

Talk-About

The official newsletter of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Leadership Team

December 2022



(L-R) BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service Medical Director Dr Jane Brazier, community member Aunty Barb Hubbert, Metro North Board Member Bonny Barry and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Leadership Team Project Officer Kim Minniecon (wearing the Sistas Shawl) attending the Sistas Shawl Launch.

New 'Sistas Shawl' supporting women across the BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service

BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service is trialling a 'Sistas Shawl' project to boost screening rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, however mortality rates are higher compared to non-Indigenous women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women tend to get breast cancer when they are younger, have more advanced

tumours when they get diagnosed, and have low rates of participation in breast screening programs.

Dr Jane Brazier, Medical Director at BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service, said it is recommended that women aged 50–74 have a breast screen every two years as it remains the best way to detect breast cancer early. BreastScreen Queensland provides free breast screening to women who are aged 40 and over.

Continued page 6>

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Give us feedback

We welcome your feedback, contributions, story ideas and details on any upcoming events. Please contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team at A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au or phone (07) 3139 3231.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team

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

Mail to:

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

Email to:

A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au

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

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

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

Contact information

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

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

After hours PH 3646 5106 / 0428 861 888

The Prince Charles Hospital

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

After Hours Ph: 3139 6429 / 0429 897 982

Redcliffe Hospital

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer Ph: 3049 6791

After Hours Ph: 3049 9734

Caboolture/Kilcoy Hospital

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Office Ph: 5433 8249

After Hours Ph: 5316 5481

Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS):

Indigenous Hospital Liaison Office Ph: 3647 6044

Community Indigenous Primary Health Team

Indigenous Community Health Team Ph: 3631 7379

Indigenous Sexual Health Team

Clinical Nurse Consultant Ph: 3631 7379

Indigenous Mental Health

Professional Lead Ph: 3646 2695

Ngarrama Maternity Services

Caboolture Ph: 0439 732 970

Redcliffe Ph: 0407 251 890

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

Forensic Mental Health Service, Indigenous Mental Health Intervention Program

Forensic Mental Health Team Ph: 3234 0800



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What's inside December 2022

COVER

New 'Sistas Shawl' supporting women across the BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service

Contact information 2

A word from the Executive Director 3

A word from the Chief Executive 4

OUT AND ABOUT

Health Equity moves towards action 6

STARS working towards Reconciliation 7

Koobara Kindy Northside Community Fun Day 7

Deadly Start Graduation 8

Indigenous Business Month 8

Brighton's new Moora View Healing Garden 9

Caboolture Hospital Indigenous Touch Football Carnival 9

CKW taking the next steps to achieving health equity 10

STARS monthly staff gatherings for mob 11

IN FOCUS

Yarning with Community 13

Learning to live well with diabetes 14

Deadly Start Graduate – Claire Guthrie-Quinn 15

Herston Quarter engages Aboriginal artist to bring the precinct to life 16

Aunty Barb's second chance in life 16

STAFF PROFILE – Vashti Beetson 18

WORD OF THE MONTH 18

A word from the Executive Director



Sherry Holzapfel
Executive Director,
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Health

This year has been a big year for Metro North Health. As we move towards the end of 2022 I would like to acknowledge and thank Metro North Health Chief Executive Jackie Hanson and Chief Operating Officer Jane Hancock for their ongoing commitment and coming along with us on our journey towards creating a culturally safe and capable health service as part of our Health Equity Strategy. They have showed up at every community event, taking a seat at the table to listen, learn and engage with our community for meaningful change and reconciliation.

I would also like to thank all Metro North Health staff and services, including our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, for their continued support and hard work driving the health equity agenda across our services and facilities.

This year has seen some amazing work in the health equity space, with numerous community and staff consultation sessions, the exciting launch of our Health Equity Strategy: Our Journey Towards Health Equity 2022 – 2025 during NAIDOC week, and the progression of our Health Equity Implementation Plan - outlining the actions designed to demonstrate a commitment to the health equity reform, and improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the whole health care system.

We recently released our 2022 Year in Review report documenting and showcasing the fantastic work Metro North Health has achieved throughout the year. I encourage you to take the time to sit down and enjoy a nice cup of tea and read about all the deadly initiatives and programs within the [2022 Year in Review](https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/better-together-van/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/12/atsilt-year-review-22.pdf)¹

Our local Elders have been our ongoing support system, inspiration, mentors and leaders throughout our journey, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to each and every one of you who have guided us throughout this process. Without you all we would not be where we are today, creating a safe healthcare system for our families and community.

I was excited and positively overwhelmed to recently attend our first ever Community Yarns engagement event held in Deception Bay for Elders, community and staff. This event, hosted by Metro North Health, will be an annual event creating a safe and casual space for our Elders and community to get to know and engage with our staff, and for our staff to talk, listen and learn from our Elders and community. The day was filled with laughter, tears, storytelling, and fun, and as any community event goes, I made personal family connections and got to share in stories of home and family. Another highlight was listening to an idol of mine sing, Uncle Roger Knox, and receiving a signed poster from him!

As we settle back into normality and living with COVID-19, the recent rise in COVID-19 community transmissions serves as a reminder that we all still need to be aware and continue to practice good hand hygiene, ensure we are up to date with our vaccinations, wear masks where you can't social distance and look after each other. Our Elders are our most vulnerable, and we all need to play our part to keep our Elders and community safe.

This is our last newsletter for the year so I would like to take this time to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I hope you can spend the festive season with loved ones. I encourage you all to take the time to be kind to yourselves, look after your health and wellbeing during this period and keep your mind, body, and spirit strong.

I look forward to what 2023 holds for us here at Metro North Health. Thank you to all our deadly frontline staff who are working over the Christmas and New Year's period to provide ongoing healthcare and support to community and patients. Your commitment and dedication is inspiring and highly valued.

Until next time, stay safe and deadly.

Sherry Holzapfel
Executive Director, Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Health

¹ <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/better-together-van/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/12/atsilt-year-review-22.pdf>

A word from the Chief Executive



Jackie Hanson
Chief Executive
Metro North Health

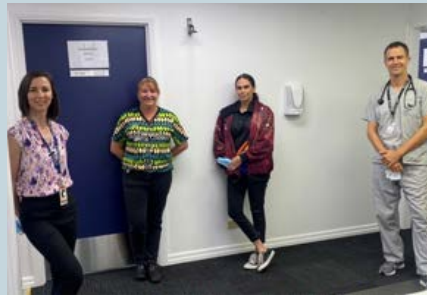
This has been a huge year for Metro North in our efforts to build our health equity plan. As Chief Executive of Metro North Health, I am personally deeply committed to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This year we launched our first Metro North Health Equity Strategy, which was developed in partnership with staff, Elders and community members to ensure the strategy is robust, meaningful and achievable. Thank you to everyone who participated in both the strategy development and in our actions so far to implement the strategy.

It has also been a significant year for our Deadly Start education to employment program. After only two years, the program will now become statewide. This year we welcomed another 30 students and saw the second group graduate. It's a huge achievement for these young people who will be finishing high school with an additional qualification to help them in their careers. Metro North also committed to continued employment for those students graduating from the program. For some this means continuing full time while others have chosen to move to casual or part time work while

they pursue further studies. I am very proud of what Metro North has achieved with the program and look forward to seeing it continue to grow as more health services around the state come on board.

In partnership with UIH we have also launched the new Urban Indigenous Respiratory Outreach Clinic (UROC) at the Moreton Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (MATSICHS) at Margate. UROC will provide specialist respiratory services closer to home in a culturally safe and respectful environment. The first clinic was held at the end of October and is already seeing great results with the first patient able to come off a long wait list at one of our hospitals.



The new UROC clinic at Margate

As you'll read in this edition of Talk About, we have introduced a new Sistas Shawl for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people visiting BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside. This October and November we have seen screening numbers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people jump to higher than pre-pandemic numbers for first, second and third screens. In November 2022, we screened 13 First Nations people for the first time, compared to 4 in October 2019.

This month Metro North Health held our annual staff excellence awards. For the first time we have introduced two new categories which emphasise and remind staff of our commitment to health equity. These new categories are First Nations Staff and Improving First Nations Health. Fittingly, the first recipients of both awards are our dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team.

We have started regular community yarning sessions which will continue in 2023. It is essential that we engage with Elders and community to ensure that our services and our actions are delivering on what is truly needed. Thank you to everyone who has come to a session already. I was very pleased to meet with people at the first session in Deception Bay and meet musician Uncle Roger Knox. If you are unable to attend one of the yarning sessions but would like to share your experiences of our healthcare services, please reach out to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team. There are contact details for a range of services at this front of this newsletter.

As we end the year, I want to acknowledge the sad news and sorry business that has seen too many farewells in our community and offer my condolences.

Regards,
Jackie.



If you need to visit an Emergency Department, try the Virtual ED first.



To check if you are eligible*:

- Scan the QR code or
- Visit metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/ved

We are open 8am to 6pm, 7 days a week.

**Note: Not all medical problems are suitable for the Virtual ED, so it's important to check your eligibility first. You must reside, be visiting or receive your treatment in the Metro North Health area.*



**In an Emergency
DIAL 000**

Please call 000 IMMEDIATELY if you have a life-threatening condition or require urgent medical help.

Continued from page 1 >

“We are really pleased that over the years more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have chosen to participate in the BreastScreen Queensland Program, however it is still very important to ensure these rates continue to rise and to improve the cultural appropriateness of our services.

“BreastScreen Queensland’s Brisbane Northside Service experienced an increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women screening in the 2021-2022 financial year with 522 women coming in for a breast screen compared with 507 the previous year,” said Dr Brazier.

“While this is the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women that have screened at the service, we cannot become complacent. We welcome the opportunity to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health on the ‘Sistas Shawl Project’ to support more women to use our free breast screening services.”

The Sistas Shawl concept was introduced to BreastScreen Queensland by the BreastScreen Victoria Beautiful Shawl Project.¹ Women accessing the service were incentivised to attend with the gift of the beautiful cultural shawl that they were then able to wear during the screening to reduce the feeling of embarrassment about being undressed in front of a stranger.

Metro North Health Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and proud Yidindji and Butchulla woman Sherry Holzapfel has partnered with the BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service to support the project.

The Sistas Shawls, featuring ‘A Women’s Dreaming’ artwork by Aboriginal artist Sharon McAvoy, were unveiled by Sherry at a special morning tea at the BreastScreen Queensland Chermide Service as part of October Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

¹ How the Beautiful Shawl Project helps Close the Gap » <https://www.breastscreen.org.au/news/how-the-beautiful-shawl-project-helps-close-the-gap/>

“We want to reduce shame with having a breast screen for our women as it really is a lifesaving check that should be completed every two years,” Sherry said.

“The Sistas Shawl will provide comfort and modesty for our women accessing BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Services and be supported by the delivery of culturally appropriate services and care.”²

Seven hundred Sistas Shawls have been ordered as part of the project and staff have been invited to support the initiative by wearing a polo shirt also featuring Sharon McAvoy’s artwork for dedicated clinic days with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

BreastScreen Queensland Brisbane Northside Service has screening locations at Chermide, Brisbane City, Keperra, North Lakes, Indooroopilly and Redcliffe. Women can make an appointment by phoning 13 20 50 or can book online at www.breastscreen.qld.gov.au. A doctor’s referral is not required.

² <https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-topics/cancer/breast-cancer/>

OUTandABOUT

Health Equity moves towards action

Metro North Health have now moved into the implementation phase of the Health Equity Strategy journey, with the creation and design of an Implementation and Evaluation Plan that outlines actions, and guides Metro North Health to deliver on the five key performance areas highlighted in the strategy, ensuring services are equitable and free from racism and discrimination.

In September, a forum was held with Elders, community, Metro North Health Executives and staff to review the draft Health Equity Implementation and Evaluation Plan, provide feedback and share their voices, co-designing an implementation plan that will put words and voices into action.

Yarning circles were held during the event, providing an opportunity for Elders and community to speak up, share their healthcare and lived experiences, helping guide the implementation plan into its end stages before being finalised.

“We want a health service that our mob feel proud and comfortable to access,” Sherry Holzapfel, Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, said.

“The voices and feedback are invaluable to this process as we create an implementation plan that drives our health service to achieve and act on the needs of our community.”

To view the Metro North Health Equity Strategy and Implementation Plan 2022 – 2025 visit: <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/health-equity>



Staff and community participating in the Health Equity yarning circle



(L-R) Aboriginal Artist Elaine Chambers-Hegarty, Allira Schafer Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officer, Kellie Stockton STARS Director Allied Health, Jackie Hanson Chief Executive and Helen Boocock STARS Executive Director

STARS working towards Reconciliation

The Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS) has launched its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) along with new exclusive one-of-a-kind artwork by gifted Aboriginal artist Elaine Chambers-Hegarty.

The STARS Reflect RAP demonstrates the newest purpose-built specialist public health facility's commitment to reconciliation.

"Through partnership and collaboration, we are proudly building culturally capable services through the delivery of healthcare that is planned, supported, and culturally equipped to increase access and improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," STARS Executive Director Helen Boocock said.

The concrete and deliverable action plan supports STARS to lay the foundation and build a culture of leadership and accountability, so that all staff actively engage on their reconciliation journey. It reinforces the importance of delivering culturally responsive, safe, and connected care, services and programs.

"By increasing understanding, recognising, and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and knowledge, we will embed cultural respect into everything we do," said Helen.

Community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, patients, Metro North Health staff and Executive came together to celebrate this significant milestone in STARS reconciliation journey, and to get a first peek at the stunning new artwork which is proudly on display to everyone who visits the service.

"We are delighted to launch our STARS Reflect RAP and artwork. These two key pieces of work demonstrate our commitment to drive health equity and provision of a culturally safe service for patients who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

"The artwork created for STARS by Elaine Chambers-Hegarty depicts the journey one needs for a successful recovery incorporating stepping stones, water, message sticks and links to community," said Kellie Stockton, Director for STARS Allied Health and RAP committee member.

Koobara Kindy Northside Community Fun Day

Due to a slight increase in COVID-19 cases in July, many NAIDOC celebrations this year were rescheduled. Fortunately, many events still occurred later in the year, and the Better Together Health Van team and Metro North Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff were lucky enough to be invited along.

In late September, staff attended the Koobara Kindy Northside Community Fun Day to connect with community and celebrate the two oldest continuing cultures in the world.

Set up at a stall in front of our iconic Better Together Health Van, the team spent the day at the Northside NAIDOC event catching up with mob, sharing important health information and resources with community, and building relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and organisations.

The day was enjoyed by community who were treated to live music, entertainment, food, arts and crafts stalls, and activities to keep the little ones entertained. It was great to see community come together again at this event which had unfortunately not taken place for the last two years due to COVID-19.

Metro North Health staff thank Koobara Kindy, and all involved for a deadly day out and can't wait to come back next year and do it all again!



Jodi Dyer, Senior Project Officer and Kim Minniecon, Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce Coordinator attending Northside NAIDOC



Deadly Start Graduation

Metro North Health executive staff, the Deadly Start project team and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders joined 30 Deadly Start school-based trainees, their families and friends at a special graduation ceremony held at the Birrunga Aboriginal Art Gallery in Brisbane City, celebrating the completion of their work placement within Metro North Health in their relevant health qualification, and the hard work and dedication shown by the trainees over the last couple of years.

The Queensland Minister for Health and Ambulance Services The Honourable Yvette D'Ath MP has shown great support for the Deadly Start program and came

along to the graduation ceremony to present the students with their certificates.

Moving into its fifth year of operation in 2023, Deadly Start has proven to be successful in building Metro North Health's future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, contributing to cultural capability, safety and improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the hospital and health service.

Committed to increasing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, Metro North Health has pledged to provide ongoing employment opportunities to Deadly Start trainee graduates who would like to continue working within Metro North Health and/or pursue further study.

Congratulations to the graduating trainees on your outstanding achievement. Metro North Health staff have enjoyed following you on your journey and look forward to working alongside you in future to achieve health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Indigenous Business Month

In celebration of the 2022 Indigenous Business Month, Metro North Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff attended a special capability uplift and networking event held by Australian Unity, to acknowledge and recognise local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in Brisbane.

The 2022 Indigenous Business Month theme 'Actions Today, Impact Tomorrow' aims to inspire rising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business leaders and acknowledges that the journey for many business owners is not straight forward,

but the stories and experiences shared can help encourage the next generation of leaders.

Australian Unity was pleased to show its support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses by hosting the networking event with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business leaders at the Herston Quarter health precinct.

Guests were treated to light refreshments while hearing from Australian Unity experts in human resources and commercial/legal about how to build business resilience following the events of the past couple of years.

Feedback from the event was positive, with attendees sharing much gratitude for the event and opportunities for business leaders to showcase their businesses.



Attendees of Australian Unity's Indigenous Business Month event



Brighton's new Moora View Healing Garden

Brighton Health Campus residents, staff and community joined together in September to celebrate the newly anticipated and welcomed edition to the facility, the Moora View Healing Garden.

Located next to the Brighton Brain Injury Service, the healing garden was created with the love and pride of many people including Elders, staff, community members, patients and the Men's Shed.

Moora View received its name from the language of the local Traditional Owners, the Turrbal people, who called Moreton Bay 'Moora', meaning 'open sheet of water'.

The garden is a culturally safe, visually pleasing outdoor space featuring Australian native plants and a shady seating area with space for wheelchairs and seating for patients, residents, families, visitors and staff to enjoy and escape to. Not only does this special place of healing celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to Country, it also acknowledges history, celebrates identity, and the healing properties of plants and place.

Caboolture Hospital Indigenous Touch Football Carnival

Staff and community members banded together again for the highly anticipated annual Caboolture Hospital Indigenous Touch Football Carnival, for the third year running, organised by the Caboolture Hospital Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee.

This year's event saw 11 teams register to participate in a family friendly event, all competing for first place bragging rights. But drifting their way into first place, the Drifters secured the win with Tap N Gap coming in at a close second.

The day was enjoyed by all who attended, with a number of health and information stalls and activities on offer for the whole family. Attendees were even treated to a sausage sizzle sponsored by local community organisation KYC.

"Definitely the highlight is meeting people and having a yarn, I had both of my kids involved in the day, volunteering and playing on a team, and to see their investment

in it, enjoyment and creating connections with community is great. It was lovely to see so many people come this year, we had the most teams this year at 11," said Rachel Bailey, Clinical Nurse Consultant and Caboolture RAP committee member.



CKW taking the next steps to achieving health equity



Executive Director, Caboolture and Kilcoy Hospitals and Woodford Corrections Health Service, Angie Dobbrick sharing a few words

The Caboolture and Kilcoy Hospitals and Woodford Corrections Health Service (CKW) has ended the year on a high having officially launched its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The RAP launch, held on Monday 21 November, was attended by Metro North Health Board members, Executive Staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and community members who gathered to celebrate this exciting milestone and the hard work, dedication and commitment shown by the CKW RAP committee members over the past year.

Over 50 Attendees joined in on the celebration and were welcomed to the land of the Kabi Kabi/Gubbi Gubbi people by Aboriginal Elder and Traditional Owner, Uncle Mick Douglas, and were later in the day treated to a traditional song and dance performance by the Jinibara Dancers.

Executive Director, Caboolture and Kilcoy Hospitals and Woodford Corrections Health Service, Angie Dobbrick, shared a few words on the day highlighting the significance

of the journey that has led them to this momentous occasion, and her commitment to continuing on this journey.

“I am committed to walking together on a shared journey with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and our community. I am committed to creating culturally inclusive and safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to do this, I know it’s important that we understand our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

community’s spiritual, social, and cultural connections to the land where our services are delivered,” said Angie.

Developing the CKW RAP highlighted what needed to change to ensure facilities are welcoming, clinical practices are culturally safe, and workplaces are free from racism and discrimination, which is what inspired Caboolture Clinical Nurse Consultant and CKW RAP Chair Rachel Bailey to continue advocating for change.

“We understand that reconciliation is a vital part of achieving equal health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who disproportionately face disadvantage from effects of colonisation, policy, and trauma,” Rachel said.

“Reconciliation is everyone’s business, we want cultural respect and the value of relationships to be understood and embraced by all as we work to shift our attitudes, change our behaviours and overhaul systems so we can strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.”

Congratulations to CKW for launching its first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan and taking the next steps forward in their journey to achieving health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



OUTandABOUT

STARS monthly staff gatherings for mob

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we know connection to culture and Country plays a big role in our identity, and similarly in the workplace, forming connections with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff can enable us to feel a sense of safety and comfort.

Building relationships with co-workers can at times be challenging, however building relationships over a good feed in an informal setting can certainly help break down barriers, which is what Surgical, Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS) Cultural Capability Officer, Jarrod Parter, hopes to achieve by conducting monthly staff afternoon teas.

“I want to provide an opportunity for the STARS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, Deadly Start trainees and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from the other directorates across Metro North Health to connect with one another,” said Jarrod.

The inaugural STARS informal afternoon tea gathering, which took place on Monday 7 November, was the first of many which aims to build and maintain a sense of community within the STARS facility, whilst also serving as an informal brainstorming session in relation to important workforce initiatives, and an opportunity for staff to check in on one another.

“As we progress with the Health Equity agenda, this is the time for us to support not only ourselves, but others around us,” said Jarrod.

The flow on effects of strengthening and building relationships in the workforce will contribute directly to improved performance, greater ideas, a more positive workplace culture and ultimately improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing our services.



(L-R) STARS receptionist Shane-Ellyn King, and Cultural Capability Officer Jarrod Parter enjoying the day.



(L-R) STARS receptionist Siobhan Johnson, and Redcliffe Hospital Cultural Capability Officer Elwyn Henaway enjoying the day

HEALTH EQUITY

Starts with Me

Let's work together to create
health equity for our mob

**“I commit to
ensuring we receive
equitable health
services for
our families.”**

Aunty Denise Proud,
Aboriginal Elder

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
health is everyone's business.**

Visit our website <https://metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/health-equity> for further information

 Be part of the conversation #ourhealthourway #forcommunity #BetterTogether -
<https://www.facebook.com/BetterTogetherHealthVan>



Metro North Health in partnership with



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IN FOCUS

Yarning with Community



Elders are the backbone of our community. They are our family, leaders, mentors, story tellers and cultural guides.

Throughout Metro North's Health Equity journey, local Elders have contributed numerous amounts of time, knowledge and guidance as part of the co-design process to creating a health equity strategy that reflects community voices.

Metro North Health is committed to building strong relationships with Elders and community, including ongoing engagement activities and partnerships.

To show their sincere appreciation and ongoing commitment to Elders and community, Metro North Health held its first Community Yarns event at Deception Bay. This event will be held annually with the aim of connecting staff, Elders and community together to build stronger relationships.

"I feel this is a great way for our staff to connect informally with our



community members and be a part of the understanding, importance and obligation of their roles to the community," Community and Engagement Officer Rayna Cowburn said.

"Connecting with each other is a really important part of sharing information. Elders and community feeling that they are being a part of the system, having their voices heard, and being acknowledged for their ongoing support and work is how we will build better relationships, and receive increased participation and community interest in supporting our health initiatives/direction across Metro North."

Staff, Elders and community came together for this relaxed and casual event held on Remembrance Day, enjoying a yarn with one another over a delicious roast buffet lunch while enjoying music by the legendary and award-winning country music singer, Uncle Roger Knox. Uncle Russell Doctor



also provided music and gave tribute to the late Dennis 'Mop' Conlon, lead singer of Mop and the Dropouts. Everyone in attendance was treated to a special blessing of the food by Pastor Rodney Minniecon and an acknowledgement of Remembrance Day by Aunty Brenda Kanofski, sharing a personal story and leading a one-minute silence to reflect and remember our fallen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander war heroes.

Following lunch, a few Elders even carved up the dance floor showing the young ones some classic moves. So much enjoyment was had by attendees, the day filled with laughter, tears, storytelling, and fun, and many people reconnecting with old friends and family.

"The atmosphere was beautiful, there was a peace about the day. The conversations that were flowing around the room were so broad and meaningful. Everyone looked so happy and the community that was there felt so connected. The kindness in the room was evident from the smiles, gratitude and support, not only from the community members but from the leadership staff and other staff," said Kim Minniecon, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce Development Coordinator.



IN FOCUS

Learning to live well with diabetes

To live well with diabetes, first you must know what diabetes is, how it can be treated, and how to effectively monitor and manage diabetes.

Diabetes is a condition where there's too much glucose in the blood. Glucose is a simple form of sugar that gives us energy to walk, run, jump, move and think, and helps parts of our body like our heart, liver, and kidneys to work properly.

When colonisation occurred, there was a deep disruption to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Culture and land were stolen from Traditional Owners, with many forced to live on missions. People were removed from their lands and restricted in movement. This prevented them from being able to continue cultural practices and activities such as hunting, trade, ceremony, marriage, connecting and celebrations.

The forced removal of people from their lands meant people could no longer hunt, farm and gather their traditional foods, forcing them to consume introduced sources of carbohydrates, sugar, flour and rice.

The sudden change in diet and lifestyle negatively impacted health and wellbeing, which contributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now being almost four times more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to develop diabetes or pre-diabetes.

The best way to prevent or reduce the risk of diabetes related complications is by managing your blood glucose levels, ensuring it remains as close to your target range as possible, as indicated by your doctor. You can do this by consuming a healthy diet, keeping active and taking prescribed medications.

There is no special diet for diabetes. Healthy eating means getting a balance of fruit, dairy, meat, grains and vegetables. Incorporating physical activity into your lifestyle can include going to the gym, throwing a football around at the park, gardening, fishing, walking and housework.

It is recommended that we undertake 30 minutes of physical activity every day. This can be done at one time or broken down throughout the day in smaller sessions. Physical activity and exercise help to burn excess glucose from our blood, keeping it in a healthy range, and can improve our overall wellbeing.

Whilst a healthy diet and lifestyle helps to manage diabetes, depending on individual circumstances, this may not be enough. Most people living with diabetes may need to start medication to help keep their glucose levels in a healthy range, and over time, may be required to take additional medications, or new medications to manage their condition.

Once diabetes is being managed effectively, individuals

must continue to monitor their condition and regularly check their blood glucose levels to ensure it remains within a healthy range. This can be done with a finger prick check or a blood test.

Understanding diabetes, and how to effectively manage and monitor the condition will allow those who are living with the condition to have the confidence and motivation to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing, alongside their trusted medical professional, that will improve their physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental wellbeing.



Deadly Start Graduate – Claire Guthrie-Quinn

Metro North Health recently celebrated the special achievements and hard work of the Deadly Start trainees who graduated from the school-based traineeship program in 2022. Among the 30 students who graduated was Claire Guthrie-Quinn. Claire is excited for what her future holds and feels inspired to work with community after participating in the Deadly Start program. Read below as Claire shares her experiences in Deadly Start, and plans for her future:

1. Who is your mob and where are you/ family from?

I am Dungibara/Pitjarra. Dungibara are from southeastern Darling Downs, close to Brisbane. The Pitjarra are from the southwestern Queensland area around Tambo. My family resides within inner Brisbane.

2. What made you want to join the Deadly Start Program?

I had taken an interest in becoming a dental assistant (DA) before COVID, and the Deadly Start Program was an amazing opportunity that allowed me to gain that qualification whilst still at school and continuing my studies.

3. What inspired you to choose Dental for your traineeship?

In early high school I didn't really know what I wanted to do in the future for work. My parents are both in health, as are many in my extended family, so when the school sent traineeship options home for us to consider, I discussed dental assisting with my parents as an opportunity. We decided it would be a great head start when I left school, but I have enjoyed this course so much I have now been exploring dentistry as a career.

4. What was one of your favourite



memories during your Deadly Start traineeship in Dental?

Not so much one memory, but I will forever appreciate the incredible support and encouragement from the fabulous staff at the Oral Health Centre. The dentists, the dental students, and most importantly, the DAs, were all kind and nurturing. I was able to learn by being hands on, I got to work with a range of different people with experience and advice, and I was able to witness a wide range of different procedures across dentistry.

5. What was one challenge you experienced in your traineeship?

Part of my training was rotating through the various areas of the dental clinic, so each area had its own challenges. At each rotation I had to become familiar with new staff, new procedures and new equipment. Very different from my days at school. One more memorable day was when I thought I had lost an x-ray. Just as panic set in, I realised I had opened a different desktop window. Fortunately, the x-ray was where it was meant to be, and no one was wiser until now...

6. Now that you have completed your

traineeship, what are your future plans once you graduate college?

This is a great question. I have plans to study and to travel. Having this qualification means I will be able to work anywhere in Australia and possibly overseas.

7. Has Deadly Start inspired you to pursue a career in health? If so, what are your inspirations for the future in health?

My experience at the Oral Health Centre has definitely inspired me to explore dentistry as a future career. Being able to talk to the dentists and dental students about their experiences has helped me gain a better understanding of the work and study involved in becoming a dentist. I hope to be able to work in Community in the future, or with the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

8. What are your favourite hobbies, or what do you like to do outside of school and work?

I play volleyball for both the school and a club team, so this takes up much of my spare time. Once I finish school, I am looking forward to having more time to connect with my mob again.

IN FOCUS

Herston Quarter engages Aboriginal artist to bring the precinct to life



The newly installed art within the Herston Quarter Heritage Precinct, next to Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, provides an opportunity to create unifying threads throughout the area, enhancing the arrival experience of visitors and staff.

Knowing that art informally becomes part of the visitors' experience, Herston Quarter has carefully selected public artworks to support the wellbeing of diverse audiences who may visit the precinct.

The collection of artworks was designed to complement the heritage architecture, adding a layer of meaning and stimulation.

Of the artworks recently installed, the interactive seating is the most substantial of the collection which has been designed by nationally recognised Aboriginal artist, Elisa Jane Carmichael.

Resembling interlocked weaving, the seating design has woven cast strings embedded in their bases which are inspired by a string making technique

that seeks to link the past, present and future.

Elisa says they are also symbolic of the Strings of Waterholes close to Herston Quarter which were plentiful in water and abundant in material which supported weaving and food supplies.

"String making is a weaving technique which has sustained life for millennia for First Nations people all around the world. When weaving string, we weave strands together to make them stronger. Just like we do as humans when we come together as a community," Elisa said.

The full circular form of the design is more than six metres in diameter, however it has been separated into multiple sections to provide alternative seating for individuals or groups in different parts of the precinct.

Where the seating loops open, the native plant *Lomandra*, which once grew in the area and is used as a traditional weaving fibre, will be planted.

If you are passing through the Herston Quarter Heritage Precinct, be sure to stop by and check out this deadly piece of art created by Elisa.

IN FOCUS

Aunty Barb's second chance in life

It took many years, and a trip to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH), for proud Badtjala woman, artist, mum, friend, and survivor of domestic violence, Barbara (Aunty Barb) Pershouse to find out that symptoms she has been experiencing were more serious than severe anxiety attacks.

In 2014 Aunty Barb was staying in Brisbane with her daughter, Ann-Maree, when she suffered a heart attack and was taken to the RBWH.

"I had a major heart attack after fleeing from domestic violence. Thankfully the nurses did a thorough examination and an angiogram," Aunty Barb said.

Whilst on the operating table at RBWH, Aunty Barb suffered repeated heart attacks, which showed in real time what was happening to her valves, and she was immediately admitted into hospital to undergo a heart procedure.

Sitting in the hospital bed after her procedure at RBWH, Aunty Barb knew it was time that she had to quit smoking.

"I gave up smoking whilst in the hospital with the help of the nurses. I had access to patches and ongoing support from staff. This wasn't easy yet having the help from the medical professionals made it possible," Aunty Barb said.

"To this day I haven't had a smoke since."

Requiring heart surgery, Aunty Barb was transferred from RBWH and admitted into The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH).

"I had a double heart valve transplant procedure at TPCH with one of the best cardiac doctors in the country.



This operation gave me a second chance in life which I am very grateful for,” she said.

Experiencing breathing difficulties two years later, Auntie Barb found herself back at TPCH.

“One of the valves in my heart was too narrow so I had to undergo a high-risk heart operation,” she said.

Thankfully it went well, and she recovered and felt better than ever.

During her stay at TPCH, Auntie Barb was supported by the Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officers (IHLO).

“They assisted me in getting to appointments as my daughter and I do not drive. They were always there for me to communicate with and have been friendly faces in my health journey,” said Auntie Barb.

Eight years on after her diagnosis, Auntie Barb still receives ongoing care at both hospitals, traveling from Hervey Bay to Brisbane every three months for face-to-face appointments, as well as connecting

in with the Indigenous Cardiac Outreach Program (ICOP) team monthly via telehealth from the beautiful Badtjala Country.

The care she continues to receive from staff at both hospitals has made her feel safe, respected, and listened to when attending appointments in Brisbane.

Feeling safe when accessing the health care system has not always been the case for Auntie Barb, with her fear and reluctance stemming from a very young age. “My mum was a part of the Stolen Generation, and she was deaf. Staff in uniforms or of authority were very intimidating, and I absorbed some of that concern. I would take days off school as a kid to assist my mum who was going to appointments because of the fear she felt in that environment,” said Auntie Barb.

Fast forward to recent years, and in a full circle moment, Auntie Barb’s daughter, Ann-Maree, is now that strength, and supports her when attending appointments.

“I know it was hard for my daughter to sit and wait while I had my open-heart procedures. I was in the hospital for many months before and after my operation,” she said.

At first, Auntie Barb found it intimidating when doctors used medical jargon, however over time she gained confidence in feeling more relaxed around medical professionals.

“Not all mob find it easy to ask questions at their appointments, so they go home not knowing or comprehending what their health issue is, or its long-term impact,” she said.

“It is important for doctors to explain in simple ways what the diagnosis is.”

Auntie Barb recommends patients, and their families, utilise the support of the Indigenous Hospital Liaison Officers within the hospitals as they have been instrumental in supporting her throughout her health journey and explaining in simple ways what was going on.

By distributing information of the services and supports that are available within the hospitals, and by the health care system becoming more aware of barriers such as language, access, history, locations, and ongoing fear from past exploitation, Auntie Barb hopes this will encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to seek the help they need and feel safe in doing so.

Auntie Barb can’t thank the medical staff enough for saving her life. “The staff, doctors, nurses and specialists all deserve a special mention as they have treated me with respect and care.

“Galangoor nyin (thank you) to the staff again at The Prince Charles Hospital for giving me a better life and for your ongoing support for my future, as well as looking after our fellow Aboriginal community members.”

STAFF PROFILE

A Day in the life of: Vashti Beetson

Administration Officer,
Women's Business
Pathway – RBWH

Q1. Who is your mob and where are you from?

I am an Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri and Gubbi Gubbi peoples, with family ties in the Brisbane and the Sunshine coast areas. I grew up in central Queensland and I am now living in North Brisbane.

Q2. What is your role within Metro North Health and what does it involve?

I am the sole administration officer for the Women's Business Pathway, which delivers culturally appropriate care for women living within the Metro North catchment who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

My role within the Women's Business pathway is helping my Aunties and sisters by improving access to care, changing appointments, helping them to prioritise their health, ensure they feel welcome and comfortable, having good yarns and compassionately doing my part in this awesome team.

Q3. How long have you worked for Metro North Health?

This is my first role working within Metro North Health. My role commenced this year, January 2022.

Q4. Where did you work before coming to this role?

Prior to starting this role, I worked in retail and hospitality.

Q5. Who or what inspired you to pursue a career in health?

From a young age it's been instilled in me to be loud and proud about my heritage and that I am part of community. My family inspires me through their achievements, from mum and aunty working in Indigenous health, uncles providing prison support and cousins creating opportunities within youth Indigenous



arts. They have shown me that it's always been about giving back.

The pride I feel for my culture and my people inspires me every day, and I want to be part of building better systems and health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Q6. What does achieving Health Equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people mean to you?

Health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples means lots of things to me. It means appropriate training, education, and transparency from the health system. This includes breaking down colonial constructs and understanding societal issues. It means understanding a different demographic, catering to different lifestyle factors, and providing the opportunity to be as healthy as possible to people from all walks of life.

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

I like to spend time with friends and family. I chase waterfalls, beaches, and mountain views on my downtime.

WORD OF THE MONTH

“Kala”
(Ka-lah) is Spear
in Gunggay
language.

Gunggay (aka Gunggandji & Koo-gun-ji) is a language group centred on the Yarrabah, Cape Grafton Peninsula region of Far North Queensland. The area includes the Yarrabah, and surrounding areas.



BreastScreen Queensland

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Sistas Shawl



**Get your
free Sistas
Shawl!**

Stay healthy and strong for your Mob

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

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

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

Brisbane Northside Locations:

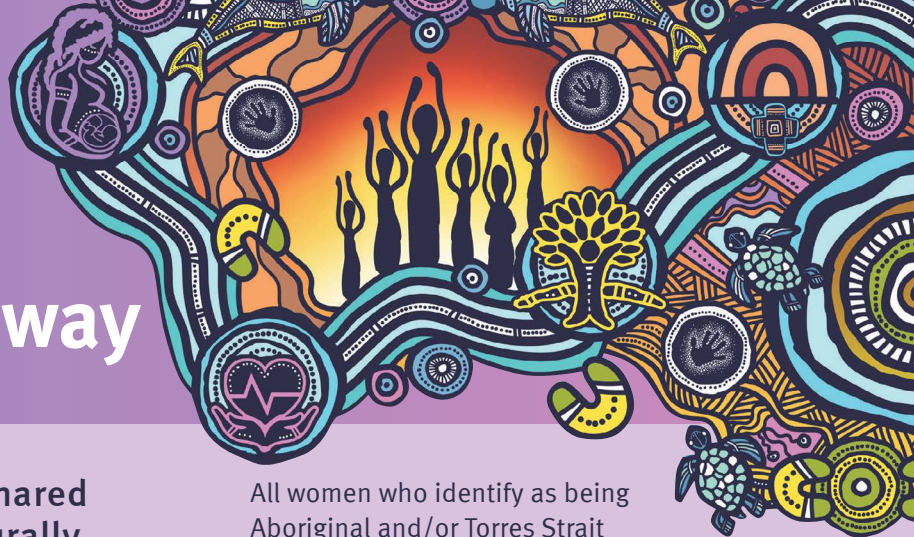
- Chermide
- Brisbane City
- Indooroopilly
- Keperra
- Redcliffe
- North Lakes

To find out more or to make an appointment
call us on **13 20 50** or go to
breastscreen.qld.gov.au



**Queensland
Government**

Women's Business Shared Pathway



The Women's Business Shared Pathway will deliver culturally appropriate patient-centred care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, in partnership between Metro North Health and the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH).

This new shared service model aims to support care closer to home for you with the option of outreach locations, cultural support and a clearer path for care for all things "women's business" within Metro North Health.

All women who identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander will be offered the pathway which includes access to outreach specialist clinics located at various locations in addition to The Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital clinics and treatment/surgery as required.

Clinical services available through the pathway include:

- Specialist gynaecologist consultations
- Gynaecology procedures and surgical treatment
- Physiotherapy care and treatment
- Education and advice.

How it works



-  Your GP will send a referral for gynaecology specialist care to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital or IUIH provider or contact us to discuss care and options on 0476 842 686.
-  If you choose care through this pathway you will be provided with a choice of clinic for your appointment. You can also ask for access to cultural support and transport through this pathway.
-  You will receive access to both hospital and community staff to assist in your healthcare journey.
-  Staff caring for you can provide more information about the pathway at any time.

Clinic Locations

Moreton Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service
10-20 Walkers Road, Morayfield. Phone: (07) 5429 1000

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Gynaecology Outpatients
Corner Butterfield St and Bowen Bridge Rd, Herston. Phone: (07) 3646 1545

Email: womens_business@health.qld.gov.au



**Metro North
Health**



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

Please contact the Manager, Communications at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Team on A_TSIHU_MNHHS@health.qld.gov.au or phone (07) 3139 3235.



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Produced by the Metro North Communication Directorate

Page 20