

TALK-ABOUT

June 2026



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Growing Our
Future Aboriginal
and Torres Strait
Islander Leaders

*(L-R) Tanya Beaumont - RAP Co-Chair,
Glynis Schultz - Executive Director
and Paul Drahm - RAP Co-Chair at
the launch of the new COH RAP.*

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
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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:

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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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Redcliffe Hospital	
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A word from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Executive Director

Adj.Prof. Sherry Holzapfel



Over the past year, Metro North Health has continued to implement the *Health Equity Strategy 2025–2028*, launched in July 2025 alongside community, staff and key stakeholders. This work builds on strong foundations and reflects the collective effort of our workforce and community partners to drive long-lasting change.

Recent reporting shows improvements across several key focus areas, including workforce strengthening, service redesign and embedding cultural capability across both clinical and non-clinical settings.

Importantly, this work is not happening in isolation. Health equity actions are increasingly being embedded into everyday business, services and decision-making across Metro North Health—strengthening accountability and ensuring equity remains everyone’s responsibility, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health teams.

Our priorities remain clear: improving access to culturally safe healthcare, particularly in mental health and alcohol and other drug services; growing and supporting an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce; and delivering continuity of care for mums, babies, dads and families. This is the work that makes a real difference on the ground for our people.

A key part of this work is creating culturally safe health services, including addressing racism wherever it occurs. Over the past year, Metro North Health has continued progressing its Anti-Racism campaign, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and community voices.

This commitment was strongly reflected when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team hosted Metro North Health’s inaugural International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination event earlier this year. Staff and community came together to acknowledge this globally recognised day and to reflect openly on the impacts of racism in all its forms.

The event reinforced Metro North Health’s zero-tolerance stance on racism and reaffirmed our commitment to dignity, equity and respect for all. We were privileged to hear from Race Discrimination Commissioner, Giridharan Sivaraman, and to take part in workshops that provided practical insights to help inform system-level change across our health service.

This work builds on our broader Anti-Racism efforts, including empowering staff and community to speak up, strengthening culturally safe reporting pathways, and ensuring accountability when unacceptable behaviour occurs.

Another significant milestone I am proud to share is the launch of Metro North Health’s Sad News and Sorry Business Leave Guidelines.

These guidelines are a critical step towards ensuring our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is supported with cultural respect, compassion and understanding at some of the most difficult moments of life. This contributes to an organisation that values cultural safety—where our workforce feels respected, supported and empowered in both their personal and professional lives.

Sad News and Sorry Business are deeply cultural and community-centred practices, and these guidelines provide clear direction on how staff are supported during these important times. They recognise kinship connections, community obligations and cultural practices, as well as the need for time, space and support. Shaped by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, this work reflects our commitment to a culturally safe workplace that honours cultural responsibilities alongside professional roles.

We know there is still more work to do, but I am encouraged by the progress we are making and the strength of our partnerships with community. Health equity takes time, trust and sustained action, and we remain committed to walking this journey together.

I encourage you to stay connected with our work by following *Better Together – Our Health, Our Way* on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, where we will continue to share updates, stories and upcoming events.

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

A word from Chief Executive

Nick Steele



Dear colleagues,

Building greater health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remains a key priority for Metro North. As the first hospital and health service in Queensland to develop a Health Equity strategy, we hold a unique position to lead initiatives that actively contribute to closing the gap and improving health outcomes for members of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The next phase of our Health Equity Strategy, launched in July last year to guide activities for the next three years, is focused on improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This includes strengthening initiatives that support families and ensuring that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are reflected in the services that impact them.

These initiatives are informed by meaningful engagement and connection with community, to help support the co-design of culturally safe, appropriate and accessible services. I acknowledge 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 have significant influence in how Metro North continues to develop services that genuinely improve the outcomes and experiences of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

I recently had the opportunity to observe the impact of these connections at Metro North's second Health Equity Community Consultation event this year, 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 with lasting impact.

Building a workplace where individuals can be their best is a key focus of Metro North, especially with such a large and diverse workforce. Health equity among our 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, inclusive and psychologically safe workplace for everyone.

This type of work environment allows staff to do their best work which ultimately leads to the delivery of improved care outcomes and experiences for our entire Metro North community.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our health equity journey.

Best wishes.

Nick Steele
Chief Executive,
Metro North Health

STOP RACISM

It Starts with Me



Metro North Health does not tolerate any form of racism or discrimination within our hospitals and health services.

Racism feels like you are constantly living in two worlds. One where your cultural responsibilities are significant to you, your family, larger kinship group and community. And another world where you feel less than. One world that lifts your spirit, and one world that drains your spirit

Community Member

If you see or experience racism when accessing our health services, you can report it. Your feedback will be taken seriously and will help drive real change.



SEE IT. CHANGE IT. TOGETHER WE CAN STOP RACISM.



Further information and instructions on how to report can be found by searching 'stop racism' on qheps.

metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/better-together-van/stop-racism



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

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COH Launches Second Reconciliation Action Plan

Community and Oral Health (COH) have launched their second Reconciliation Action Plan, reaffirming their commitment to fostering a more unified healthcare system that addresses health inequities and embeds cultural respect and safety in all aspects of care.

“As a Co-Chair of the RAP Working Group, I am extremely proud to reaffirm our shared commitment to reconciliation. Reconciliation is not just an aspiration, it is a responsibility we all share, we aim to change hearts and minds,” said Tanya Beaumont, Director of Nursing.

The newly released Innovate RAP, created through the dedication and hard work of the COH RAP Working Group, outlines meaningful actions that embed cultural safety and respect into everyday practice, deepening partnerships and fostering ongoing reflection and learning.

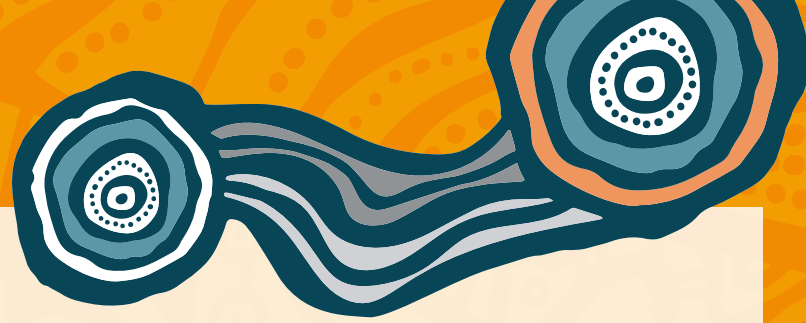
“Our RAP is more than a framework, it is a call to action for every member of Community and Oral Health to help create inclusive systems that reflect the rights, voices and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” said Paul Drahm, COH Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and RAP Co-Chair.

Metro North Community and Oral Health service provides local and accessible care to patients in their homes, oral health clinics, mobile dental vans, community residential facilities and bedded services across north Brisbane.

Since the launch of their first RAP in 2017, COH have explored and implemented innovative approaches that have helped to advance and strengthen reconciliation. With 62 actions identified within the plan, 56 were completed, with three still in progress.

Key achievements from the first RAP included establishing a structured and ongoing delivery of a locally tailored Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness and Capability Program, strengthening health governance and outcomes reporting processes, and continuing to facilitate Yarning Circles with local Elders and community members.





The new RAP builds on these achievements and reinforces COH's commitment to expanding actions that drive meaningful change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both within the organisation and in the community it serves.

"Over the next two years we aim to enhance cultural capability, strengthen community relationships, and continue to create inclusive systems and services.

"We will measure success through tangible shifts in attitudes, behaviours and outcomes, ensuring reconciliation becomes a lived reality within Community and Oral Health," said Paul.

Reconciliation Australia Chief Executive Officer, Karen Mundine, commended the Brisbane northside health service on the endorsement of their second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

"This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for COH to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments.

"Congratulations COH on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following you on your ongoing reconciliation journey," said Karen Mundine, Chief Executive Officer Reconciliation Australia.



COH RAP Working Group pictured at the launch of the new RAP.



Close the Gap Yarn Brings Leaders Together at Redcliffe Hospital

Staff, community members and healthcare partners came together at Redcliffe Hospital to mark National Close the Gap Day 2026, participating in a meaningful yarning circle focused on connection, reflection and strengthening health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

National Close the Gap Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness of the ongoing health disparities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to highlight the collective action needed to achieve health equity. The day advocates for improved health outcomes, longer life expectancy, and equal access to culturally safe healthcare and services.

Facilitated by Cultural Capability Officer Will Muckan and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clinical Nurse Jaysen Young, the yarning circle provided a culturally safe and welcoming space for open conversation. Staff and community members shared their experiences, perspectives and ideas, fostering a deeper understanding of the barriers that can impact access to care and the importance of culturally responsive health services.

Throughout the morning, discussions acknowledged the positive progress being made across the healthcare system and within communities, including greater recognition of cultural safety and stronger partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. At the same time, participants reflected on the ongoing challenges that many still face when accessing care, reinforcing the need for continued commitment and action.



Metro North Health staff pictured at the Redcliffe Hospital Close the Gap Yarn event.

Events like this play a vital role in building stronger relationships, supporting cultural understanding and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices remain central to improving healthcare outcomes. Redcliffe Hospital remains committed to working alongside community to help close the gap and create a more equitable and inclusive health system for all.



Redcliffe Hospital Aboriginal staff members pictured with Metro North Health Chief Operating Officer, Stephen Eaton at the yarning circle event.

Your foot health,
Closer to home

DEADLY FEET



Pain in your feet or legs?

Come yarn and get a free check with the Deadly Feet team.

Our clinic service includes:



Podiatry



Vascular Specialist doctor



Sonography

- ultrasound of the legs as required.

Monthly clinics at:

Caboolture MATSICHS

5 James Street, Caboolture

Kallangur Satellite Health Centre

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Hub.

To find our more, contact us:

email: deadlyfeet@health.qld.gov.au

Phone: 0474 215 801 or 1300 492 492

Self referral:

We accept self referrals
- scan the QR code or
get a referral from a
healthcare provider to
come and see us.



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Top left: Metro North Health staff, community and stakeholders attending the Strong Men's Group at Brighton. Top right: Note taking at the Strong Men's Group focusing on the importance of Men's Health. Bottom right: Metro North Health staff at the Strong Men's Group.

Strong Men, Deadly Men – A Community Coming Together

A powerful gathering of more than 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men from across Brisbane Northside came together at the Brighton Health Campus in March, placing culture, connection and community leadership at the forefront.

The Men's Business Yarn, hosted by Metro North Community and Oral Health (COH) service created a space for open conversation, shared learning and collective thinking about the future of men's health and wellbeing.

Representatives from the Valley Men's Group, Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, and the Metro North Public Health Unit shared insights and support while the Deadly Feet team provided on-the-spot foot health screening and education.

COH's Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Paul Drahm, highlighted the importance of these gatherings, noting that the yarns are a direct response to the *Metro North Health Equity Strategy 2025–2028*, particularly Key Priority Area 3.8: Connecting services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

A key part of the day was a workshop exploring a central question, "What would you like to see at a Men's Health Clinic?"

The responses were strong, clear and deeply grounded in cultural priorities.

The yarn wrapped up with ideas for a dedicated Men's Health Clinic that combines healthcare with strong cultural connection and activities.

Ideas included integrating bush walks, bowls, morning teas and other social activities alongside opportunistic health checks. The vision is simple but powerful – create a welcoming, stigma-free environment where men feel comfortable to look after their health.

"A big thank you to Community and Oral Health for hosting the day, and to the Brighton Men's Shed for putting on a deadly BBQ lunch that kept us all well fed and connected," said Sean Burr, Metro North Health Equity Project Support Officer.

The next Men's Business Yarn is planned for later in July 2026, continuing the momentum toward stronger, healthier futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

For more information on the Men's Business Yarn you can email the COH Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Team at COH-A_TSI_HLTHTeam@health.qld.gov.au.

Five major pillars emerged as essential foundations for a future Men's Health Clinic:

1. Comprehensive Health Services – accessible, holistic care that meets men where they are.
2. Social and Emotional Wellbeing – support that recognises the whole person.
3. Cultural Connection – a space where identity, tradition and community are honoured.
4. Youth and Family Support – strengthening the next generation and the families around them.
5. Breaking Down Barriers – reducing stigma, increasing trust and making healthcare feel safe.

1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers have signed up to get SMS4DeadlyDads messages.

The impact of the messages

88% Less isolated

87% Better support for their partner

86% Better connect to their baby

From Dads

"I think the ones I really, really enjoy is actually the interaction ones. Like at this stage he'll be looking at doing these kind of things or do these things to him. Sing to him. Play with him."

"I'll get an SMS right, and then it'll pull the conversation. I'll come home to my wife and talk to her about it. She's like "Where did you get that from?" It's from SMS4DADS."

"I know it's helped me. It's like I said it's made me smile. It's actually made me cry sometimes. I look at it and go "Oh!"

"Them mood checkers, especially you know about you and your partner. Mum's at home struggling. I'm at work struggling. I come home and like argh. Little things to check-in, check-in on the kind of stuff. Some handy pointers."

From Practitioners

SMS4DeadlyDads is non-invasive and that's really important. Sometimes men don't want to engage if they feel a bit forced or a bit of pressure coming – these messages don't do that. They leave it open to the men to engage with the message when they are ready. And the links that are provided for more info. They can do that when they are ready as well

-Staff member Wuchopperen Health Service



FOR MORE INFO

Scan the QR code for the page for Deadly Dads

OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE

sms4dads.com.au

Local students explore pathways into health

Students at Bray Park State High School had the chance to learn about future careers in health during the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Career Pathways Expo.

Metro North Hospital and Health teams were on site, spending the day yarning with students about what working in health can look like and the many different ways to get there. From traineeships and study options through to real job opportunities, students were encouraged to ask questions, explore their interests and start imagining where a career in healthcare could take them.

The expo created a welcoming space for students to connect, learn and build confidence. There was strong engagement throughout the day, with students showing genuine curiosity about the broad range of roles available across hospitals and the wider health system.

A key message shared with students was that careers in health are not limited to one pathway or profession. From clinical roles such as nursing, midwifery, medicine and allied health to non-clinical careers in administration, support services, leadership and cultural capability, there are opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at every level of the healthcare system.

Having a diverse workforce that reflects the community helps create more culturally safe and inclusive environments, improves communication and trust, and ultimately supports better health outcomes for patients and families.

Events like this play an important role in supporting young people to see themselves in health careers.

By connecting students with real people and real experiences, the expo helps break down barriers, build confidence, and strengthen the pipeline for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals.

Metro North Health is committed to creating opportunities for young people to thrive in the health workforce—now and into the future.



Students yarning with Saroma, Senior Diabetes Health Worker at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Career Pathways Expo.



Metro North Health staff at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Career Pathways Expo.

Supporting Staff and Strengthening Community

Metro North Health brought Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff together earlier this year for a dedicated wellbeing day, creating space for connection, reflection and support.

The event, hosted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Team, provided an opportunity for staff to step away from their everyday roles, reconnect with one another and focus on their social and emotional wellbeing in a culturally safe and supportive environment.

The wellbeing day recognised that strong staff are essential to strong communities.

By creating time and space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to come together, Metro North Health continues its commitment to walking alongside staff and supporting their wellbeing, both personally and professionally.

Throughout the day, attendees had the opportunity to participate in team-building activities, learn about key wellbeing support services, yarn, share experiences and build stronger connections across teams and services.

These moments of connection are more than just a break from work; they are a way to strengthen culture, support one another and create a sense of belonging within the workplace.

For many, it was a powerful reminder that they are not alone in their roles and experiences, and that there is strength in coming together.

The wellbeing day is part of a broader commitment under the Metro North Health Equity Strategy to support and grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

Key focus areas include:

- Supporting staff social and emotional wellbeing
- Strengthening cultural safety across the workplace
- Creating opportunities for connection and collaboration
- Supporting recruitment, retention and career pathways



Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff participating in wellbeing activities.

By investing in the wellbeing of staff, the organisation is helping to build a workforce that feels supported, valued and empowered, leading to better outcomes not just for staff, but for patients, families and community.

A strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce plays a vital role in delivering culturally safe care and improving health outcomes for community.

Initiatives like the staff wellbeing day recognise the importance of looking after those who care for others, and ensuring staff have the support they need to continue their work in community.



Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff attending the Staff Wellbeing Day hosted by the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officers.



Metro North Health staff providing health information at the Homeless Connect Expo.

Homeless Connect Event

The annual Homeless Connect Expo continues to play an important role in bringing essential services together for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness across the community.

Originally established to create a one-stop support hub, the event has grown over the years into a well-recognised community initiative focused on connection, dignity and improving access to support services.

Designed to remove some of the barriers people can face when navigating healthcare and community systems, the expo brings health, housing, social support and community organisations together in one welcoming location.

By creating a safe and accessible environment, attendees are able to connect directly with services, ask questions, access practical supports and build relationships with organisations that can assist them beyond the event itself.

This year's Homeless Connect Expo once again highlighted the power of collaboration, with Metro North Health staff and the Better Together Health Van proudly attending alongside a range of community organisations and frontline services.

The Better Together Health Van was on site throughout the event, creating a welcoming and culturally safe space for community members to yarn with staff and access health information.

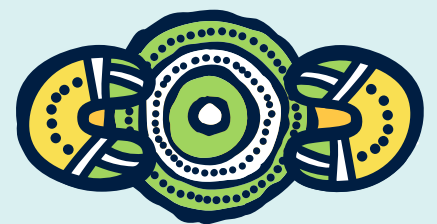
Throughout the day, staff yarned with community members, shared health information and helped connect people with safe healthcare pathways and ongoing support services.

The Deadly Feet team provided foot health checks and education around diabetes-related complications, highlighting the importance of looking after foot health and identifying concerns early before they become more serious. Staff also shared practical information around kidney health and diabetes management, helping community members better understand risk factors, healthy lifestyle choices and where to access ongoing support and care.

Importantly, the expo also created opportunities for services to listen and learn directly from lived experiences within the community.

Conversations throughout the day reinforced the importance of safe, compassionate and person-centred care, as well as the need to continue strengthening trust and connection between healthcare services and vulnerable community members.

For many people, events like Homeless Connect can be a first step toward reconnecting with healthcare and support services in a way that feels approachable, respectful and supportive. The event reflects a shared commitment across the sector to improving health equity, reducing barriers to care and ensuring people feel seen, heard and supported.



Bringing care closer to home: Deadly Feet at Bribie Island

Accessing the right care at the right time can make all the difference, especially when it comes to preventing serious health complications. That's exactly what the Deadly Feet team is all about.

Deadly Feet is a specialist outreach service supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with culturally safe foot care, closer to home. The team works with people living with, or at risk of, foot complications linked to diabetes and peripheral vascular disease, helping catch issues early and keep community strong and well.

Following a recent Yarning Circle at Bribie Island Satellite Health Centre (Yarun), local conversations turned into real action.

Nurse Navigator Emma Bushby partnered with Deadly Feet Senior Health Worker Ry Abel to organise a community drop-in day, making it easier for people to connect with care in a familiar and welcoming space.

The clinic brought together community members, including both new and familiar faces. The day had a relaxed, welcoming feel, with time to yarn, ask questions and learn more about staying healthy, supported by light refreshments and resources from the Deadly Feet team. Importantly, the focus was on early identification and prevention.

As a result, three people were recognised as needing further vascular checks at Caboolture Hospital, helping ensure they receive the right follow-up care at the right time.



Alongside this, attendees learned practical knowledge around foot care, diabetes management, nutrition, smoking and alcohol use — small steps that can have a big impact in reducing the risk of amputation and avoidable hospital visits.

The Deadly Feet team connecting with community at Bribie Island Satellite Health Centre (Yarun).





Redcliffe Hospital Executive Leadership Team attending Close the Gap Day Yarning Circle.

Executive Leadership Team strengthens Cultural Capability

Redcliffe Hospital's Executive Leadership Team recently participated in the Cultural Practice Program (CPP), a powerful learning experience focused on building cultural understanding, reflection and awareness.

Facilitated by Redcliffe Hospital Cultural Capability Officer Will Muckan, the session encouraged open conversations and meaningful reflection on the experiences and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the important role cultural understanding plays in healthcare.

Through activities including a yarning circle, visual storytelling, historical timeline exploration and group discussions, participants were encouraged to reflect on the impacts of historical trauma and how culturally safe care can help create better health outcomes for community.

The workshop was highly praised by participants, who described the session as engaging, thought-provoking and impactful.

"It was a great opportunity to connect as an Executive Leadership Team while taking dedicated time to reflect on the cultural impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

"The interactive approach, particularly the visual history component, encouraged thought and consideration about the significant changes that have occurred in a relatively short period and how we can positively influence the future," said Donna, Director of Planning and Performance.

Redcliffe Hospital continues to strengthen cultural capability across the facility while creating safe and inclusive healthcare environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

WORD OF THE MONTH

"Molum"

"Molum" (Mow-lum) is Child in Yugara language.

Yugara is the name of one of the languages spoken in the Brisbane area west to Ipswich and the Lockyer Valley. The language was spoken and understood by Aboriginal groups in the Greater Brisbane area, including neighbouring groups of Turrbul, Yugambeh and Yugarabul.



RBWH remembers trailblazing cancer care volunteer

Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital (RBWH) has unveiled a memorial to honour pioneering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer support worker Maureen Kirk.

During her short 45-year life, Maureen Kirk became Australia’s first cancer support worker for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. While Maureen passed away in 2001, her legacy lives on at RBWH and across Australia.

Maureen’s daughter, Natasha Bond, shares some of her beloved mum’s inspiring story.

“Mum was first diagnosed with breast cancer at age 31. At the time, there was a lack of culturally appropriate care available for mob in the mainstream health system,” Natasha said.

“This experience motivated her to turn her battle into a determination to improve cancer care for other Indigenous women.”

Maureen’s advocacy helped her forge strong relationships across Queensland Health, cancer screening services, academic institutions, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

“Mum fought for our women to have better access to cancer services, including prevention, screening, treatment and support,” Natasha said.

“In 2000, she was awarded a Queensland Health Outstanding Achievement Award for her contribution to her community.”

To mark Maureen’s legacy, RBWH staff gathered with her family on the 25th anniversary of her passing to unveil a plaque in her honour.

RBWH’s Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Roslyn Boland, credits Maureen’s legacy for changes to how members of this community access health services.



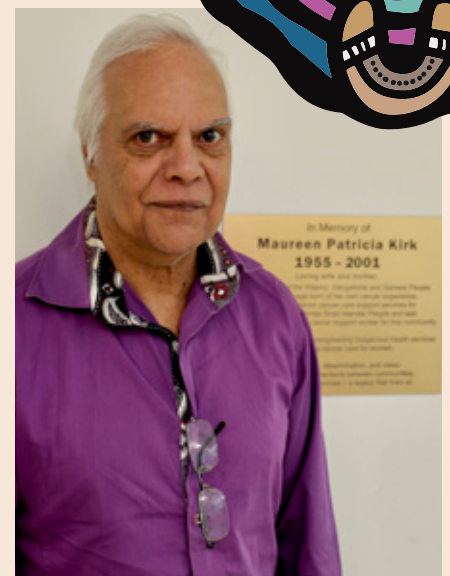
Family and RBWH staff recently gathered to honour Maureen Kirk.

“Much of what has been achieved in how communities access cancer services today has been drawn from Maureen’s advocacy and determination to make a difference,” Roslyn said.

“We owe her a debt of gratitude, and her legacy lives on. It was an honour to recently host her beloved husband, Uncle Hughie, and family at RBWH to remember her life and many achievements.”

Maureen was again diagnosed with cancer in 2000 and passed away the following year after battling the disease.

The plaque honouring the life and legacy of Maureen Kirk is displayed in the foyer of RBWH Cancer Care Services on level 4 of the Joyce Tweddell Building.



Uncle Hughie attended the recent event at RBWH to remember his wife, Maureen Kirk.



Lung Cancer Screening Trial

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Australia, causing more deaths each year than breast, prostate and bowel cancer combined. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the impact is even greater.

Lung cancer is the most common cancer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, making up about one in every six cancer diagnoses. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also about 70% more likely to get lung cancer than non-Indigenous Australians.

Sadly, it is also more often found at a later stage, when treatment is harder. Early detection makes a big difference. When lung cancer is found early, up to two-thirds of people may still be alive five years later. When it is found late, survival falls to around 3%. This is why lung cancer screening is so important.

The Australian Lung Screen Trial is helping address this gap by offering free lung cancer screening using low-dose CT scans for people at higher risk of lung cancer.

International studies have shown that this type of screening can reduce lung cancer deaths by 20–30%, because it can find cancer early, sometimes before any symptoms appear.

People may be invited to take part in the lung screen trial if they are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, aged 50 years and over, who either smoke now or used to smoke. The first step is a simple eligibility check, which can be done online or with support from a GP, nurse, or Aboriginal Health Worker, including during a routine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health check.

If eligible, participants are offered a free low-dose CT scan of the chest at a nearby radiology service. The scan is quick, painless and uses a very small amount of radiation that is carefully monitored. Results are sent to the participant's GP, who talks through what they mean and whether any follow-up is needed.

The Lung Cancer Screening Trial program has been designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Elders and health workers to make sure it is culturally safe, respectful and community-led.



Taking part is always your choice. You can withdraw at any time and your healthcare will not be affected. All personal information is kept private and secure.

For people who smoke, the program also offers the option to link in with culturally appropriate quit-smoking supports. This support is optional and available if and when people feel ready.

By taking part, people are not only looking after their own lung health but also helping shape Australia's future National Lung Cancer Screening Program so it works better. Early checks save lives, and strong lungs help keep families and communities strong.

To learn more visit:
<https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/tpch/australianlungscreeningtrial>

SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

We are seeking community feedback to better understand how we can strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce initiatives and opportunities across Metro North Health.





(L-R) TPCH Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer, Rhonda Kunde pictured with Aunty Lorian.

Aunty Lorian's heart health journey

What started as a sudden dizzy spell at home in Barcaldine became a life-changing health journey for Aunty Lorian.

After feeling faint and unwell, Aunty called her daughter, who quickly organised an ambulance. She was taken to Barcaldine Hospital, where doctors and nurses identified concerns with her heart and lungs.

Aunty said the kindness and care she received from the very beginning helped her feel safe and supported during a frightening time.

"The nurse sat down and had a yarn with me. He explained everything in a way I could understand," she shared.

After her initial treatment, Aunty was connected with the Indigenous Cardiac Outreach Program (ICOP), a service that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with heart conditions by helping coordinate specialist care, follow-up support and connections between local and hospital health services.

Through ICOP, Aunty was transferred to The Prince Charles Hospital to access specialist heart care and ongoing treatment.

Throughout her stay, Aunty was supported by a range of healthcare workers including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, who helped her feel culturally safe, connected and heard during her time away from home and Country.

One moment that particularly stayed with Aunty was when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Hospital Liaison Officer (IHLO) Rhonda Kunde wrote 'Aunty Lorian' on the ward nameboard. Soon after, staff across the ward, including non-Indigenous staff began warmly referring to her as Aunty Lorian too.

Aunty said the gesture made her feel proud, respected and genuinely seen. It was a small but meaningful act that helped her feel culturally safe and connected while in hospital.

A proud woman from Iningai Country, Aunty is a seventh-generation woman deeply connected to culture, community and Country.

Her bush name, Murrindji, means "to take people on a journey to discover wellness" — something reflected in the way she supports and uplifts others every day.

Aunty is an artist, author, researcher, advocate, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who has spent many years sharing knowledge through storytelling, education and cultural healing.

During her time in hospital, she spoke about growing up on Country, raising a large family, creating artwork inspired by her life experiences and the importance of culturally safe healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aunty Lorian also shared her advocacy work around foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and empowering community through education and understanding.

She spoke passionately about healthcare workers taking the time to see the person behind the patient.

"People have to remember there's a story behind everyone," she shared.

For staff, Aunty's stay became more than a healthcare journey. It became an opportunity to sit, listen and learn.

Aunty hopes her story encourages others not to ignore warning signs and to seek help early if something does not feel right. While her symptoms did not initially seem heart-related, the quick actions of her family, local healthcare workers and specialist teams helped ensure she received the care she needed.

Now focused on healing and returning home to Country, Aunty is looking forward to continuing her artwork, storytelling and advocacy work within community.

Metro North marks International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Metro North Health hosted their first International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD) event earlier this year, recognising the ongoing commitment to promoting respect, equity and inclusion across the health service.



(L-R) Adj. Prof. Sherry Holzapel, Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Aunty Denise Proud and Giriharan Sivaraman, Race Discrimination Commissioner pictured at the IDERD event.

Metro North Health hosted their first International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD) event earlier this year, recognising the ongoing commitment to promoting respect, equity and inclusion across the health service.

Attended by staff from across the organisation, the event highlighted ongoing efforts to create a hospital and health service free from racism and discrimination.

This commitment is underpinned by the launch of the Metro North Health's bold Anti-racism Campaign and policy, *Stop Racism. It Starts with Me*, introduced in July 2025 to address unconscious bias and institutionalised racism in healthcare, particularly impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Since the launch, Queensland's largest hospital and health service has continued to drive anti-racism efforts across the organisation, working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, allies and community to enhance cultural safety, reduce discrimination, and build a more inclusive and respectful health service for all.

During the IDERD event, attendees heard from guest speakers Giridharan Sivaraman, Race Discrimination Commissioner from the Australian Human Rights Commission and Aboriginal Elder Aunty Denise Proud. Both shared powerful insights and lived experiences, encouraging reflection and action to address racism and foster greater inclusion across communities and workplaces.

Building on these conversations, attendees participated in yarning circles and workshops, providing a culturally safe space for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Indigenous staff to openly discuss the structural, institutional and everyday forms of racism experienced within healthcare settings. The discussions and feedback gathered will play an important role in strengthening Metro North Health's anti-racism initiatives, helping to inform future actions that support a more inclusive, culturally safe and respectful health service.



Insights from the yarning sessions highlighted that while Metro North Health has a strong anti-racism policy framework in place, racism can still remain structurally embedded, under-reported and insufficiently addressed.

Staff discussions identified several key areas requiring ongoing attention:

- **Institutional racism:** Racism can persist in clinical decision-making, policy implementation and dominant biomedical models, often taking priority over cultural considerations.
- **Cultural burden:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff frequently carry additional, unrecognised responsibilities in addressing racism, contributing to increased workload and burnout.
- **Unsafe reporting systems:** Existing reporting pathways are sometimes mistrusted and may reinforce existing power structures rather than challenge them.
- **Lack of accountability:** Incidents of racism can be perceived as symbolic, with limited operational consequences.
- **Impact on patient care:** Racism in clinical settings can affect patient outcomes, including misdiagnosis and reduced engagement with health services.

Drawing on participant feedback, several key actions were identified to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander anti-racism efforts across the health service:

- **Strengthen accountability:** Introduce clear consequences for racist behaviour and improve transparency through reporting.
- **Improve reporting pathways:** Develop culturally safe, trauma-informed systems guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance.
- **Reduce cultural load:** Recognise and support the additional responsibilities carried by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff through dedicated roles and appropriate compensation.



Guest speaker Aunty Denise Proud sharing her powerful insights and lived experiences with event attendees.



Attendees at the International Day of Elimination and Racial Discrimination (IDERD) Event.

- **Embed anti-racism in clinical governance:** Recognise racism as a patient safety issue and reflect this in clinical tools and practice guidelines.
- **Build workforce capability:** Provide ongoing, practical training in cultural safety, bystander intervention and responding to racism in real time.
- **Support staff who speak up:** Introduce safeguards and independent escalation pathways to ensure psychological safety.

The IDERD event not only commemorated a global day of action against racial discrimination, but also reaffirmed Metro North Health's commitment to achieving zero experiences of racism across its services.

By listening to staff experiences and embedding their feedback into clinical governance and workforce practices, the organisation is taking important steps toward meaningful, system-wide change and more inclusive care for all.



Growing Strong Kids and Walking Together for Health Equity

Walking alongside community, Elders, families and partners, Metro North Health and Children's Health Queensland are continuing a shared journey to support stronger, healthier futures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The *Connecting the Journey: Growing Strong Kids Health Equity Community Consultation*, held in March, created a safe space for community to yarn and share what matters most for jarjums (children) and their futures.

At the heart of the day was one clear purpose: listening to community voices to help shape a health system that is culturally safe, connected, and responsive to the needs of children and families.

Through the partnership between Metro North Health and Children's Health Queensland, it is recognised that improving outcomes for children and young people requires both health services to work together.

By walking together with community, both health services are committed to shaping services, strengthening pathways, and making sure families are supported, not navigating the system alone.

Community members highlighted how important it is to see this partnership in action, with many saying more opportunities like this are needed to connect services and community in meaningful ways.

Around 175 people attended the consultation, including Elders, parents, carers, community members and staff. Together, they shared lived experiences and ideas through culturally grounded yarning circles.



Health Equity Community Consultation attendees participating in yarning circle discussions.

These conversations focused on what helps children stay strong and connected to culture, family and community, and how services can better support them through respectful and accessible care.



Darsha Beetson, Clinical Nurse Consultant at Children's Health Qld facilitating yarning circle discussions.

Attendees spoke openly about what is working well, but also where change is needed.

Key priorities raised included:

- Easier pathways through the health system, with support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from the first point of care.
- Better coordination between hospitals, community services, schools and supports.
- A stronger focus on social and emotional wellbeing, including early intervention and culturally safe mental healthcare.
- Addressing challenges such as housing, transport and cost of living that impact children's health.
- Ongoing action to eliminate racism and ensure all care is safe, respectful and culturally responsive.

A strong message from the day was clear: community wants to see action.

Families and Elders shared that while these conversations are important, real change is what matters most.

Everything shared throughout the day reinforced one key message: our children must be at the centre of everything we do.

When services are built around culture, community and connection, children are stronger, families feel supported and health outcomes improve.

The consultation is part of the ongoing journey towards health equity, with another community consultation planned for later this year.

The insights gathered will directly shape future planning, services and partnerships, with a continued commitment to sharing back with community on what has been heard and what actions are being taken.

Together, Metro North Health, Children's Health Queensland and community are building a stronger, more connected system - one that honours culture, supports families and helps every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child thrive now and into the future.

“ Messages in Coolamon from Consultation Attendees

I feel privileged to have a yarn with everyone present and to hear both the positive and challenging health journeys that people have had and how we can improve.

Great to hear and connect with mob in a health space. Some wonderful stories and info shared.

Great opportunity to share ideas and thoughts on how to improve the health services to be more inclusive.

Time for reflection in how services are rare, having a full day to listen and learn was very special.

Thank you for the opportunity to listen to what matters to community. Now let's make a positive difference.

Today has been wonderful, the collaboration between services and yarning from the Elders was moving. I feel so great to learn and grow through sharing all our mob. Thank you!

A great opportunity to see two hospital and health services coming together. Need more yarns like this.

Culture and placing children and families in the centre will close the gap for our mob and future leaders.

Thank you for bringing us together to yarn and connect. I cherish the voices of all, especially our Elders. Thank you for paving the way.

Growing Our Future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders

Metro North Health has taken an important step in growing and strengthening its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, with the launch of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Program.



Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership participants pictured with (front L-R) Adj. Prof. Sherry Holzapfel, Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Aunty Patricia Elarde and Aunty Denise Proud.

The program recently welcomed its first cohort of participants at a special launch event, bringing together emerging leaders, mentors and senior leaders to mark the beginning of their leadership journey.

Designed to nurture and develop future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, the program is an important initiative that will help shape the future of healthcare for community.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Program supports staff from across Metro North Health, in a range of professions, to grow their leadership skills, build confidence and strengthen their cultural identity within the workplace.

With a focus on strengthening and empowering the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, Metro North Health recognises that strong leadership is key to delivering culturally safe care and improving health outcomes.

Participants will take part in a two-day workshop, mentoring sessions and ongoing development activities, supporting them to build on their strengths, explore career pathways and connect with culture, community and professional networks.

Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Adjunct Professor Sherry Holzapfel, said the program is about creating meaningful opportunities for staff to lead and grow.

“This program is an important initiative designed to nurture, develop and strengthen our workforce, supporting both current and emerging leaders to grow with confidence, capability and cultural integrity.

“It is vital that we, as an organisation, continue to invest in and support programs like this, ensuring our workforce is empowered, culturally strong and equipped to lead positive change across Metro North Health.”

A key part of the program is mentoring, with experienced mentors walking alongside participants throughout their journey.

Through regular mentoring conversations and support, participants will strengthen their leadership capability, set goals, and build skills to support their growth both personally and professionally.

Mentors play a vital role—not just in sharing knowledge, but in creating culturally safe spaces where participants feel supported to lead in ways that reflect who they are.

“Mentoring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff goes beyond professional guidance. It’s about creating culturally safe spaces, honouring identity and supporting individuals to lead in ways that are true to who they are and where they come from,” said Professor Holzapfel.

The program reflects a strong commitment to growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and supporting staff to step into leadership roles across the health service.

By investing in leadership development, Metro North Health is helping to build a workforce that is culturally strong, confident and empowered to influence change.

A strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership presence within the organisation plays an important role in shaping services that reflect the needs, voices and experiences of community.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Program will run throughout 2026, bringing together staff from across Metro North Health to learn, connect and grow together.

As participants move through the program, they will carry forward not only new skills and knowledge, but also the strength of culture, community and connection.

“Leadership is not just about title, it’s about how you show up, how you lift others and the impact you make in your community and workplace,” said Professor Holzapfel.

Through initiatives like this, Metro North Health continues its journey towards Health Equity, investing in people, strengthening leadership and supporting the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to make a lasting difference for community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices guiding the design of new Medical Imaging Department

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices will play a central role in shaping the new Medical Imaging Department located at Brighton Health Campus, ensuring the service is culturally safe, community informed and connected to Country from the earliest stages of planning through to delivery.

The new department, part of Queensland's Statewide MRI and CT Expansion Program, will provide CT, MRI, X ray, ultrasound and onsite radiology reporting services to communities across northern Brisbane.

As planning progresses, Metro North Health will work closely with Traditional Owners, Elders, local community organisations to ensure the design reflects cultural values, supports healing, and promotes a welcoming space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Redcliffe Hospital Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Raelene White, said the project is an important opportunity to sustain cultural safety into major health infrastructure developments.

"Our involvement isn't an add-on, it's integral," Raelene said.

"Embedding cultural perspectives into our health service infrastructure and design elements means listening deeply to community, respecting cultural knowledge, and ensuring the built environment reflects the identity, spirit and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

As part of the planning process, the project team is engaging with Traditional Owners and Elders to explore how the new facility can reflect cultural connection to the land, support holistic wellbeing, to create spaces where people feel safe and welcomed.

This includes consideration of:

- Culturally informed design elements, such as natural materials, local stories and connection to the surrounding landscape.
- Wayfinding and artwork developed with community input.

- Patient pathways that recognise cultural needs, including family involvement and respectful care practices.

These conversations are guided by Queensland Health's First Nations Design Framework, which sets clear expectations for co-design, representation and the inclusion of cultural perspectives in health infrastructure planning.

The project has prioritised early engagement, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices influence decisions from the outset including service planning, site considerations, design layout and workflow.

Community and Oral Health Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Paul Drahm, said that engaging and listening to the community is highly meaningful and helps to shape culturally safe and appropriate healthcare.

"When our communities see themselves reflected in the design of a building, it strengthens connection, trust and improves access to care," Paul said.

"This service will support generations to come, so getting the cultural foundations right matters.

"Our goal is to create a Medical Imaging Department that delivers world class care and feels genuinely welcoming to everyone."

The new Medical Imaging Department will play a vital role in improving community access to modern diagnostic services bringing care closer to home.



(L-R) Directors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health - Paul Drahm (Community and Oral Health) and Raelene White (Redcliffe Hospital).

BRISBANE NORTHSIDE ELDER SPOTLIGHT



Aunty Sandra's Story

Aunty Sandra Blackman is someone people remember. Not just for what she has done professionally, but for how she makes people feel. Her warmth, kindness and bright, strong personality uplift everyone around her.


Growing up as one of 13 kids, family was everything to Aunty Sandra. With a proud Aboriginal heritage through her father, the Darumbal people and South Sea Islander heritage through her mum, culture and connection have always been at the heart of everything she has done.

Aunty Sandra's career didn't follow just one path; it grew over time. She started as a teacher aide, then gained qualifications in community health and later nursing. Her work took her into communities across Queensland, building relationships and supporting people through tough times. No matter where she was, her focus stayed the same: caring for people in a way that felt safe, respectful and genuine.

She later spent many years working within Metro North Health and with the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH), continuing her lifelong commitment to strengthening the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Outside of work, Aunty Sandra's life is full of family. With her husband Wayne D. Blackman (now in the dreamtime), she shares 4 children, is a grandmother of 9 grandchildren and great-grandmother to 12 great-grannies. She still stays active in community and Elders groups, including Metro North Health initiatives focused on health equity and continues to impact lives along the way.

These days, in her retirement, Aunty Sandra continues to keep in contact with fellow retired nurses and when not busy out and about, you'll find her at home quilting, crocheting, embroidering and enjoying her favourite curry.



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.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

Dr Luke David
RBWH Intern Medical Officer

Q1. Which community, Island or Country are you from?

My family is from the Kulkalgal Nation of the Central Torres Strait Islands. We are the David family from Iama (Yam) Island. I grew up predominantly in Cairns and also spent some of my childhood between Injinoo in Bamaga, Thursday Island and Iama.

My Aka (grandmother) Anacleta David lived to 97 years old and raised myself and two other siblings in Cairns alongside my Mum. I remember her speaking about the importance of education for us kids.

Q2. What is your current role and what does your role involve?

Currently, I'm an Intern Medical Officer working on the Mental Health ward at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

Right now, I assess and treat patients spending time with mental health for their medical needs. Usually, the nursing staff will hand over patient queries and then I'll go have a yarn with them and make a plan together. I'll also involve other medical specialties and try to advocate for the health of a population which can be quite vulnerable.

Q3. What impact do you hope to make?

I really hope I can be seen as a safe Torres Strait Islander practitioner who focuses on the strengths of our patients when thinking about their needs. Particularly for all our mob, I want to be known as someone who challenges preconceptions and eliminates prejudices when providing medical care.

Aside from that, I hope I can inspire our families by showing that we have a place in healthcare, and we can do it.

Q4. Why are you passionate about this work?

I came from a background of community work up in Cairns, particularly with our First Nations youth and young people from trauma backgrounds. I enjoyed being an advocate across systems for the young people I worked with, who were often left behind.

What motivates me is seeing what can happen when someone feels genuinely listened to and supported. Even small moments of trust or progress can have a big impact. It's something I've carried forward into my clinical work, and it's a big part of why I'm passionate about continuing in this field.

Q5. What do you enjoy outside of work?

I love catching up with family for a feed and watching the footy too – up the BRONX!!!

I also love exercising and getting outdoors here, being close to the ocean at the beach or walking along the big river here.

Luke also shared that people are often surprised to learn he's a pretty decent cook after working as a butcher while he was at school, saying he still prides himself on being able to spot a good steak before buying it.

Q6. What advice would you give to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people considering a career in health?

I sat back for a long time thinking I wouldn't be good enough to be able to go to university and succeed or even be able to survive in a big city like Brisbane. But I gave it a go and I succeeded above many others academically.

My advice is to just believe in yourself. Sometimes I think of the blood running through my veins carrying the success of my culture for years and years inside of me. We have great potential, and we have a place here in health. If I can do it, then you definitely can too – just give it a go!

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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_TSILCommsMNH@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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