

# Executive Message

## Metro North Health



### Summary:

- Navigating a complex system
- SMART Metro North & Future Metro North
- Health equity update
- Celebrating neurodiversity
- International conflict impacts
- Out-of-hospital care, planned care and GIE services
- Investing in our people

Message feedback

## Chief Executive Nick Steele



**Audience:** All staff



**Read time:** 5+ min



**For:** Action

Hi Everyone,

Each day in Metro North, I see our people working together with patients and other stakeholders to navigate the diverse and complex demands placed on our health service.

As our population grows and their health needs change, these demands will only become greater. As a health service, we need to be equipped to manage these, so we can continue to fulfil our key obligation into the future – to provide safe, high-quality care to the people we serve.



### Navigating a complex system

This week, I attended the first Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) workshop for the year, participating in an engaging panel alongside other health leaders around the future

of health care.

The forum featured discussions around themes of community connection, person-centred care, leadership and wellbeing, and innovation and sustainability. All of these themes are very relevant to Metro North, particularly as we focus on how we can strengthen our operations and position as a health service into the future. Interestingly, one of the topics raised during our discussions, was the complexity of the health system and how we can simplify the process of accessing the plethora of care options available to help reduce pressure on our hospitals.



With Metro North operating in such a complex and changing environment, conducting our work the way we've always done is not sustainable moving forward. We need to look at new ways of working which means developing new and different ways of providing care, which includes delivery outside of the traditional hospital environment.

Currently, there a range of alternate care options available to our Metro North patient community. These include Minor Injury and Illness Clinics, Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, SPACE, RADAR, OPEN, APACHE, Medicare Mental Health Care Centres, Virtual Emergency Care Service, IUHI MobLink and GPs. The majority of patients who come through our EDs, as well as many staff and external partners like QAS are unfamiliar with many of these options, or do not know how to navigate the system to access them. The level of complexity within our system means that many patients continue to access our EDs for all of their clinical care needs. This has a flow on effect to bed capacity within the broader hospital environment, and the ability to provide timely care across the health service as a whole.

The challenge then becomes breaking down the complexity of navigating alternative care options. How do we simplify things for our patients, our staff and partners to understand what care options are available, what best suits the needs of particular patients, and how do we access these?

System complexity has also been a common theme raised through SMART Metro North and I am keen to hear further suggestions and ideas from you about how we can make our system easier to navigate and access and ultimately, improve patient outcomes and experiences.

[Submit your ideas](#)

**SMART Metro North update**

Thank you to everyone who has submitted to SMART Metro North so far. I have asked that where possible local issues are resolved at the directorate/unit level. Many of these issues relate to internal processes that either need adjusting or need to be better communicated with staff.

There were several submissions relating to CE approval for purchasing equipment and replacing broken equipment. I have delegated authority for these decisions back to the local directorates, within the context of responsible financial decision making. Certainly, things you need to provide care and do your role should be replaced if broken.

Two submissions related to delayed budget visibility, particularly AMC funding allocations. This process has been streamlined and funding will be visible when you receive your 2026/27 budgets.

There were quite a few submissions which align with the work already happening with the Sustainability Plan, and the one Metro North focus. IT and technology related submissions are being assessed by Digital Metro North. One great outcome is procurement of a program at The Prince Charles Hospital called Sophie AI which will assist with managing phone calls including capturing essential details from callers, answering frequently asked questions, transferring calls to the right area, and sending detailed summaries of calls.

This week the Operational Leadership Team agreed that staff can access vaccinations and fit testing outside their home directorate/facility. We still need to do some work to implement this but that will be coming ahead of flu season.

I have asked Health Innovation and Excellence and HELIX Hub to work with staff on larger scale projects through a full design and implementation science approach. Four of these ideas relate to improving access to outpatient services and we are already working up some pilots to centralise waitlists to share the load and ensure patients receive care when they need it regardless of local hospital catchment.

HELIX Hub will also commence projects, working with relevant teams across Metro North, to improve and connect out of hospital care for older persons, designing a Metro North wide approach to innovation, research and improvement activities, work with Mental Health and Emergency Department teams to improve processes for people presenting with mental health concerns, and explore models for a consistent approach to trauma care for older persons.

## Future Metro North

If you've been to a staff expo in the past two weeks you have hopefully contributed your ideas for *Future Metro North: reimagining healthcare 2026-2041*.

Some of the feedback coming through so far includes making health equity an overarching domain implemented across all priority areas, digital way finding, increasing models of care supported by AI, wearable and digital technology, developing international hospital partnerships, providing inpatient mental health services at Redcliffe Hospital, making room service food options available across all inpatient care areas, creating permanent research and clinical trials positions, better aligning clinical staffing ratios to demand, developing innovative tailored approaches for staff transitioning to retirement, and creating pathways for advance nurse practitioner candidates and advance allied health practitioners.



I encourage you to continue to share your ideas on *Future Metro North: reimagining healthcare 2026-2041*. I welcome all feedback from bold and ambitious ideas to practical actions to implement over the next few years.

You can provide your feedback either at your local staff expo or by completing the [online questionnaire](#).

### Health equity update

Next Tuesday, I will attend the Health Equity Community Consultation, Connecting the Journey: Growing Strong Kids.

The consultation will bring together community members, families, Elders and staff to discuss how we can better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–12 as they navigate the Metro North Health system. Listening directly to community is a key commitment under Metro North’s Health Equity Strategy and an important part of ensuring our services continue to improve access, experiences and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Across Metro North, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 6–13 make up just over five per cent of the child population—around 7,000 children. Early intervention allows us to support children and families at critical developmental stages and helps set a lifelong trajectory for stronger physical, social, emotional and cultural wellbeing.

The consultation is being delivered in partnership with Children’s Health Queensland and reflects the importance of working across services and with community. Strengthening early intervention and improving how families experience our services will be critical to achieving the commitments outlined in our Health Equity Strategy.

### Celebrating neurodiversity

Neurodiversity enriches our workplace and the care we provide, bringing unique perspectives, talents, and strengths that benefit our patients, colleagues, and communities.

Neurodiversity Action Week, 16 to 20 March, is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the great diversity of our Metro North team. In the most recent Have Your Say Survey, the number of Metro North staff who identified as neurodivergent doubled, from 4 to 8%.

Staff are invited to participate in Neurodiversity Action Week celebrations which kick off on Monday at 2pm with a guest speaker presentation and panel discussion in the RBWH Education Centre with [other events](#) to follow throughout the week. Interested staff are encouraged to invited to join the [Neurodiversity Community of Practice](#).

### International conflict supply chain impacts

The executive team has received several queries this week from staff regarding potential operational impacts of the conflict in the Middle East, particularly concerns about fuel

shortages reported in the media. Please be assured that the Metro North Supply Chain Division and Emergency Management teams are actively monitoring the situation. At present, there are no significant concerns about fuel availability. While there is a possibility of delays for some international supplies, robust contingency plans are in place to minimise any potential disruptions.

If you have any concerns, please discuss them with your line manager. **There is no need to stockpile additional materials or fuel at this stage.** Further updates will be provided as necessary.

Take care.  
Nick

Chief Operating Officer

**Stephen Eaton**



**Audience:** All staff



**Read time:** 5+ min



**For:** Information

Dear colleagues,

One of the major focus areas for Metro North is how we can continue to provide safe, high-quality care to a growing community. With more and more people accessing our health service each year, it is essential we look at alternative models and ways to deliver care to ensure our patients have timely and equitable access to services.

### **Out-of-hospital care**

As highlighted by our Chief Executive, a key priority for the next 18 months is out of hospital care, specifically making options available to those patients who require long term care and support. At present, Metro North has a significant number of long-stay patients being cared for in our acute hospital facilities who are waiting for placement in a residential aged care facility. This has a major impact on patient flow and ensuring the delivery of timely care within our inpatient wards, as well as in high activity areas such as our emergency departments.

Metro North is currently investigating various options to help manage the care of our long-stay patient cohort. Last month, we established an arrangement with St Vincent's Private Hospital Brisbane, to open dedicated beds within their Kangaroo Point facility, which will enable the transfer of long stay patients from Metro North acute facilities for ongoing sub-acute care. This will help ensure these patients receive the care they need, while freeing up much needed bed capacity within our facilities.

Hospital in the Home (HITH) is another key area of work we need to undertake as part of expanding out of hospital care options. HITH is about supporting people to receive high quality acute care outside of traditional hospital walls supports patients to remain engaged with family and community while also decreasing the demand on acute beds.

Next month, Metro North is convening a targeted HITH planning workshop with key clinical stakeholders from across the health service. The purpose of the workshop is to ensure that Metro North's HITH model is equipped to support increasing demand for out-of-hospital care moving forward. Key objectives of the session will be understanding our current HITH status, strengthening clinical governance, and improving consistency and sustainability across facilities. This planning work is essential in setting a foundation to help develop future clinical pathways and broader service innovations within our out-of-hospital care models. I look forward to sharing the outcomes of this important workshop in due course.

### **Planned care**

Planned care is another priority for Metro North and I am pleased to share some positive outcomes in this area. We have actively improved some of our surgical activity performances, recording increases in both our elective and emergency surgery cases. In the last eight months, there have been 900 additional elective cases and 850 additional emergency cases performed across Metro North, compared with the same period in the year prior. This is a great outcome and means that more patients are receiving access to the care they need. These results have been supported by a number of strategies including investment in additional theatre sessions, and streamlining theatre bookings and pre-admission processes to ensure best use of our resources.

Further to this, the Department of Health has also recently approved funding to support improvements in surgical patient flow within Metro North as part of the SAFEST-SurgiFLOW program. This program helps hospitals respond to ongoing pressure to stabilise planned surgery waitlists, reduce hospital congestion and improve patient safety through a coordinated approach to surgical access and flow across all phases of surgical care. The funding will support new coordinator roles at RBWH that will focus on improving the prioritisation and flow of emergency surgery, and optimisation of patients before, during and after surgery. Across Metro North, we are also looking to standardise approaches to increase same-day and extended-day surgery, and support earlier, safer and more predictable discharge.

### **Gastrointestinal and Endoscopy Services**

Improving access to Gastrointestinal and Endoscopy (GIE) Services is another top priority for the health service. We have a number of strategies in place to support the delivery of more timely care for patients currently waiting for these services. These include use of the Surgery Connect Program for endoscopy services, outsourcing with private providers, load sharing across facilities and cross-facility coordination of vacant procedural lists and rooms.

Thank you to everyone who has supported these initiatives, which have allowed many patients to receive the care they need sooner. These activities demonstrate how collaboration across our facilities directly contributes to better outcomes for our patients and community.

### **Investing in our people**

Investing in our leaders is an important component of building a high performing and sustainable health service. As executive sponsor for Metro North's Emerging Leaders Program, I recently had the opportunity to participate in a workshop delivered as part of the program to share my knowledge and experience around leadership.

The importance of good leadership cannot be underestimated as it influences how work is done, how and what decisions are made, and trust and respect among teams. This was highlighted in the Have Your Say survey which flagged leadership capability as a barrier for Metro North becoming truly great. The survey also highlighted that staff want to see

stronger visibility, role modelling, as well clear, transparent and genuine communication from senior leaders.

Equally, supporting staff to develop in their career is an important role of leadership. As executive sponsor for the Metro North Coaching Program, I want to share that if you're considering your next career move, wanting to explore an idea or clarify your goals, then we can connect you with a coach.

A coach can provide a structured, confidential space to reflect, explore options and identify practical actions that align with your goals. Some examples might be:

- Are you a manager working through your Have Your Say results and wanting to clarify your priorities and next steps? **Partner with a coach.**
- Are you considering your next career move and want to build confidence or set a plan for developing a new skillset? **Partner with a coach.**
- Are you navigating a difficult workplace situation and want support to think through how to approach it? **Partner with a coach.**

The opportunities for coaching support are wide-ranging and guided by you. Metro North has a range of coaches who have completed specialised training and are equipped to help you work through the goals you want to achieve.

Any staff member at Metro North can access this program, offering up to six one-on-one sessions with an internal coach.

The 2025 Have Your Say results told us staff want more options for personal and professional growth and enlisting a Metro North coach can benefit you in both these areas.

[Find out more and be matched with a coach.](#)

Regards,  
Stephen

Chief Digital Health Officer

**Dr Jason Brown**



**Audience:** All staff



**Read time:** 2 min



**For:** Information

Dear colleagues,

As many of you will be aware, the current war in Iran is contributing to a rise in global cyberattacks targeting healthcare organisations around the world, global health companies who service Australia have already been targeted. These threats are particularly serious for our sector, given the critical services we provide and the sensitive information we hold.

Every staff member who uses email, accesses clinical systems, or handles information plays an important role in protecting our patients, our colleagues, and the services our community

relies on. It is important that we remain vigilant and take extra care when using email, accessing systems, or handling information.

### What to watch out for

- **Phishing emails:** Be cautious of unexpected messages, especially those asking for login details, requesting urgent action, or containing suspicious attachments or links.
- **Unusual requests:** Verify any messages that appear to be from senior leadership, People and Culture, or IT asking for confidential information or payment details.
- **Fake links and attachments:** Hover your mouse over links to check the real address before clicking, and only open attachments from trusted sources.

### What you should do

- Report suspicious emails immediately. Use the "Report Message" button in Outlook or notify eHealth Cyber Security Group by logging an [Information Security Incident](#), or by calling IT Support on 1800 198 175.
- Stay current with your cyber safety training. If your training is overdue, please complete it as soon as possible.
- Be cautious on personal devices. Cyber attackers often target both work and personal email accounts.

Cyber security is everyone's responsibility. A single click on a malicious link can have serious consequences but remaining alert to suspicious activity and reporting it quickly is one of the most effective ways we can prevent cyber incidents.

Thank you for your continued vigilance and commitment to keeping our health service safe.

**Metro North Health**



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**

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