learnings, the challenges and the strong connections that carried us through 2025.

The space was filled with laughter, big smiles and plenty of yarning as staff enjoyed a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.

Throughout the day, everyone had the chance to join in a variety of fun activities — trivia, bucket golf, rock painting, giant jenga and connect four. A dedicated social and emotional wellbeing activity



Left: Winner of the Best Dressed Christmas Competition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officer, Temiah Bond.

Above: Staff members (from left to right) Jed Faulkner, Project Support Officer and Aunty Phillipa Cole, Senior Project Officer taking a friendly snap at the Better Together Staff Gathering.

also encouraged attendees to slow down, breathe and check in with themselves and each other — a reminder of the importance of looking after our wellbeing as a community.

One of the crowd favourites was the Best Dressed Christmas Competition. Staff showed up in creative and fun outfits, but it was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officer Temiah Bond who stole the show. Her gingerbread house costume, crafted from a Kmart gift bag, had everyone laughing and cheering.

The day also honoured the incredible contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce through the Better Together Staff Deadly Awards,



recognising leadership, teamwork, cultural strength and commitment to community.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership – Clinical Innovation and Strategy Team received the Team Award for their outstanding collaboration, cultural capability and commitment to delivering equitable health care. Their work in strengthening partnerships across services and community has made a meaningful difference to how care is delivered for our mob.

Stephen Lane, Advanced Mental Health Worker, and Hayley Renouf, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker, were each honoured with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Individual Award. Both were recognised for their strong leadership, integrity and dedication to culturally safe practice.

Their deep respect for culture and community, compassion in their day to day work, and focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were highlighted as stand out contributions.

Penny Dale, Director for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health, received the Executive Director Award, personally selected by Adj. Prof. Sherry Holzapfel, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Executive Director.

Penny was acknowledged for consistently demonstrating respect, integrity, compassion and high performance, as well as her commitment to teamwork. Her leadership has created meaningful impact across the organisation and strengthened support for community.

These awards celebrate staff who consistently go above and beyond — lifting others up, creating culturally safe spaces, and making a real difference in the lives of our community.

The 2025 Better Together Staff Christmas Party was more than just an end of year event — it was a celebration of culture, connection and appreciation. It recognised the strength, resilience and dedication of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, who continue to support our communities with heart, compassion and cultural pride every single day.

Below: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff members celebrating together at the Better Together Staff Gathering.





New children's artwork welcomes families to The Prince Charles Hospital

Visitors attending The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) may notice two beautiful new artworks displayed near the Children's Emergency Department and the Children's Ward.

These artworks were generously donated by The Prince Charles Early Education Centre as a meaningful gesture to build and strengthen relationships within the TPCH community, while also supporting reconciliation and respectful teaching.

The artworks were created as part of the Acknowledging Culture Through Art and Storytelling project at The Prince Charles Hospital Early Education Centre. Kindy children were given the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal culture through art, storytelling and hands-on experiences.

Wiradjuri artist, Tia Williamson, worked closely with the young ones, guiding them through the creative process and sharing stories about culture, Country and connection.

The group were inspired by Dreamtime stories such as, 'The Bees and the Flies' and 'Who Saw Turtle', which helped them develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal traditions and perspectives.

The colours and symbols used in the artwork hold strong cultural meaning:

- Black represents the night sky, creation, rebirth and renewal.
- White symbolises spiritual connection, sacredness and purity.
- Red represents blood, family ties and all living beings.
- Yellow symbolises light, warmth, spiritual energy and the life-giving power of the sun.
- Dots are used to share stories while protecting sacred knowledge, messages and ceremonial teachings.

Through this experience, the young artists also learned about the deep connection Aboriginal people have with the land and animals, including their importance as food sources, totems and figures within Dreamtime Creation Stories.

The artworks have been placed in children's areas of the hospital to help create a welcoming, calming and culturally respectful space for children, families and carers. We sincerely thank The Prince Charles Early Education Centre and Tia Williamson for their generosity and for supporting opportunities to celebrate culture, learning and connection within our hospital.

Caboolture Hospital opens new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Safe Space

A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services space has recently opened at Caboolture Hospital, adding to the wonderful range of supports already available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, families and Community.

The space has been thoughtfully designed to support both wellbeing and connection in a welcoming environment. It includes a quiet outdoor garden for reflection surrounded by native plants, a small kitchenette that encourages conversation over a cuppa, and access to telehealth services to support continuity of care.

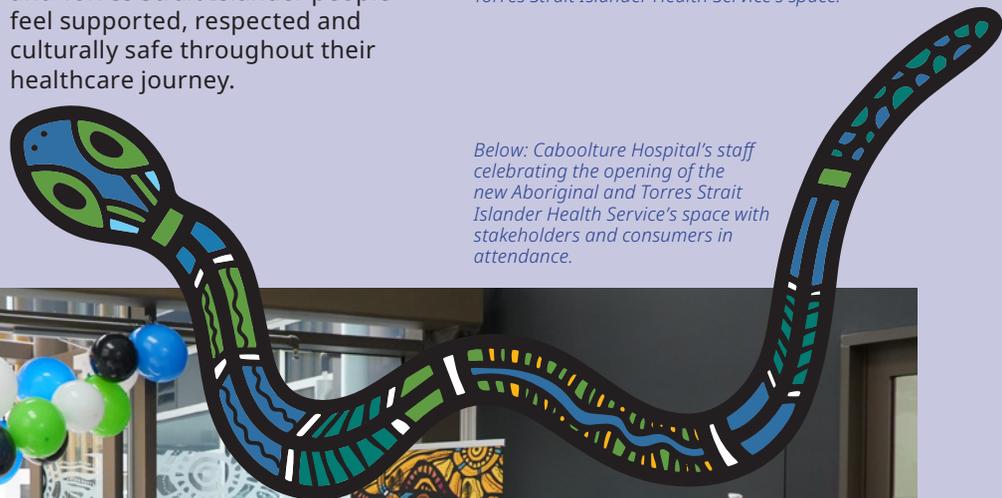
The ceremony was opened with a Welcome to Country performed by Mack Muckan, a proud Kabi Kabi, Yuru and South Sea Islander man from Undumbi Culture, whose goal is to support and guide individuals and organisations to build a culturally strong and inclusive community.

This new space strengthens Caboolture Hospital's ongoing commitment to culturally inclusive healthcare and builds on the existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services already making a positive difference.

It represents another important step towards ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel supported, respected and culturally safe throughout their healthcare journey.



Above: Mack Muckan, a proud Kabi Kabi, Yuru and South Sea Islander man performing a Welcome to Country at Caboolture Hospital's new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service's space.



Below: Caboolture Hospital's staff celebrating the opening of the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service's space with stakeholders and consumers in attendance.





The children from Metro North's Lady Ramsay Early Learning and Education Centre enjoying storytelling from Aunty Kathy.

Smoking Ceremony at the new Lady Ramsay Early Learning and Education Centre



Elder Aunty Kathy Fisher performing smoking ceremony ritual with children from Metro North Health's Lady Ramsay Early Learning and Education Centre.

Below: Metro North Health Executive and staff pictured with Elder Aunty Kathy Fisher at the new Lady Ramsay Early Learning and Education Centre.



The opening of Metro North Health's new Lady Ramsay Early Learning and Education Centre at Herston was marked in February with a Smoking Ceremony led by respected Elder Aunty Kathy Fisher.

Children, families and staff gathered as Aunty Kathy welcomed the new space on Turrbal Country. For many of the little ones, it was their first time being part of a Smoking Ceremony, a special moment of connection so early in their lives.

Speaking gently to the children, Aunty Kathy described the smoke as a way "to shoo away bad spirits and bad dreams and protect them". The little ones listened closely, some wide-eyed and some curious, before stepping forward to take part as the smoke moved through the centre.

Aunty Kathy also shared a story and a song, filling the space with culture and warmth. Parents and educators joined in, creating a shared moment that felt grounded and welcoming for everyone there.

Roslyn Boland, RBWH Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, said it was a privilege to have Aunty Kathy lead the ceremony.

"For many of the little ones, this was their first opportunity to see and participate in a Smoking Ceremony. They were mesmerised by Aunty Kathy's story, song and smoke, and it was lovely to see the children and their parents get involved," Ms Boland said.

Metro North Health owns and operates the Lady Ramsay Early Learning and Education Centre to support staff and their families. The centre provides care for children from six weeks through to kindergarten age and supports up to seventy-eight children.

Beginning this new space with cultural guidance from an Elder was a meaningful way to start, ensuring the centre opened with respect, connection and care for the next generation.



Urapun launch and celebration

Metro North Health has proudly celebrated the launch of the Urapun Clinical School, delivered in partnership with Community and Oral Health (COH), Redcliffe Hospital and TAFE Queensland.

Urapun means “One” in the Torres Strait Kala Lagaw Ya language of the Western and Central Islands. The name reflects the coming together of services, students and community as one, united in purpose and care.

The naming of the school was guided by Henry Nona, Cultural Capability Officer (Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service) and a proud Torres Strait Islander man born on Waiben. When discussions began about what this initiative represented, Henry identified Urapun as the name that best captured its spirit of unity across Community and Oral Health, Redcliffe Hospital and TAFE Queensland.

Inspired by the octopus, Henry shared, “All tentacles move in unity to support a single patient. Each tentacle brings its own unique strengths and skills, working together to help the patient achieve better living and a healthier lifestyle.”

This powerful imagery speaks to the strength of collaboration, where different disciplines and services work together, not separately, to provide holistic and culturally responsive care.

Urapun Clinical School cohort celebrating the importance of growing and supporting the next generation of health professionals.

The launch also marked a deadly milestone, with Zoe, Tanielle and Makeeli commencing their first clinical placements as Registered Nurses at Community and Oral Health and Redcliffe Hospital. Their placements represent more than clinical training. They reflect the importance of growing and supporting the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals within our own services.

The Urapun Clinical School stands as a strong example of what can be achieved when education, health services and cultural leadership come together with shared purpose and commitment.





Creating spaces where Community feels at home



Pictured: Kallangur Satellite Health Centre's gardener, Ryan Westnedge.

For many, the feeling of care begins long before stepping into a clinic room — it starts the moment you arrive. At Kallangur Satellite Health Centre, that welcome is felt in the land, the pathways and the green quiet places that wrap around the building. Much of that sense of home is nurtured by Ryan Westnedge, the centre's gardener and a strong ally for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Ryan takes great pride in creating outdoor spaces that feel calm, respectful and grounded in place — including the dedicated Healing Garden. For him, gardening is more than maintaining plants; it's about shaping an environment where people feel at ease, where the land itself offers comfort, care and connection.

He knows that for many visitors, especially those coming in for health appointments, the surroundings make a big difference.

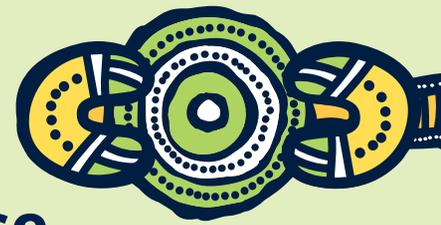
A shaded path, well kept grounds and thoughtfully tended greenery can ease anxiety and create a sense of safety and belonging before they even walk through the door.

This sense of grounding is felt deeply in the Healing Garden, located beside Kallangur Satellite Health Centre's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service. Visible from the front of the facility, the garden offers a quiet place of safety and connection — a space where community can pause, breathe and feel held by Country.

As an ally, Ryan approaches his work with care and a listening ear. He is proud to contribute to a space that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and acknowledges the importance of culturally grounded environments.

Through his work, he helps ensure the centre feels less like an institution and more like a place where people are welcome to arrive as they are. His contribution is recognised widely, including by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurse Navigator Trina Scott, who shared:

"Ryan's dedication is felt by everyone who walks through the Kallangur Satellite Health Centre grounds. It is through contributions like his that the centre truly lives its purpose of providing care that is close to home, respectful and deeply connected to place."



Community comes together for final 2025 Health Equity Showcase

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members from across Brisbane’s Moreton Bay region came together for the final Health Equity Community Showcase of 2025 — a day of connection, learning and celebrating community strength.

Hosted by Metro North Health, the drop in expo was held at the Morayfield Sports and Events Centre, transforming the venue into a safe, friendly and welcoming space where community could yarn, ask questions and access information about the services available close to home.

Throughout the day, more than 312 community members walked through the doors, taking their time to meet with services, network and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere.

With 41 stallholders present — including a wide range of Metro North Health services and community partners such as Kurbingui, Micah Projects and IUIH — the Showcase offered something for everyone. Community members could speak directly with service providers, gather resources and find out what supports are available for themselves, their families and Elders.

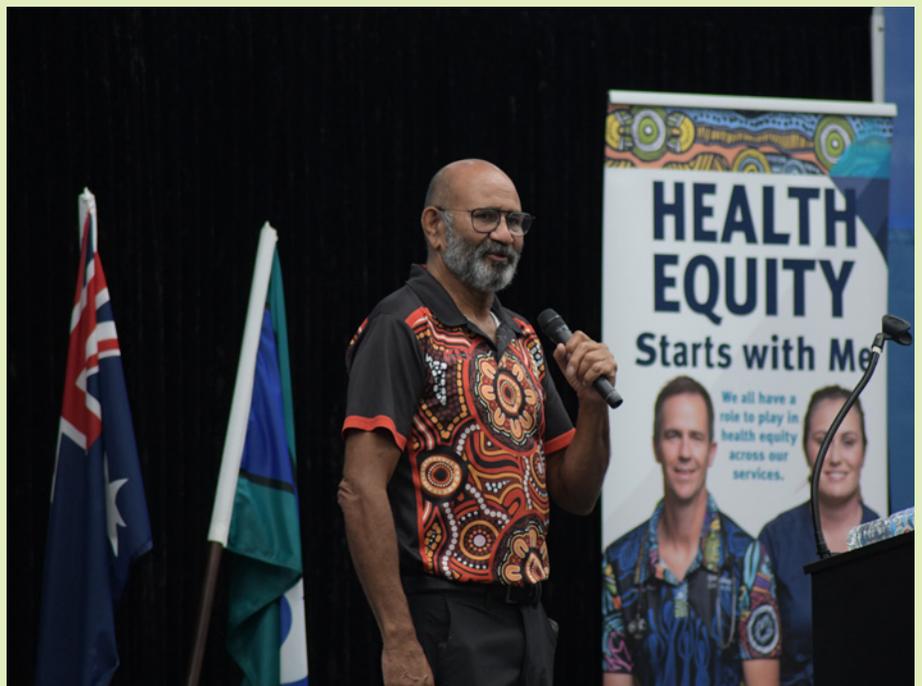
Health access was also front and centre. Visitors were able to receive brief health checks and screenings on the spot, helping support early intervention and ongoing wellbeing through simple, accessible care.

The energy of the day was uplifted by special guest MC Sean Choolburra, whose humour and warmth brought smiles and helped create a relaxed, welcoming vibe for all ages. A light lunch was also shared, giving people the chance to sit together, chat and enjoy being in community.

The Showcase was a strong example of how culture, health and community can come together to support better outcomes. Events like this help strengthen trust, improve access to care and support Metro North Health’s ongoing commitment to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Local Community members enjoying the Metro North Health Equity November 2025 Showcase.



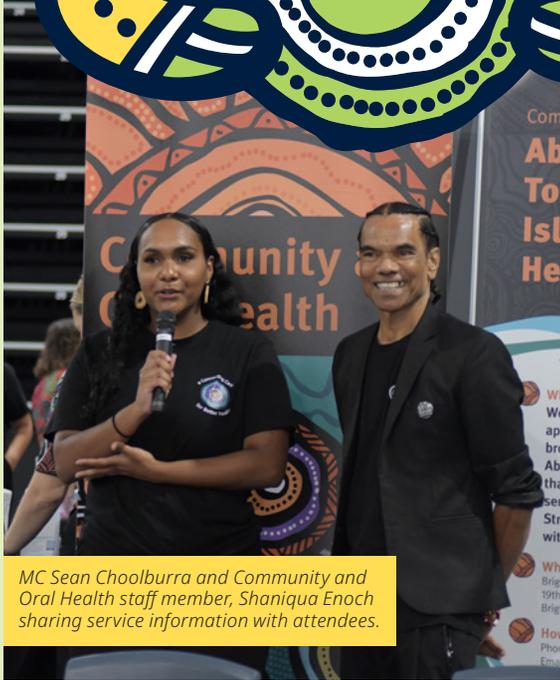
Attendee Alan Martin presenting at the Metro North Health Equity Showcase



Deadly smiles lighting up the Metro North Health Equity Showcase.



MC Sean Choolburra pictured with Redcliffe Hospital Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members.



MC Sean Choolburra and Community and Oral Health staff member, Shaniqua Enoch sharing service information with attendees.



The event's MC, Sean Choolburra pictured with Aunties and Community at the Metro North Health Equity Community Showcase.



The Deadly Start team enjoying the event festivities at their stall.

Uncle Robert's Story

I grew up in Ayr, North Queensland, as one of 11 children, with 7 brothers and 3 sisters, one being an identical twin brother, Malcolm. My heritage is a mix of Aboriginal and South Sea Islander cultures. Through my mother, I am connected to the Nyawagi people of the lands around Ingham and Halifax Bay, North Queensland.

My grandfather (dad's father) was blackbirded from Tanna Island at just 16 years of age. My father worked cutting sugar cane while my mother worked as a domestic cleaner at the primary school, in the cane fields and small crop picking around Ayr. Watching my parents work so hard to provide for our family has taught me strength and given me a sense of hard work and obligation to my family and community.

From stripping sugar cane with my family and working in both the sugar mill and bean factory, to roles in mental health at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, Stuart Creek Correctional Centre and Townsville General Hospital, my working life has been diverse. I also taught the electoral process in remote communities in the far north of Queensland.

I shared a love of music with my twin brother and together we played in a popular local band, entertaining audiences for several years. Around this time, my brother Malcolm left to start a new life in Sydney, and I married a local Ayr girl, Phillipa Malamoo and had three beautiful children – two girls and one boy.

After moving to Brisbane 35 years ago with my family, I worked in Queensland Health, including 12 years with the Homeless Mental Health Team and later with the Aboriginal and Islander Health Outreach Team. I've also worked at Coles Alderley for six years.

Now retired, I am dedicating my time to creating a documentary to honour my twin brother's legacy with the 23 years he spent with the Bangarra Dance Theatre, Sydney. This documentary is a tribute to my brother Malcolm's artistry, hard work and his cultural impact in the arts.

Today, I enjoy advocating for my community by being involved with Metro North Health's Community and Oral Health Elders Yarning Group and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team. I am dedicated to helping create a better world for our future generations.

WORD OF THE MONTH

"Gooa"

"Gooa" (Goo-ah) is Elbow in Barunggam language.

Barunggam is the name of one of the languages spoken in the Dalby and Eastern Darling Downs, extending along the Gowrie Creek and Condamine Catchments. It takes in the communities of Oakey, Dalby and Jandowae extending west towards Chinchilla.

Barunggam is connected to Wakka Wakka and is often referred to as 'Western Wakka Wakka'.

Sisters continue their health careers through First Nations Pathways

Metro North Health has welcomed the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals at its First Nations Cadetship Welcome Day, marking the beginning of their journey into the workforce.

Held at The Prince Charles Hospital, the Welcome Day brought cadets together with health leaders, mentors and cultural support teams, providing an opportunity to connect, learn and build relationships as they begin their placements across Metro North facilities. The day recognised an important milestone for students stepping into clinical environments and beginning to shape their careers in healthcare.

The First Nations Cadetship Program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying health-related degrees by providing paid employment, hands-on clinical experience and cultural mentorship while they complete their university studies. The program plays an important role in growing a strong workforce and creating pathways for students to build meaningful careers while strengthening representation across the health system.

Natasha White, Director of Systems and Performance within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team acknowledged the significance of the Welcome Day for cadets as they begin their journey into the health workforce.

"Today is not just an orientation day. It is a milestone.

"It is a declaration that your knowledge, your culture and your leadership matter in our health system."

Photo of sisters Maddison Wiggs (left) and Taytum Wiggs (right) at their Metro North Cadetship welcome day.

Natasha emphasised that the program is about representation and strengthening healthcare through lived experience.

"Health outcomes improve when people feel seen. When culture is respected. When systems are shaped by lived experience."

Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Sherry Holzapfel, said the cadetship program reflects Metro North Health's commitment to supporting and growing the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals.

"The First Nations Cadetship Program ensures students are supported not only professionally, but culturally, providing opportunities to connect, learn and grow throughout their career journey."

Among the cadets welcomed were sisters Maddison and Taytum Wiggs, whose journey into health has been shaped by shared experiences, cultural connection and family support.

The Ngemba sisters, who are just 18 months apart, are both in their second year of study at Australian Catholic University. Maddison is completing her Physiotherapy cadetship at Caboolture Hospital, while Taytum is undertaking her Midwifery cadetship at Redcliffe Hospital.

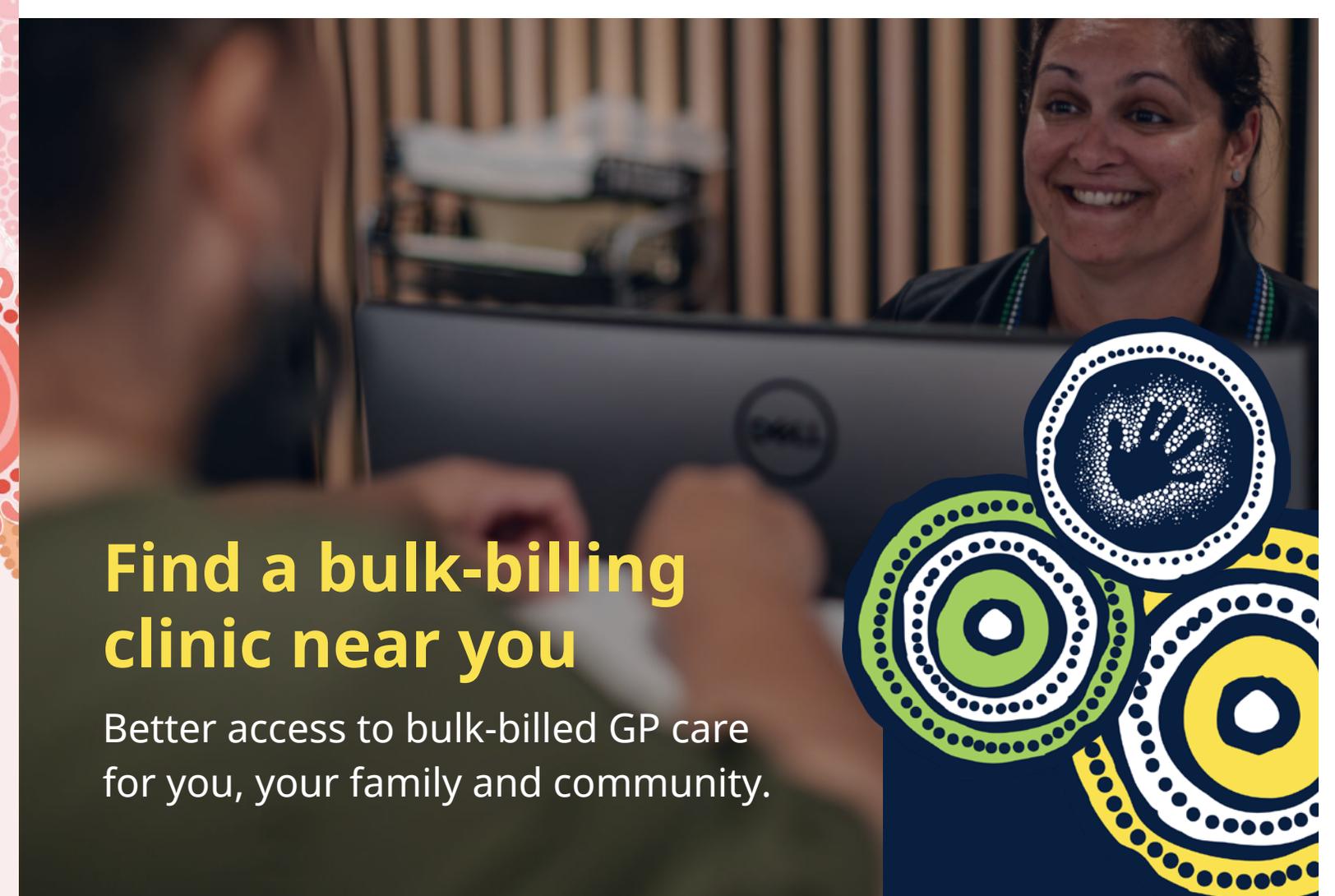
Their pathway into healthcare began with Metro North Health's Deadly Start traineeship, which they both completed while finishing school. The experience provided early exposure to healthcare workplaces and helped shape their decision to pursue careers in health.

Now, through the cadetship program, they are gaining hands-on clinical experience while continuing their university studies, supported by mentors, cultural guidance and workplace learning opportunities.

Their journey is already inspiring others, with their younger sister now interested in completing the Deadly Start traineeship and following a similar path into healthcare.

Beginning their cadetship together has made the experience even more meaningful, allowing them to support one another as they navigate their studies and early careers.





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Bulk billing means your GP visit is free because Medicare covers the cost.

Does my GP offer bulk billing?

Every GP is different, and not all visits will be bulk billed. Before you book, it's a good idea to check for any additional costs for your appointment.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

Lauren Williams

Director, First Nations Training Pathway

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

I am an Iman woman from Central Queensland on my father's side, and I remain closely connected to my mob, staying involved and giving back wherever I can. My strong connection to culture and community continues to shape my leadership and the way I approach my work.

Outside of my role, I am a proud mum to three sons aged 10, 5 and 2. I am raising them to be culturally strong and connected to their identity, and I hope their cultural upbringing will be more positive than what my late grandfather experienced. That personal legacy is a strong motivator behind the work I do.

Q2. Tell us about your role and what you are hoping to achieve.

I was recently appointed Director, First Nations Training Pathway. In this role, I am focused on creating strong, sustainable pathways that support long-term educational and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within healthcare.

I am proud to lead the Deadly Start Program, the only program of its kind in Australia with such scale and capacity, setting a national benchmark for First Nations training pathways.

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

I am passionate about creating real, meaningful opportunities for mob to gain hands-on experience in healthcare and feel supported throughout their learning and career journey. I believe strong pathways help build confidence, capability and long-term success for individuals, families and communities.

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

Under my leadership, our team has already delivered significant outcomes, including:

- Securing a Memorandum of Understanding signed by all CEOs to enable students to complete placement hours on Country.
- Establishing access to a study allowance to better support students throughout their studies.

I am also a strong advocate for collaboration and prioritise cross-sector partnerships with organisations including the Department of Education, Department of Trade and Queensland Health to strengthen pathway opportunities and shared outcomes.

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

I bring over 11 years of experience at Metro North Health. My career began in an AO3 role, which became the catalyst for my pathway into nursing. I have since worked across administrative, nursing and operational roles and have recently commenced studies in a Graduate Certificate, continuing my commitment to learning, leadership and growth.

COME ALONG FOR A YARN

ALL THINGS PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND BABIES

The Metro North Health Strong Start to Life and Ngarrama teams will be running antenatal and postnatal yarning sessions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families to yarn about pregnancy, birth and babies.

Join our midwives, child health staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker for a yarn!

Upcoming yarning sessions for 2026 – Fridays 10am to 12pm (Date and place listed below)

NUNDAH

Community Health Centre
10 Nellie Street, Nundah Qld 4012.

Term 3 dates:

17 July, 31 July, 14 August,
28 August, 11 September.

Term 4 dates:

09 October, 23 October,
06 November, 20 November,
04 December.

DECEPTION BAY

219 Deception Bay Road,
Deception Bay Qld 4508.

Term 3 dates:

13 March, 27 March, 10 April.

Term 4 dates:

01 May, 15 May, 29 May, 12 June,
26 June.

You are welcome to attend one of all yarning sessions. Tea and coffee will be provided. No RSVP necessary.

Support persons are welcome to attend. Keep in mind we will be discussing body changes and birthing, so if this will make you or your support person uncomfortable, please let us know and we might be able to arrange something different for you and your family.

Please call your midwife or Health Worker if you have any questions.



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<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_TSILTCommsMNH@health.qld.gov.au or phone 07 3170 4460. Produced by the Metro North and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Communications teams.



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