

Metro North Health

Message from the

Executive Director STARS

Dale Dally-Watkins



Summary:

- Spinal services update
- Interprofessional meal ordering initiative
- 5th birthday save the date
- Staff Shout Out: Lisa Anemaat
- Patient compliment

Message feedback



Audience: All staff



Read time: 4 min



For: Information

Dear Colleagues,

I know many STARS staff have been waiting for news about our spinal cord injury business case. The System Planning Branch (SPB) recently provided an update on the Spinal Cord Injury Service Delivery Model for Queensland. Following consultation and planning work, the Department of Health has drafted a budget submission seeking funding to implement the first horizon of the service model.

This initial phase focuses on strengthening and formalising the foundations of the networked service model and increasing specialist spinal cord injury rehabilitation beds across Metro North, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Services.

SPB is progressing work to further define how the networked service model would operate in practice across sites, including convening a workshop with key stakeholders in early 2026. I'll keep you updated on any further progress in this area.

Board Chair and CE vidcast

Last week, Metro North Board Chair Bernard Curran and Chief Executive Nick Steele hosted their first vidcast for 2026. The vidcast detailed key focus areas including expanding our out-of-hospital care capacity, continuing to digitise our facilities, and exploring partnership opportunities with universities and other institutions. If you were unable to watch the live session, you can view the recording [here](#).

Interprofessional meal ordering initiative

I'd like to give a shout out to the STARS speech pathology and dietetics teams for the therapeutic meal ordering initiative. The pilot project introduced a new Interprofessional Clinical Assistant (IPCA) role, which provided dedicated time for therapeutic meal ordering support and communication therapy for patients with a communications deficit.

IPCA Jenny Heller uses a variety of visual aids to assist patients to order their meals.

"The IPCA role is not just about helping patients order their meals – the meal ordering is used as an opportunity to provide speech therapy. I may get the patient to work on saying a word or writing a word from the menu, for example. We also use a picture of a particular food and ask the patient questions such as 'what does it rhyme with', 'what is the sound it starts with' and 'what does it make you think of.'"



The success of the pilot has resulted in therapeutic meal ordering becoming a permanent feature at STARS. This interprofessional initiative is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia.

You can read more about the initiative [here](#).

A vibrant, colorful graphic for STARS' 5th birthday celebration. The background is a collage of abstract shapes in shades of orange, yellow, green, and blue. The text is arranged in a grid-like fashion. On the left, the words "Save THE Date" are written in large, bold, dark blue letters. To the right, "STARS 5th Birthday celebration" is written in white on a green background, followed by "23-27 February" in white on a yellow background. Below that, "Time to celebrate 5 years of great work at STARS" is written in white on a dark blue background, with a red star icon. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo with the text "VALUES IN ACTION" in white on a dark background.

5th birthday celebration

STARS 5th birthday celebrations are less than a month away. There will be a week of fun activities from Monday 23 February to Friday 27 February. On the Wednesday, a Consumer Showcase will be held on the Terrace from 10am – 12 noon. This event will celebrate the work of consumer partnering across STARS in research, engagement or service activities and patient improvement

projects.

On the Friday, there will be a dress-up day with the theme 'Super STARS'. Come dressed as your favourite movie, music, sport or cosmic star or whoever is a super star to you. Keep an eye out for the rest of the program, coming soon.



Staff Shout Out

A shout out to Lisa Anemaat who recently received a Future Leader grant from the Stroke Foundation. Lisa received the Dr Anna Correll Future Leader in Aphasia Research Grant which will enable travel to the UK to learn from leading experts in co-design and partner with consumers in research. This important opportunity will allow exploration into the development and design of an international collaborative priority setting project, specific to stroke and aphasia.

Patient compliment

This fortnight's compliment comes from RBWH patient John, his family and the RBWH Occupational Therapy team. John is a RBWH ICU patient and due to his condition is unable to hold or operate the nurse-call button. Johanna and Annie from our Rehabilitation Engineering Centre (REC) developed a foam splint for John's arm, customised to hold a switch in place, enabling him to use the nurse call button. Following three visits to the ICU to refine the prototype, John was able to successfully call for a nurse using his thumb. John was very excited about this milestone in his recovery and his family gave the REC team a round of applause. The RBWH Occupational Therapy team are hopeful that this will assist John in operating a communication device in the future. Sometimes a small change can make a big difference to somebody's recovery journey. Well done to the REC team for coming up with a solution for John.

Kind Regards

Dale Dally-Watkins
Executive Director
STARS



We uphold our commitment to health equity through our Values in Action
Respect | Integrity | Compassion | High Performance | Teamwork



Metro North Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Land upon which we live, work and walk, and pay our respects to Elders both past and present.

Metro North Health's vision

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



**Queensland
Government**

If you have received this email and do not work for Metro North please follow this link to be removed from the mailing list.

[Email us](#)