



2021/22

ANNUAL REPORT

Sunshine Coast Health
Network Ltd.

phn

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND,
WIDE BAY, SUNSHINE COAST

An Australian Government Initiative



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Sunshine Coast Health Network Ltd. acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.



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BOARD CHAIR REPORT

DR PETER DOBSON

"I congratulate Pattie for her passion and dedicated service over the past decade in serving and providing positive health outcomes for our communities and wish her well in her future endeavours."

I am pleased to present the 2021/2022 Annual Company Report for Sunshine Coast Health Network Ltd (SCHN).

The 2021/2022 financial year has seen the end of an era for Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN (the PHN), with CEO Pattie Hudson announcing her departure from the organisation after a 10-year tenure with Medicare Local and the PHN.

Pattie was instrumental in leading the successful tender to establish the PHN and has developed strong partnerships within the government and non-government sectors to drive the health system reform agenda and most recently, chaired the state-wide response to COVID-19 and flood response.

During her time at the PHN, Pattie championed a range of joint initiatives to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities, including the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership Roundtable, Gympie Health Hub and the Healthy Towns Awards program to name a few.

This year also saw the PHN launch a new training program for GPs, aimed at improving the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The 'Walking Together, Learning Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency for Health Professionals' one-day training program was developed by the PHN to help primary healthcare professionals in their role in Closing the Gap.

In partnership with SANE Australia, a new, free digital mental health service was launched for people with complex

mental health needs across the Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast region, connecting participants with a dedicated team of mental health support professionals.

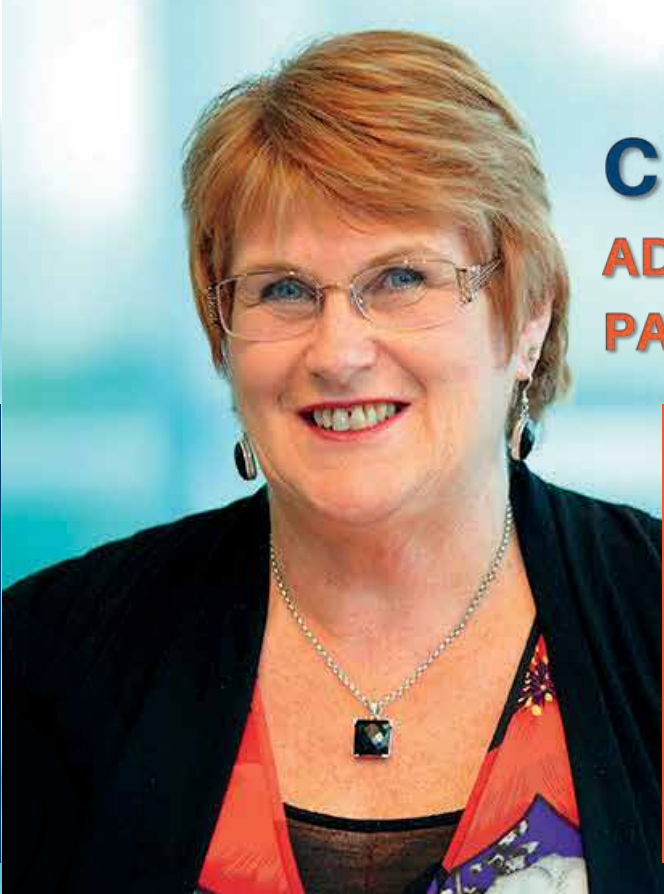
Building capacity within the generalist workforce to provide quality end-of-life care was made possible through the Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach (PEPA). The PHN partnered with PEPA in delivery of the program to GPs, providing participants with access to supervised observational placements within a specialist palliative care service in order to develop skills, confidence and knowledge in the palliative approach.

Along with our CEO, I commend our executive and senior management teams for their efforts in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic to keep our staff and communities safe and congratulate them on their achievements.

The Board has watched with admiration as the PHN team has adapted to the changing landscape during the pandemic and worked tirelessly with incredible resilience to enable and support health providers and services to continue to provide quality care to our community.

I sincerely look forward to the coming year and the challenges it will bring in the PHN's continuing commitment to work with other health organisations, community members and local hospital and health services to meet a unified goal: to achieve healthier, happier communities.

Yours faithfully



CEO REPORT

ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PATTIE HUDSON

"Our PHN continues to lead the way in building healthier communities through an innovative approach and strong partnerships while continuing to promote the value of primary care as the best way to keep our communities healthy."

Now, more than ever, we recognise the importance of good health and wellbeing to our quality of life, and the central role played by primary healthcare in keeping our communities strong and resilient. In this report you will read about the efforts of our PHN team and the impact of our primary healthcare programs and initiatives on our local communities.

I am delighted with the collaborative effort, from our partners and stakeholders across our local community, Queensland and Australia in developing the "Ageing Well in our Region: A Healthy Ageing Strategy 2022 - 2027", outlining our strategic vision to ensure that as people age, they have value in the community and are empowered to live the life of their choice.

Our PHN consulted with and listened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the region to gain an understanding of perceived health needs, health service gaps, issues and opportunities to inform the Health Needs Assessment, through a community health survey.

The PHN's mental health team also collaborated closely with the community of Emerald to secure a full headspace centre, which officially opened in April, providing vital support to the Central Highlands community.

This early intervention service provides tailored and holistic mental health and wellbeing support for people aged 12 - 25, and I look forward to this service in Emerald leading the way for headspace services across rural and remote regions of Australia.

Through the Old Health Reform and taking on lessons learned from the amazing collaboration throughout COVID-19, we are resetting our priorities for integration and hospital avoidance

with Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay and Central Queensland Hospital and Health Services. We are utilising our robust Health Needs Assessment process to co-design and innovate models of care that are sustainable, equitable and affordable.

An example of this includes establishing the PHN-CQHHS Joint Governance Group. This partnership between the PHN and the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service aims to identify and prioritise local health needs, enhance service access to address health inequalities and identify new priority projects for the Central Queensland region, delivering improvements in coordination and integration across the health continuum.

As always, a huge thanks to our PHN team for their tireless commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of the communities in which we live.

It has been a privilege for me to work with the communities and healthcare providers across our vast and diverse region. Thank you to all involved who continue to build universal healthcare that focuses on wellness, not on illness.

This annual report will provide an overview of our activities over the past financial year and our commitment to continue to work towards achieving our vision to build healthy, resilient, connected communities - country to coast.

Warmest regards

Pattie Hudson.

MEET THE BOARD



**Dr Peter Dobson | MBBS, GAICD
Board Chair**

Peter is a GP with over 30 years' experience. He has extensive leadership experience in the healthcare sector, having chaired the Sunshine Coast Division of General Practice and stewarded the development of Sunshine Coast Health Network Ltd. through the Medicare Local and PHN transformations.

Peter is highly involved and networked with our stakeholder groups and has enjoyed a long involvement with and contribution to state and national initiatives. He is also a member of the board of Australia's first residential eating disorders facility.

As an experienced Chair, Peter has strong governance skills with his areas of key competency and experience including stakeholder engagement, conflict resolution, performance evaluations and member engagement.



**Ms Rebecca Bell | Adj Assoc Professor, B Occ Thy, Exec MBA, Grad Dip App Fin, GAICD
Board Director**

Originally an Occupational Therapist, Rebecca has held a number of senior executive roles across health and community organisations. These roles have spanned health and care service delivery, policy development, strategy, and business development. In her current role as Senior Executive, Member Health at Medibank Private she is accountable for the health and wellbeing support for Medibank Private's 3.8 million members.

Rebecca maintains several Non-Executive Directorships including CASPA Family Services and Healthy North Coast. Rebecca has been included in the AFR Boss' Top 10 Young Executives.



**Mr Shea Spierings PhD | BA.(Hons), GAICD
Deputy Chair**

Shea is a Gangulu man, originally from Central Queensland. He is currently a Research Fellow at the University of Queensland where his research focuses on Aboriginal men's health and COVID-19 health messaging in Indigenous communities.

Shea has significant experience advising and working in the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation sector, research sector, and youth sector. In 2015 Shea was appointed by the Australian Government to serve as the Australian Youth Delegate to the United Nations (UN). Shea is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



**Mr Grant Dearlove | LLB, LLM, MBA, LFAIM, Grad Dip ACIS, GAICD
Board Director**

Grant is a company director and lawyer. He holds a Bachelor of Laws, Master of Laws, an MBA, a Graduate Diploma in Applied Corporate Governance and has studied leadership of professional service organisations at Harvard.

Grant has held executive roles and directorships in several ASX-listed national and state organisations spanning law, property, risk, franchising, finance, tourism, economic development and training.



Dr Fiona McGrath | MBBS, Dip RANZCOG

Board Director

Fiona has worked as a GP on the Sunshine Coast since 1998. She is a passionate advocate for primary healthcare and maintains involvement in GP education, practice improvement and primary healthcare program improvement and innovation.

Her experience has included both leadership and program development roles at local, regional and state levels; in the public, not-for-profit and private sectors.



Dr John Menzies | MBBS (1st Cls. Hons), MHP, FRACMA, AFACHSM

Board Director

John is an experienced hospital and health service planner and administrator who has over 35 years' experience in the health field, both in Australia and internationally. He graduated with first-class honours in Medicine at UQ and obtained a Master of Health Planning Degree from UNSW.

John is currently an independent hospital and health service consultant. His professional interests lie in improving primary health services, particularly involving the use of telemedicine services.



Mr David Conry AM | A Dip Bus USQ, OAY, FAIM

Board Director

David is Managing Director of Damarcon, a privately owned advisory and investment business. He has over 20 years' of experience on private, government and community sector boards.

David has a strong community focus with particular interest in health and disabilities and has been awarded an Order of Australia, Queensland's Australian of the Year, and EY Social Entrepreneur of the Year.



Mr John Woodward | BPharm (Hons), MHM, Adv Prac Pharm, BCPS, BCGP, GAICD

Board Director

John is an advanced practice pharmacist who has practised on the Sunshine Coast and in the Gympie area since 2004. He provides pharmacy consultancy services with a number of general medical practices in the region and has worked in community pharmacy.

He is a director and co-founder of MedicinesEd, a company that aims to improve consumers' health literacy regarding medicines, with a focus on those living in regional and rural Australia.

John has been a Non-Executive Director and Chairperson of Sundale Limited, a provider of residential care, in-home care, retirement living, and social housing services in South-East and Central Queensland. He is a Graduate Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Ms Amanda Boland | BBus (Comn), Grad Dip App Corporate Governance, GAICD, FCIS, FGIA

Company Secretary

Amanda is Managing Director of Business Governance Solutions, an independent consultancy providing corporate governance advisory services and support to clients throughout Australia.

Amanda has significant executive and board-level experience across a range of industries and is the Company Secretary of a number of companies in healthcare, innovation and the arts.

BOARD MEETING ATTENDANCE

Board Member	Days eligible	Days attended
Dr Peter Dobson, Chair	11	11
Ms Rebecca Bell	11	9
Mr David Conry	11	10
Mr Grant Dearlove	11	10
Dr Fiona McGrath	11	11
Dr John Menzies	11	11
Mr Shea Spierings PhD	11	11
Mr John Woodward	11	11
Ms Amanda Boland	11	11

SUBCOMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

The Board has established the following Subcommittees and working groups to facilitate effective governance.

Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee

Directors

Ms Rebecca Bell
Mr Grant Dearlove
Dr Peter Dobson
Mr Shea Spierings PhD

Management

Ms Pattie Hudson
Mr Terry Plant

Clinical Assurance Subcommittee

Directors

Dr John Menzies
Dr Fiona McGrath
Mr John Woodward
Mr David Conry

Management

Ms Pattie Hudson
Mr Wallis Westbrook
Ms Rae Fialla
Ms Liz Giles

Independent Nominations Committee

Directors

Dr Fiona McGrath

Independent representatives
as required

Remuneration Working Group

Directors

Dr John Menzies
Ms Rebecca Bell
Mr Grant Dearlove

OUR REGION AT A GLANCE



Sunshine Coast Health Network Ltd. (SCHN) is an independent not-for-profit commissioning organisation. SCHN is proudly delivering the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care's primary health network (PHN) program, to improve the health outcomes of our communities.

We commission organisations to provide services that meet primary and preventive healthcare needs.

We identify where there are areas of need, such as lack of healthcare services, difficulty in accessing these services, or regions with particularly high health needs.

We work closely with GPs, allied healthcare providers, hospitals and the broader community to ensure people can receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

Our seven key priority areas for health improvement are: mental health; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health; population health planning; health workforce; digital health; aged care; and alcohol and other drugs.

 **161,108km²**
our geographical region

 **945,353**
residents in our region


 **4.6%**
identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

 **68.1%**
live regionally or remotely

 **28.5%**
live in the most disadvantaged quintile

 **9.7%**
live in outer regional, remote or very remote areas

 **21.9%**
are 65 years old or older

 **93.3%**
of one-year-olds fully immunised



CLINICAL COUNCILS

The PHN has three Clinical Councils to support our role in commissioning primary health services to meet the needs of our community. Each Clinical Council is aligned with the Hospital and Health Service boundaries: the councils include:

- Central Queensland Clinical Council
- Wide Bay Clinical Council
- Sunshine Coast Clinical Council

The Clinical Councils report on clinical issues to influence the PHN Executive and Board on the unique needs of their respective communities, including rural and remote areas and ensuring effective consumer involvement. They act as the regional champions of locally relevant clinical care pathways designed to streamline patient care, improve the quality of care and utilise existing health resources efficiently to improve health outcomes.

With membership renewed every two years this year in April, nominations for the Chair and Deputy Chair positions were called for re-election.

In April 2022, this process was undertaken for the new Clinical Council term, which runs from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2024.

The PHN Clinical Council Chair and Deputy election was finalised in early May and the successful candidates for the 2022-2024 Clinical Council term are as follows:

Central Queensland Clinical Council

- Dr Ewen McPhee is the re-elected Chair.
- Dr Bhavesh Dhamsania is re-elected Deputy Chair.

Wide Bay Clinical Council

- Professor Alan Sandford was successfully appointed to the Chair role
- Professor Anthony (Tony) Schneiders was successfully appointed to the Deputy Chair role

Sunshine Coast Clinical Council

- Dr Geoffrey Byrne is the re-elected Chair.
- Dr Michelle Johnston was successfully appointed to fulfil the Deputy Chair role.

The PHN acknowledges the incredible work and contribution of the outgoing Sunshine Coast Clinical Council Deputy Chair, Associate Professor Florin Opreescu and Wide Bay Clinical Council Deputy and Acting Chair Dr Fionna Hadden, for their valued work in supporting effective Clinical Councils to provide strategic advice to improve the health outcomes in our regions.

In 2021/22 the Clinical Councils provided strategic advice to PHN teams on activities including the mental health intake and referral program changes, the training rollout for the Decision Support Tool (DST) for GPs and telehealth and after-hours portfolio project activities.

In 2021/22 Clinical Council members provided updates and presented at various industry forums. Prof Kim Greaves (Sunshine Coast Clinical Council member, Cardiologist and Epidemiologist) presented the ATHENA program (Australians Together Health Initiative) and National CVD (cardiovascular disease) Surveillance. Lee-Ann Monks and Rob Cross (Sunshine Coast Clinical Council members) also delivered a presentation regarding the Consumer and Community Consultative Panel for the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service, highlighting how a collaborative approach could support the vision for health services in region.



STORIES FROM OUR REGION

Encouraging vaccination within our First Nations communities

In collaboration with our partners, Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service and North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health, the PHN developed a suite of short videos to encourage uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination within First Nations communities in our region.

The suite of videos, filmed locally on the Sunshine Coast, aim to increase awareness of COVID-19 vaccinations within the First Nations community, increase confidence and trust in vaccinations and increase vaccination rates, specifically for the 20–29-year-old cohort.

Gordon Browning, Coordinator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health at the PHN said, "The videos were developed to address misinformation in the First Nations community surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine and highlight that the vaccine is safe and free."

"Community members have a choice regarding vaccination and need to make an informed decision based on trusted information."

"We wanted to encourage the First Nations community to take the first step and talk to their GP or Aboriginal Health Worker about the COVID-19 vaccine".

The suite of videos encouraging our First Nations community to get vaccinated, are available on the Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN [YouTube channel](#).





Cultural Competency training for health professionals

In September 2021, the PHN launched a new training program for health professionals, aimed at improving the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Titled 'Walking Together, Learning Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency for Health Professionals', this workshop aims to help primary healthcare professionals like general practitioners in their role in Closing the Gap.

The PHN's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Coordinator, Gordon Browning said "This workshop was developed in response to demand from local clinicians, and a lack of accredited cultural competency training in the primary healthcare sector. The PHN's health needs assessment survey also revealed significant gaps in access to appropriate healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living locally."

"One of the ways to close these gaps is to provide education to health providers such as general practitioners and allied health staff in meaningful and practical ways."

"Health professionals need to know how to engage and understand what our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members see as their significant health issues, how to support them and their family towards better health outcomes."

The one-day workshop is RACGP and ACRRM accredited for GPs and has been delivered across the PHN region in locations including Emerald, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, Gympie and Maroochydore.

This workshop is an opportunity for participants to discuss and respond to barriers and enablers that influence whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can access mainstream health services. Local community leaders are also engaged to provide a local context to the training.

Delivery of this training forms part of an ongoing journey of quality improvement in delivering a culturally safe healthcare environment and improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health outcomes.



"The aim of Walking Together, Learning Together is to give local health providers an insight into how government policies and historical events have had a major impact into the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in our region".

headspace Emerald providing vital support to the Central Highlands community

Young people in the Emerald community can now access the support they need, with Australia's peak youth mental health and wellbeing group, headspace, now delivering services in the region. headspace Emerald was officially launched in April coinciding with Youth Week activities in the region.

headspace Emerald provides a free, confidential service for youth, offering early intervention across four key areas – mental health, related physical health, social and vocational support, as well as alcohol and other drug use.

Despite being a remote area, headspace Emerald has secured the services of qualified mental health clinicians to work closely with general practitioners, sexual health services, vocational education services and alcohol and other drug services to provide support to young people at a crucial time in their lives.

Given the pressures faced by young people today and the number of youth suicides in the area, the availability of early intervention services is much needed in the region. Funded by the PHN, Anglicare Central Queensland heads up the new centre in Emerald, providing mental health and wellbeing support to people aged 12 to 25.

PHN CEO Pattie Hudson said "Anglicare Central Queensland had a strong history of providing services to young people in the region and continues to play a key role in the Central Highlands Suicide Prevention Group."

"I am extremely pleased that this much needed service is available in the Central Highlands region. By working together, we can build better healthcare services for young people living in Emerald and surrounds and we look forward to the headspace service in Emerald leading the way for headspace services across rural and remote regions in Australia."

Anglicare Central Queensland is well known in the community and had long been advocating for a headspace centre to provide a meaningful safe space and provide clinical safety for young people. Along with Anglicare Central Queensland, the Central Highlands community worked tirelessly over many years advocating for and supporting this valuable service, which has since expanded from a satellite to a full-service centre.

headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



“The PHN’s mental health team collaborated closely with the community of Emerald to secure a full headspace centre and we are delighted that Anglicare Central Queensland is the lead agency for this service.”





Fostering healthy ageing in our community through the Healthy Ageing Strategy

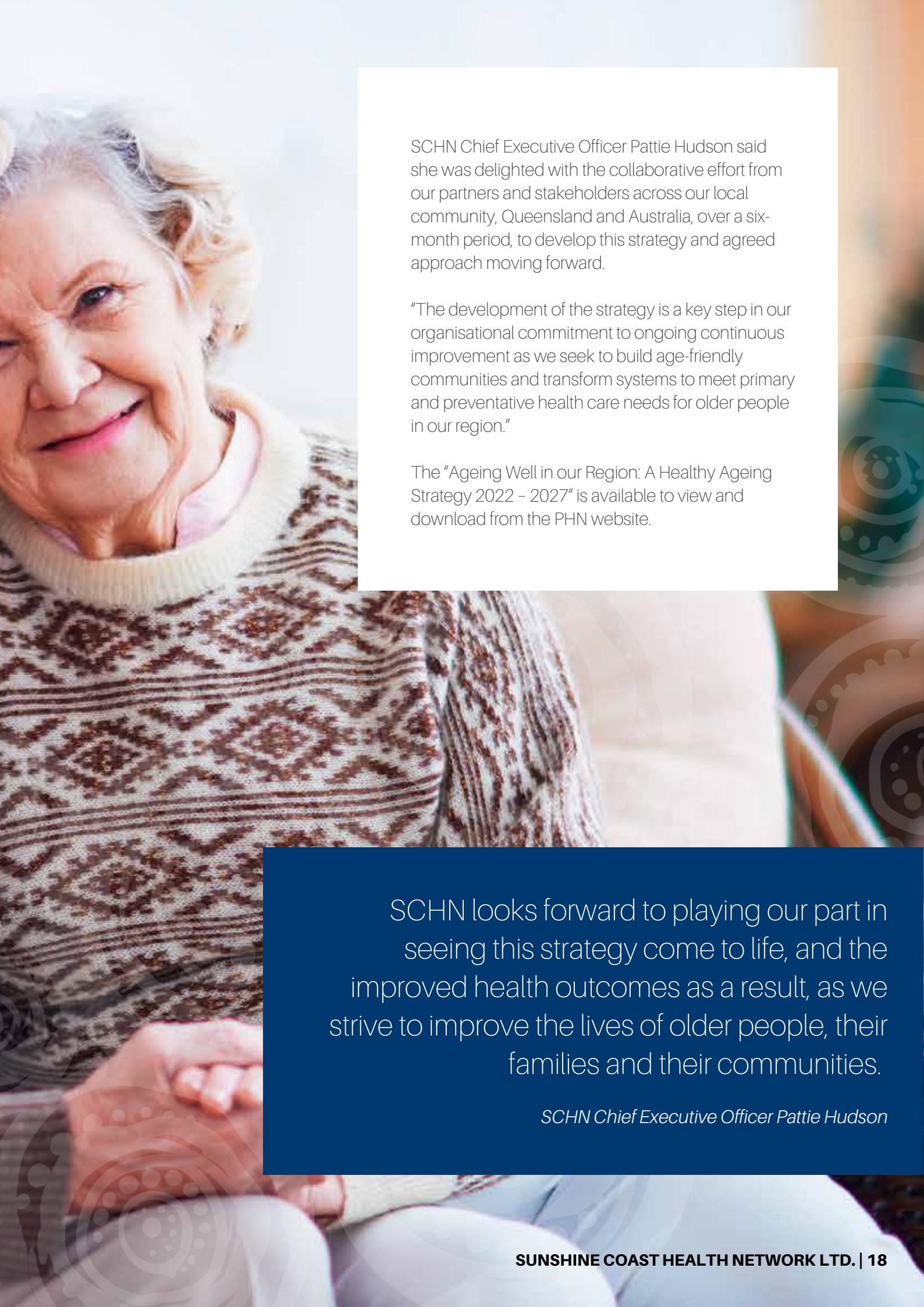
In collaboration with our communities, partners and stakeholders, SCHN this year launched the "Ageing Well in our Region: A Healthy Ageing Strategy 2022 - 2027". The Strategy outlines the SCHN's strategic vision to ensure that as people age, they have value in the community and are empowered to live the life of their choice.

The Strategy details the action required by a range of key agencies to deliver the region's vision for older people. The Strategy is also aligned to the SCHN's overarching strategic plan to build healthier communities through primary health outcomes.

Older people make a significant contribution to our society: economically, socially and intellectually as mentors, leaders and skilled workers and volunteers. Good health is fundamental to being able to live well, age well and continue to participate in family and community life.

This strategy represents a great opportunity to improve the health outcomes for older people in our region and achieve greater coordination and integration of efforts in older people's health within and beyond primary health care.

In developing this strategy, the contributing stakeholders recognised that healthy ageing requires a whole-of-society response, highlighting a need for all sectors and agencies to work together.




SCHN Chief Executive Officer Pattie Hudson said she was delighted with the collaborative effort from our partners and stakeholders across our local community, Queensland and Australia, over a six-month period, to develop this strategy and agreed approach moving forward.

“The development of the strategy is a key step in our organisational commitment to ongoing continuous improvement as we seek to build age-friendly communities and transform systems to meet primary and preventative health care needs for older people in our region.”

The “Ageing Well in our Region: A Healthy Ageing Strategy 2022 – 2027” is available to view and download from the PHN website.

SCHN looks forward to playing our part in seeing this strategy come to life, and the improved health outcomes as a result, as we strive to improve the lives of older people, their families and their communities.

SCHN Chief Executive Officer Pattie Hudson




Supporting advance care planning in residential aged care

Residential aged care providers play a key role in advance care planning, and support is available to assist providers to improve the quality, safety and care of older Queenslanders. The Supporting Advance Care Planning in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) project, funded by the Australian Government, is a collaboration between our PHN and the Brisbane South Palliative Care Collaborative, to improve the quality of advance care planning (ACP) support to residents of aged care facilities.

As part of the project, a series of face-to-face advance care planning education workshops were delivered across Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast.

Jennifer Bearham, a Specialist Palliative Care in Aged Care (SPACE) nurse based in Rockhampton who participated in the workshops said, "I credit these workshops with giving me the grounding and confidence to support and champion ACP in my work."

The initial ACP face-to-face education workshops were followed by virtual education sessions on relevant topics. To further support RACFs, a comprehensive ACP Train-the-Trainer Guide was developed, to assist RACFs to provide quality end-of-life care in line with accreditation standards and embed ACP as part of routine clinical care.



The PHN's Manager, Older Person's Health and Palliative Care, Paige Martinez, said "The Supporting Advance Care Planning in Residential Aged Care Facilities project has provided a practical approach to build ACP capacity for health professionals working in RACFs across the Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast region."

The project focuses on ensuring resident-centred end-of-life care and quality advance care planning is supported and prioritised within RACFs and that RACF staff know what services are available to support their residents. Good-quality palliative care can positively impact the dying person, their family and even the staff caring for them.

The Supporting ACP in RACFs project brings health professionals, resources and processes together to help improve end-of-life care and advance care planning within the residential aged care setting.

PHN's Manager, Older Person's Health and Palliative Care, Paige Martinez

Right Place Right Time campaign

The Right Place Right Time campaign aims to reduce presentations to emergency departments by providing alternative healthcare options for residents and holiday makers alike.

Campaign messaging focusses on directing consumers to the [Right Place Right Time website](#) which promotes access to after-hours services such as the National Health Services Directory (NHSD) and 13HEALTH. Visitors to the website can check their symptoms using the symptom checker, find a local doctor or speak to a nurse on the phone, for free medical advice anytime of the day or night.

The campaign is activated during busy holiday periods, including the Christmas and New Year period. During December 2021 and January 2022, the campaign was activated in the Sunshine Coast region specifically. Campaign activity included promotion on social media, radio, Google, Spotify, convenience, billboard and bus advertising, signage at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and distribution of promotional magnets. Pleasing results were achieved from the Christmas campaign, compared to the campaign activation over Easter 2021, including an increase of 10% in overall visitors accessing the Right Place Right Time website and an increase of 180% in click-throughs to primary health care services, alleviating pressures on emergency services.



"The Right Place Right Time campaign provides alternative options for medical services, reducing emergency department presentations"



Supporting general practice to safely treat COVID-19 patients

The PHN worked closely with general practices across our region to support the rollout of personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies, to assist primary care practitioners to safely treat COVID-19 patients.

As part of the Government's \$180 million Living with COVID-19 Primary Care Package, the Australian Government Department of Health tasked the PHN with distributing PPE bundles from the National Medical Stockpile across our PHN region.

Upon receiving the supplies, the PHN packed and delivered the Living with COVID PPE bundles to eligible pharmacists and general practices including Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations, to assist in safely treating COVID-19 patients within their practice. Supplies included P2/N95 respirators, eye protection, gowns, surgical gloves, surgical masks, hand sanitiser and pulse oximeters.

PHN Manager - COVID Response, Dianna Billington said the PHN worked closely with both state and federal governments to secure delivery of these supplies to general practice, to support clinicians to safely treat COVID-19 patients.

“Primary healthcare providers play an important role in our communities and proper use of PPE helps keep health workers safe and helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

“Once the supplies were made available, we were able to quickly assemble a team who did a great job in receiving deliveries, sorting and delivering PPE bundles to primary healthcare providers across our region.”

To further support general practice in the safe treatment of COVID-19 patients, the PHN secured and distributed qualitative fit testing kits and supporting resources. Fit testing provides healthcare workers with maximum protection against respiratory hazards by ensuring there is an adequate face seal of the N95 respirator mask, helping to protect against illness or injury. The qualitative fit tests aim to improve the protection of both healthcare workers and patients, as well as general practice business continuity.



Across the Central Queensland,
Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast
regions, our PHN distributed:



157,800

P2 / N95 respirators



30,100

pairs of eye protection



45,900

gowns



71,900

pairs of surgical gloves



163,800

surgical masks




1,390

bottles of hand sanitiser



1,350

pulse oximeters



Establishment of the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service (CQHHS) Joint Governance Group

The PHN has partnered with the CQHHS to launch the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service Joint Governance Group (the Group), which held its inaugural meeting in June 2022.

The Group aims to identify and prioritise local health needs; enhance service access to address health inequalities; identify new priority projects in line with the strategic directions of both organisations; review current projects and advise on suggested improvements and efficiency; and respond to relevant state and national strategies and policy.

‘The group has successfully collaborated on other projects over the past few years, including joint work during the past 2-3 years, including joint work during the COVID-19 preparedness and response phases; working together on the vaccine rollout and in providing the Central Queensland community with access to virtual COVID-19 care.

Sam King, PHN's Central Queensland and After Hours Manager, said a key role of the PHN is to work closely with GPs, allied healthcare providers, hospitals and the broader community to ensure patients can receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

The Group has identified priority areas for ongoing collaboration including older persons' health, developmentally vulnerable children, mental health, workforce, and digital health.

Over the next two years, additional priority projects identified for collaboration include the Local Areas Needs Assessment (LANA) and the Health Equity Strategy. The Group also identified the key performance indicators they will use to monitor these projects and to measure the success of this joint work.

To continue to build our great partnership with CQHHS, PHN representatives will continue to meet quarterly as part of this governance group, to deliver improvements in coordination and integration across the health continuum.



“This partnership allows us to work closely with the local health service to understand the health needs and improve the overall health outcomes of the region”.





Developmentally vulnerable children stakeholder consultation

Childhood development lays a critical foundation for long-term outcomes in health, learning, behaviour and wellbeing. Whilst most Australian children are healthy, safe, and doing well, childhood can be a time of vulnerability and outcomes vary depending on the living and financial circumstances of their family.

According to the Australian Early Developmental Census 2021 results, in the Rockhampton Local Government Area there is a high rate of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains (36.1%, n=378) when they reach primary school.

Our PHN is committed to evidence-based planning in the procurement of services and programs to ensure they are based on community needs and therefore the PHN set out to engage with key stakeholders to gain a better understanding of why and where our children are developmentally vulnerable.

From January to June 2022 our PHN conducted interviews with key stakeholders and facilitated a face-to-face workshop. Throughout this engagement process, the emerging theme was the fundamental concept of “children and families at the centre of policy and planning”. Through the consultation and engagement process, we learned that while all stakeholders place a high value on seeing children thrive, there is still more work to be done towards improving long-term outcomes in the Rockhampton region.



Paediatric early intervention into childhood education settings

In response to Australian Early Development Census, our PHN commissioned Royal Far West to deliver paediatric early intervention into childhood education settings in 2017. Our health needs analysis indicated Wide Bay as an area of need to address children's developmental vulnerability and improve readiness for school. The program was expanded into Gladstone in 2021.

Faced with workforce shortages and the challenge of travel to rural communities, a telehealth model of early intervention into an education setting was established. This model takes childhood development interventions out of a clinical setting, and capitalises on the skills of early childhood educators, whilst also providing day care and kindergarten staff with capacity building training too. A multidisciplinary team, including occupational therapist, speech pathologist and paediatric psychologist, work in partnership with early learning centres, and with the support of parents, to provide assessments and a course of one-to-one goal-oriented therapy sessions. Progress is measured using Goal Attainment Scoring.

Over the four years since the program started in 2017 results have been positive: 91% of children made some improvement, with 73% of children meeting or exceeding treatment goals. Feedback is also sought from parents and educators; 88% of parents and 63% of educators very satisfied, and 100% of parents and educators satisfied with the services.

Through COVID-19 uncertainty, waves of illness, workforce shortages in early learning centres, and severe weather, Royal Far West has responded nimbly, with re-scheduling appointments and the delivery of therapy into the home setting. Appropriate support and responses are being put in place for a Maryborough kindergarten whose parents and children were affected by the floods. The program has been well received by First Nations parents, with 19% of participating children identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Each year, almost 1,588 occasions of service are delivered to 159 children, predominantly aged four years, across 29 early learning centres.

Early intervention into childhood education settings in Wide Bay saw improvements in 91% of children, with 73% meeting or exceeding treatment goals



VIDEO CALL PLATFORM HEALTHDIRECT

Connecting patients and clinicians through the Healthdirect video call platform


The PHN again partnered with Healthdirect in 2021/22, to provide general practices free access to the Healthdirect video call service platform, offering a secure video conferencing service purpose-built for health consultations.


Designed with clinicians' needs in mind and integrating with healthcare workflows, the service connects people to healthcare services by overcoming the barriers of distance, time and cost.




Program outcomes


Users across our region


 **1,418**
individuals used the service


 **291**
clinics set up to access the service

User base


 General practices

 Mental health providers


 Aged care services

 Allied health providers

Consultations in 2021/22

 **12,484**
individual consultations

 **2 minutes**
minimum consultation time

 **8,593**
consultation hours

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DISCLAIMER

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