

Response to Caboolture Hospital Paediatric Review – A Time to Listen.

Our Commitment

- Metro North Health (Metro North) and Caboolture Hospital thank the Review Team for ensuring that the experiences of our patients and their families and staff were clearly heard throughout the process.
- We recognise that there needs to be an increased focus to ensure parents and carers are included in the clinical planning and care for their child when they are in the Emergency Department or the Children's Ward. We need to acknowledge that parents and carers know their child best.
- We recognise through the experiences included in this report, and the previous WT review findings, that parents are sharing their stories so that other families do not have the same experience and that we continue to learn and improve our services.
- It is now our responsibility to listen and act. We give a strong commitment to improving our quality of care as we not only implement the recommendations of this Review but continue to refine how we keep the community engaged and ensure parent and consumer voices continue to be heard.
- We want all parents and carers to consider Caboolture Hospital as a safe place to take your child.

Change in Focus

- The first 2000 days of life are critical for child development, with many adult chronic conditions a direct result of this critical development period.
- Metro North is the largest public health service and despite up to 25 per cent of patients across all of our facilities being children, adolescents and young adults, we are largely considered an adult health service.
- During 2024-25, Metro North will focus on the 'first quarter of life', from neonates to young adults, to re-position and highlight the importance of child health in adult disease prevention through its Year of Children, Adolescents and Young Adults launched on 8 July 2024.

Improvements underway

- Throughout the Review, Metro North and Caboolture Hospital was kept informed of individual patient experiences to allow for immediate improvements to be made.
- We acknowledge that you said wait times are too long and that the Emergency Department environment can cause distress. Early review feedback has resulted in a separate dedicated paediatric triage area with paediatric trained nurses to ensure your child receives a thorough assessment upon arrival. In addition, we are recruiting additional Nurse Practitioners and will ensure there is always a doctor on shift with appropriate paediatric emergency medicine experience to ensure children receive safe and quality care.
- Feedback has also ensured that consumers have been involved to co-design planning work to support the establishment of the new \$15 million Paediatric Outpatients Centre. This will not only ensure this is the best outpatient model for the Caboolture, Kilcoy and Woodford community but provides the basis for meaningful collaboration for new and revised services and models of care.
- Early parent and carer advice regarding the current state of child protection services resulted in some swift changes including the immediate relocation and re-design of an examination room used to conduct forensic and physical examinations. Staffing has been increased and a highly experienced senior social worker with child protection experience and training in trauma informed care has been employed to support revisions to the current service approach.

- A range of other modifications have also been made to ensure a more child friendly environment.
- We recognise that a child's worst day may also be a very busy day in the Emergency Department with multiple priorities and stressors for clinical and support staff involved in their care. We acknowledge that unintended staff behaviours or actions may not meet our community's expectations. Our first 60 participants from the Emergency Department, Paediatric Ward, Child Protection Unit have commenced a three-part compassionate leadership training set to enhance soft skills through the lens of compassionate care.

Driving Continuous Improvements

- Metro North is committed to implementing all 76 recommendations however we cannot do this alone. In recognition of the cross-agency requirements and interdependencies of the recommendations, we will establish a Children of Caboolture Collaborative. This will include a broad range of representatives including consumers, the Brisbane North Primary Healthcare Network, the Moreton Bay Regional Council, Education, Disability Sector, and the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health to drive action and sustainable improvements.
- As the Collaborative is established, work will continue to progress recommendations with a focus on:
 - Better management of pain and distress experienced by children and their parents when they are presenting to the Emergency Department and escalation processes that allow for parents and carers to feel heard.
 - Creating an advisory group of parents and accessible feedback avenues to allow parents and carers to directly share their experience and how they can be involved in review processes and planning to help shape improved services for children including a developmental service strategy.
 - Establishing a range of specific performance metrics for Paediatric Emergency Medicine to create an environment of continuous improvement.
 - Strengthening our relationships across other facilities and with the Queensland Children's Hospital to support paediatric care, pathways and patient outcomes.
 - Continued strong focus on the ED triage processes including acknowledgement of the potential for pain and distress experienced by children and their parents/carers through medical procedures and environment, redevelopment of the Child Protection Unit and development of the Paediatric Outpatients Centre.
 - Sharing information about improvements through newsletters, local forums and social media.

Metro North will reach out to all families who were involved in the Review process to organise group and individual feedback sessions.

Metro North is committed to continuous monitoring and evaluation of our progress including direct reporting to the Metro North Hospital and Health Service Board and welcomes a review of implementation in December 2025.