

Acting Executive Director, STARS

Ben Ballard



Summary:

- Supporting patient flow and access to care
- Staff Excellence Awards nominations extended
- Herston Symposium Award winners
- RBWH Foundation Grants open
- STARS in the socials
- Patient compliment

[Message feedback](#)



Audience: All staff



Read time: 4 min



For: Information

Dear Colleagues,

This is my last week as Acting Executive Director at STARS, with Dale returning from leave on Monday 7 September. I will be undertaking a series of secondments over the next few months, starting next week as the Director of Nursing at Community and Oral Health until 23 September and Nursing Director, Workforce and Innovation at TPCH, from 28 September to 22 November.

Thank you to Ben Hackwood for acting in the Director of Nursing role until 11 October. Nathan Costin will take on the role from 12 October to 22 November.

While today feels like summer already, over the past few weeks Metro North has experienced significant demand and capacity pressures due to seasonal influenza cases. This late influenza surge is expected to peak mid-September.

To support safe patient flow and access to care across the system, STARS has been approved to temporarily increase capacity within Ward 6B/6C. While we acknowledge the additional workload and flexibility this requires, the ability of STARS to provide this capacity will make an important contribution to the broader health service.

Thank you for your ongoing support, leadership and commitment during this period.

With the increase in influenza cases, it is also a timely reminder to practice good hand hygiene. This includes washing your hands thoroughly, covering any coughs or sneezes and staying home if you're unwell.

NOMINATIONS EXTENDED!

Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service, Oral Health Centre and VECS

Staff Excellence Awards 2026



STARS, Oral Health Centre and VECS Staff Excellence Awards

The nominations for the Staff Excellence Awards have been extended until next **Wednesday 9 September**. Thanks to everyone who has already recognised a colleague or team.

If you haven't yet had a chance to [nominate](#), please do so by the submission closing date. If finding the time is proving difficult, consider collaborating with colleagues on a joint submission.

Remember, you can choose to also have your nomination go into the Metro North awards, which are also open until Wednesday 9 September.

Other facilities have had an amazing number of nominations for their Staff Excellence Awards, so let's make sure you are also recognised for your contributions to safe and quality care.

Herston Symposium Award winners

I am very pleased to announce that several staff/teams received awards at the Herston Symposium Awards on Wednesday afternoon. Congratulations to:

- Clare Burns (RECOVER) - Highly Commended. Best Translational Research Award. 'Implementation of a virtual reality therapy program for communication rehabilitation'.
- Lisa Sorbello - Highly Commended. Allied Health (Dr Jennifer Paratz) Research Award. 'Optimising medication safely for inter-hospital transfers'.
- Penni Burfein. Best Poster Research Award.



R U OK? training across STARS

Book your team in for a practical, 30-minute session facilitated by Staff Psychologist Allison Welch.

Dates: 7 - 10 September BOOKINGS LIMITED SO GET IN EARLY

Email MNStaffPsychology@health.qld.gov.au or phone 3647 9673 with your preferred date and time that week.

R U OK? Training

A conversation could change a life, but you don't need to be an expert to ask R U OK?

Staff psychologist Allison Welch will be offering practical 30-minute sessions to teams across STARS from Monday 7 September to Thursday 10 September. The sessions will take participants through

the four steps - Ask, Listen, Encourage action and Check in - and how to keep the conversation going every day, not just one day in September.

Bookings are limited so get in early. Email MNStaffPsychology@health.qld.gov.au or phone 3647 9673 with your preferred date and time that week.

A purple banner for the RBWH Foundation. On the left, a green pill-shaped button contains the text "Turn ideas into action!". Below it, the text "RBWH Foundation Grants" is in white, with "Grants" in orange. Underneath, "Applications close 2 October" is in white. At the bottom left, a white pill-shaped button says "Apply today!". On the right, a man in a white shirt with the RBWH Foundation logo on the pocket stands with his arms crossed. To his right is the RBWH Foundation logo, which consists of a stylized white flower above the text "RBWH Foundation" and "Official charity of RBWH" below it.

RBWH Foundation grants are open

The next round of RBWH Foundation Grants are now open. The grants fund research projects and patient care initiatives that improve the health and wellbeing of patients throughout the Herston Health Precinct. If you have a research project or something that you think would benefit patients you can [apply here](#) by Friday **2 October 2026**. It would be great to have STARS well represented in these grants, so please consider putting in a submission.

STARS in the socials

Last week, the Metro North Facebook page shared a fun reel featuring STARS physios Jacob and Emily who were asked to provide Euro summer holiday inspired hacks. If you haven't seen it yet, [check it out here](#). Marjorie, Assistant in Nursing at STARS Central Sterilising Unit, was also featured in the staff Monday Mantra on the the [Metro North LinkedIn page](#).



Patient compliment

This week's patient compliment comes from one of our endoscopy/colonoscopy patients. It shows how important humour can be for patients who might be anxious about their upcoming procedure or appointment. Well done to everyone involved, including food services for supplying the best sandwiches!

I just wanted to pass on some serious kudos to the surgical and support teams in the Endoscopy Suite.

I had a Colonoscopy and Upper GI Endoscopy and the whole process was seamless from start to finish. I can only attribute this to the exceptional staff working that shift whose professionalism, empathy and gentle humour calmed any nerves, made me laugh and put me at ease.

What an incredible team who clearly displayed a passion for their roles, true care for their patients and a professional comradery that is rare nowadays. This experience has reinforced that it is our people that make our Hospitals and Health Service great. Thank you so very, very much and keep doing what you are doing. You are all awesome!

PS. Those sandwiches offered post-procedure were AMAZING too!!! :)

Finally, ahead of the weekend, I want to extend a very Happy Father's Day to all the dads, guardians, grandfathers and father figures in our team. I am also mindful that this occasion can be a challenging time for some. Remember that staff have access to a range of support services - you can find out more on our Staff Wellbeing [extranet page](#).

Kind Regards

Ben Ballard
A/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**

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