

2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT

Sunshine Coast Health Network Ltd.



phn
CENTRAL QUEENSLAND,
WIDE BAY, SUNSHINE COAST
An Australian Government Initiative



Acknowledgment

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.

Contents

GOVERNANCE

Board Chair report	4
CEO report	5
Meet the Board.	6
Board meeting attendance	8
Subcommittees and Working Groups	8

OVERVIEW

Our region at a glance	9
Clinical Councils	10
New Board member.	12

OUR ACTIVITIES

COVID-19 vaccination roll-out.	14
Joint Regional Plan 2020-25	18
The Way Back Support Service	19
Gympie Cultural Healing Program	20
Professional Development Supervision Mentoring Selfcare Program.	21
headspace.	22
Mental health in-reach to aged care.	24
ASIST training	25
Compassionate Communities.	26
Queensland General Practice Liaison Network.	27
Diabetes educator	28
Pulmonary rehabilitation	29
Smart Referrals	30
Health Needs Assessment.	31
Emerald Communities of Excellence	32

CONTACT

Office locations and contact details	36
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Board Chair report

Dr Peter Dobson

When I reflect on the 2020/21 financial year, one of the standout achievements has been the evolution of meaningful, dynamic partnerships across the health sector in our region.

This cross-sector collaboration was best showcased in the launch of the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs (MHAOD) Joint Regional Plan – a comprehensive, aligned approach to mental health services developed by the PHN, in partnership with Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Services (HHS).

The Joint Regional Plan guided the implementation of MHAOD services across the region, including the commissioning of The Way Back Support Service, a suicide aftercare service developed by Beyond Blue and delivered in partnership with the HHS and local service providers.

We've worked with headspace national, the federal government, and local communities to advocate for extra funding to open or enhance headspace centres, offering much-needed support to young people in regional areas.

Our focus on mental health isn't, of course, restricted to young people or those at risk of suicide, and as life with COVID-19 has become the 'new normal' we've all had to be mindful of the impact the pandemic has had on our lives.

Primary care practitioners have keenly felt that impact professionally and personally. Frontline practice staff have had to manage both mixed messages and mixed emotions, which has reinforced the need for a whole of team approach.

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I congratulate primary care practices for their hard work over this past year. They've worked tirelessly to continue delivering an exceptional level of service in an ever-changing environment.

This has been made somewhat easier through the work of the PHN as a trusted source of information. I'm proud of the complex, but essential information our organisation has been able to distill and distribute to general practice in a timely fashion.

It speaks to the resilience of the sector and bodes well for the years ahead.

Over the past year, the Board has collectively worked hard to develop a robust and ambitious Strategic Plan for 2021-2025, one that encourages innovation in our approach to improving health outcomes.

As we look ahead to the remainder of 2021 and beyond, we look forward to embracing new challenges as we build healthier communities across our region.



CEO report

Adjunct Associate Professor Pattie Hudson

Our world somewhat shrunk in 2020/21, amid lockdowns and the many travel restrictions brought on in response to COVID-19, and it's brought our local communities and their health needs into sharper relief than ever before.

I've been the Chief Executive Officer of Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN since its inception, and while we might now be a large organisation with eight offices spread across a footprint twice as big as Tasmania, what we do makes a big difference to the individual lives of many.

In this report, you'll read some of the personal stories of people whose lives have been improved, often in profoundly simple ways, through the primary care programs we commission.

With the support of a PHN-funded pulmonary initiative in Hervey Bay, a participant can now walk around to do their own shopping for the first time in years.

After completing a diabetes management program in the North Burnett, a local resident now has an understanding of the effects food, alcohol and insulin have on his blood glucose levels.

And a patient with a workplace injury was able to access her clinical information via My Health Record as a result of our digital health initiative in rural Queensland.

Programs like these rely on a strong, skilled local workforce, and we've continued to invest in building our regional health workforce from within, particularly with the most vulnerable in our communities.

In Rockhampton, the Professional Development Supervision Mentoring Selfcare Program, the first training initiative of its kind, was developed by a local psychological service to bolster the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

“

In Gympie, the Cultural Healing Program continues to go from strength to strength, with a clinical nurse working tirelessly to promote holistic social and emotional supports to improve the mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We've also invested in strengthening our own staff base, which has had to adapt in the past 18 months like never before.

This report is a great reflection on the progress we've collectively made over this past year towards optimising the health and wellbeing of people across our region.

Pattie Hudson.

Meet the Board



Dr Peter Dobson

Board Chair MBBS, GAICD

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.

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

Director B Occ Thy, Exec MBA, GAICD, Adj Assoc Prof UNSW

Rebecca is General Manager of Member Health at Medibank Private. She has worked in a range of health settings in both clinical and corporate functions.

Originally an occupational therapist, Rebecca understands the coalface of health service delivery and the importance of local nuances across geographies and demographics – critical success factors for SCHN.



Mr David Conry AM

Director A Dip Bus UQ, QAY, FAIM

David is Managing Director of Damarcon, a privately owned advisory and investment business. He has over 15 years of experience on private, government and community sector boards.

David has a strong community focus and was awarded an Order of Australia, Queensland's Australian of the Year, and EY Social Entrepreneur of the Year.



Mr Grant Dearlove

Director LLB, LLM, MBA, LFAIM, Grad Dip ACIS, GAICD

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

Director MBBS Dip RANZCOG

Fiona has worked as a GP on the Sunshine Coast since 2008. She is a passionate advocate for primary health care and has been closely involved in improving healthcare delivery through her involvement at local and state government levels.

Fiona has had extensive governance training through a number of programs including the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is involved in research, development and innovation of new healthcare programs in the primary care space.



Dr John Menzies

Director MBBS (1st Cls Hons), MHP, FRACMA

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 Shea Spierings

Director BA.(Hons), MAICD

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 John Woodward

Director BPharm (Hons), MHM, Adv Prac Pharm, BCPS, BCGP, GAICD

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

John is a Non-Executive Director and past 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

Company Secretary BBus (Comn), Grad Dip App Corporate Governance, GAICD, FCIS, FGIA

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 C-suite 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 members	Number eligible to attend	Number attended
Dr Peter Dobson, Chair	9	9
Ms Rebecca Bell	9	7
Mr David Conry	9	6
Mr Grant Dearlove	9	8
Dr Fiona McGrath	9	9
Dr John Menzies	9	9
Mr Shea Spierings	6	6
Mr John Woodward	9	9

Subcommittees and Working Groups

The Board has established the following Subcommittees and Working Groups to facilitate effective governance.



Finance, Audit and Risk Subcommittee

DIRECTORS

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

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
Ms Emma Whitehead
Ms Donna Waterford
Dr Jon Harper



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



161,108km²
our region



908,804
residents



4.37%
identify as Aboriginal
or Torres Strait Islander



68%
live regionally or remotely



9.8%
live in outer regional,
remote or very remote areas



30.4%
live in the most
disadvantaged quintile



20.2%
are 65 years or older



93%
of one-year olds
fully immunised

Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast Primary Health Network is an independent not for profit commissioning agency funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health to improve health outcomes across the region.

We commission service providers to deliver services that meet primary and preventative healthcare needs.

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

We work closely with general practice, allied healthcare providers, hospitals and healthcare services, and the community, to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

Clinical Councils

Engagement and health planning

Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN has three GP-led Clinical Councils to support our role in commissioning primary health services to meet the health needs of our community.

Each of the three Councils are aligned with local Hospital and Health Service boundaries, and represent the sub-regions of Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast.

In 2020/21, the PHN undertook a strategic periodic review of the Clinical Councils, and subsequently implemented some quality improvement measures to enhance communications, increase engagement with Councils across the commissioning cycle, and allow for greater sharing of impacts and outcomes.

A review of Council composition and membership resulted in new members with clinical expertise and experience to advise on the organisation's strategic priorities.

In 2020/21, there were 58 active members across the three Councils, with representation from a range of primary health disciplines, including psychologists, pharmacists and general practitioners, as well as consumers.

Councils met bimonthly over the course of the year, for a total of 18 meetings, to candidly discuss topics like COVID-19, digital health, older person's health, palliative care, and Smart Referrals to name but a few.

These meetings also provide a unique opportunity for members of the internal teams from the PHN and HHS to present to the Councils on new bodies of work, like the PHN's mental health service directory and its mental health referral processes, and Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service's Integrated and Virtual Care Framework.

As a result of these meetings, the Councils were able to provide advice and feedback to the SCHN Board and PHN Executive Leadership Team.



Testimonials

"I work full-time in a general practice as a registered nurse and a practice manager and have been involved in the Clinical Council for three years. This role gives me an insight into general practice and community, and the interactions between general practitioners and other health professionals."

Jennifer Brandon (practice manager)

"I am passionate about making it easier for people to access the most suitable support for their health issues when they need it and in a setting they are comfortable in."

"Our health systems need to evolve to provide multi-disciplinary, collaborative teams with connections across the various levels of health care (GPs, hospitals, allied health etc)."

"It's a big ask and will take time, but I believe PHNs can make a real difference in this space."

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to bring a consumer perspective to the table as a current member of the Sunshine Coast Clinical Council."

Lee-Ann Monks (consumer)

"I originally signed up because my interests aligned with some of the PHN's priorities around mental health, workforce development, and the wellbeing of the first peoples of this land."

"The best part about being on the Clinical Council is getting a good look at the people and initiatives in the region."

"I learn a lot from the others on the Council, especially from the experience of those who have been working in the region for a long time and can lend their expertise to current issues."

"A challenge in the past year and a half has been getting everyone together, not just related to the online format of meetings, but also because people may be a bit more tired and stretched from the changes related to the pandemic. Having said that, I look forward to another year of rolling with the new normal of our region."

"I have confidence in the PHN's responsiveness to and collaboration with the community."

May Chi (psychologist)

New Board member

Improving Indigenous health and wellbeing is one of the top priorities for the PHN. In 2020 SCHN was delighted to appoint Gangulu man Shea Spierings to its Board of Directors.

SCHN Board Chair, Dr Peter Dobson said the appointment was an important step towards culturally appropriate representation at the organisation's highest level.

"We're absolutely delighted to welcome Shea to the Sunshine Coast Health Network board, which shapes the strategic direction of the PHN and informs the services it delivers," Dr Dobson said.

"As a GP, I know only too well the significant challenges facing the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

"Shea is not only from the Indigenous community, he also brings with him valuable academic insight into the barriers and enablers we need to understand to continue working towards Closing the Gap."

Hailing from Central Queensland, Mr Spierings is currently a Poche Scholar at the University of Queensland's Poche Centre for Indigenous Health where he is investigating Aboriginal men's health, and the effectiveness of COVID-19 health messaging in Indigenous communities.

He also has significant experience advising and working in the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service sector, research sector, and youth sector and in 2015 was appointed by the Australian Government to serve as the Australian Youth Delegate to the United Nations.

PHN CEO Pattie Hudson said she was looking forward to Mr Spierings' input in helping shape the PHN's approach to identified service gaps.

"Shea's appointment to the Sunshine Coast Health Network's Board of Directors is a huge step in the right direction. We very much look forward to sharing in his knowledge and expertise," Ms Hudson said.

"Culturally appropriate health care is a key priority for the PHN, and our programs are developed locally, in partnership with community, Elders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers as well as mainstream health professionals.

"Relationship building is a big part of this process and we'll be able to learn so much from Shea on how to enhance this further."

Prior to his career in health and research, Mr Spierings worked as a concreter, steel fixer, and labourer on large-scale construction projects.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) from the University of Queensland, is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is looking forward to bringing together his wide skillset and significant cultural connections to improve health outcomes in the Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast region.



“

*I was born and raised in Rockhampton,”
Mr Spierings said.*

*“My people are Gangulu, we traditionally
come from an area west of Rockhampton,
but I also have a strong personal
connection with the Sunshine Coast region,
where I lived for a number of years.*

*“I’m looking forward to being a part of
making some of the decisions that impact
the communities which I’m still very much a
part of.*

*“Currently, I am doing my PhD which has
a strong focus on Aboriginal men’s health.
Previously I worked in the Community
Controlled Health Sector, and in the youth
leadership space, so for me it’s about
bringing all those different areas and
interests together in a governance role.*

*“There are challenges ensuring access to
primary healthcare across such a diverse
region with vastly different needs, but
engaging with communities and listening
to them is something that’s of great
importance to me and critical to meet
both the existing and emerging challenges
facing the region.”*

COVID-19

As the initial crisis flashpoint of COVID-19 transitioned to a new normal in the 2020/21 financial year, Queenslanders adjusted to living with COVID-19, and the restrictions it imposed.

The Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast region was fortunate to avoid major outbreaks of the virus during that time, but the danger presented by a COVID-19 outbreak loomed large. And with it, threats to businesses and livelihoods, the physical and mental health of our residents, and the delivery of essential services like healthcare.

This knowledge hastened the need for an effective vaccine, and more importantly, a strategy for securing doses and their delivery to the community.

In the first week of 2021, the Federal Government released Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll-out strategy, an ambitious plan outlining sites and priority populations for initial vaccinations, and the phases for delivery.



RACFs

In early 2021, the Federal Government identified people living in residential aged care facilities (RACFs) as a priority cohort for the very first of the COVID-19 vaccinations, due to their increased health risk.

There are 103 residential aged care facilities throughout Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast, along with 11 multi-purpose health services in rural areas.

Known as Phase 1a, vaccination services commenced in these facilities in February 2021, with most residents vaccinated by the end of June 2021.

Our PHN was an important intermediary for this initial stage of the roll-out, providing a dedicated facilitator to act as a conduit between RACFs and external vaccination administration services (VAS), and to contribute to mandatory reporting to the Department of Health.

This facilitator was also responsible, in consultation with facilities' management, for supporting the preparation of the site by providing information and resources at short notice where logistical challenges were encountered.

Our PHN worked hard to build trust with the residential aged care sector and maintain confidence in the process in the face of many challenges which included vaccine supply and delivery issues, workforce shortages within the VAS provider, and in some cases the postponement of clinics.

These challenges were overcome in part through the development of strong relationships with providers: weekly newsletters, personalised phone call reminders of vaccination schedules, pre and post courtesy calls for the delivery of both doses, fielding enquiries around site requirements, and facilitating clinical advice on other vaccinations e.g. influenza.

Clear communications were essential to keeping RACFs engaged and informed with the many changes. Reporting and accurate record keeping to track stakeholders and informing general practice and the hospital and health service of processes was paramount.



103

Residential aged care facilities



11

Multi-purpose health centres



6

General practice respiratory clinics

“

The PHN was instrumental in the advocacy and complete support for the Sunny Street service to apply to the Commonwealth to provide Australians with testing and vaccinations.

“We were successful in our bid!

“Commencing a new respiratory and vaccination clinic, an Australian first, was challenging - never been done before this pandemic time.

“Our service is a pop-up service and the need was great, with over 450 tests completed on one of our highest days.

“The PHN worked alongside our Nursing and Medical Director every step of the way, assisting us to find solutions to challenges we had including barriers around advocacy, awareness of the services, stakeholder collaboration with the local councils, community services and Queensland Health, and location issues.

“They went out of their way every single time, returned our calls, created immediate action, and helped Sunny Street in every way they possibly could.”

Sonia Martin, Sunny Street Sunshine Coast Respiratory Clinic

GPRCs

Across the region, the PHN offered support to six general practice respiratory clinics, with three in Central Queensland, one in Wide Bay and two on the Sunshine Coast.

The most recent to open, Sunny Street Sunshine Coast Respiratory Clinic in Tewantin, offers respiratory clinic services including COVID-19 testing for the assessment and treatment of symptomatic patients, as well as COVID-19 vaccinations.

GENERAL PRACTICE

The Federal Government's COVID-19 vaccination roll-out in general practice was one of the biggest challenges facing the primary health care sector in 2020/21.

In January, the Commonwealth utilised the PHN's communication channels and strong relationship with primary healthcare providers to invite accredited general practices to participate in the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out program.

The PHN played a pivotal role in facilitating the EOI process to the 286 practices in the region and embedded a dedicated COVID Vaccination Program Coordinator from within the existing primary health care team to act as their primary point of contact.

Almost two thirds of general practices across Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN opted to join the Commonwealth's COVID vaccination roll-out, with 178 practices administering the AstraZeneca vaccine by the end of June.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The challenges in managing the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in general practice have been many.

Not all general practices opted to deliver COVID-19 vaccines in the initial stage of the vaccine roll-out, and supply constraints meant quantity and availability of doses were limited.

A high demand for the vaccine, along with high levels of uncertainty within the community regarding their eligibility, availability of vaccines, and concerns around the safety of the vaccine put significant strain on all frontline healthcare staff.

The PHN, as the conduit of information between the Commonwealth Government's Department of Health, the State Government's Queensland Health and general practice, prioritised clear and concise communications and participation in state- and nation-wide working groups to address these issues.

Our PHN supported positive media coverage by providing subject matter experts and spokespeople in response to numerous media requests to clarify information and importantly, dispel any misconceptions surrounding the vaccine and roll-out.



286

practices in
our region



178

administering AstraZeneca
by the end of June 2021



The PHN has been extremely helpful throughout the entire process.

"They supported us in preparing our practice, we made lots of phone calls with questions (none were too silly for them to answer), and the PHN even helped us organise direction signs for our patients.

"The PHN was super supportive during this time, giving me tips and in the early days, consent forms and updates were an issue, PHN always immediately made sure I had the latest versions and answered any questions I had straight away.

"I have rung PHN with questions at least once a week since we started and I couldn't have done this without PHN's support.

"Frankly, the whole process has been extremely stressful but the one thing that drives our entire time is the sense of community service we feel.

"Even on the bad days, we realise we are contributing positively to the people of Hervey Bay and that is what keeps us going."

Katherine Potter, Practice Manager, Main Street Medical Centre Hervey Bay



91

e-newsletters to GPs



17,290

visits to PHN's COVID-19
clinical webpage



958

total orders for PPE



114,171

face masks delivered to general practice,
RACFs and allied health clinics



68,620

face masks delivered to
respiratory clinics



6,232

practice engagements

*(This includes practice visits,
emails, phone calls and video
calls, and webinars)*



Health groups join forces for five-year regional plan

In the midst of World Mental Health Week 2020, healthcare agencies across Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast unveiled their combined five-year plan to deliver mental health, suicide, alcohol and other drugs services for the region's communities.

The Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Alcohol and Other Drugs Joint Regional Plan 2020-2025 is a collaboration between Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, and the Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Services.

The PHN's CEO, Pattie Hudson, said the Plan is a great example of how federally- and state-funded health organisations can join forces to create long-term change across the region.

"Our PHN is incredibly proud to partner with the Hospital and Health Services on this Joint Regional Plan to make a real difference to the health of people living in this special part of the world," Ms Hudson said.

"This Plan will utilise the resources and knowledge of our PHN and our three Hospital and Health Services, along with those of non-government organisations, private health providers and consumer representatives.

"Working together we will be able to develop new services and increase early intervention, and importantly, reduce not only duplication, but in this case, triplication, of resources.

"We know the issues facing people in our region do not discriminate by income, employment or age, and by following the framework laid out in this Joint Regional Plan, we'll be able to tackle them together."

New service paves The Way Back from suicide

Beyond Blue's suicide aftercare initiative The Way Back Support Service, which provides critical support for people after a suicide attempt, became available in 2020/21 in Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast.

Beyond Blue Chief Services Officer Alistair Stott said The Way Back provides practical support for people for up to three months after they leave hospital.

"People who have attempted suicide often experience severe distress in the days and weeks afterwards and are at high risk of attempting again," Mr Stott said.

"The Way Back addresses a significant gap in the current service system and eases this distress by guiding them towards the right support and informing them about how to stay safe."

The service is delivered in Central Queensland by AnglicareCQ, in the Wide Bay by Richmond Fellowship Queensland (RFQ), and on the Sunshine Coast by Open Minds.

The PHN's CEO Pattie Hudson said The Way Back Support Service had shown promising results in helping people since it started as a pilot program in 2014.

"It's a dynamic model that combines an evidence-based approach to recovery with that all-important personal connection and integration with existing health services," Ms Hudson said.

"The Hospital and Health Services will provide the pathway to the service and ensures we have the best understanding of a person's needs and mental health, so that we can give them the best possible care."

People are referred to The Way Back by the Hospital and Health Service in their local area, and are assigned a support coordinator to guide them through their recovery.

RFQ Area Manager Karen Suey said coordinators would provide people with practical support to help them find their way back to life.

"We recognise that tailored, timely support is critical to people's safety," Ms Suey said.

"Our coordinators use several techniques, like face-to-face and over the phone contact, help build a personalised safety plan as well as link them to health and community services that address some of the issues leading to their initial distress.

"Individualised support promotes strength and resilience, and delivers assertive outreach to participants."

The Way Back Support Service is just one example of how the federally-funded PHN and state-funded HHSs work together to achieve positive health outcomes for the community, as outlined in their Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Alcohol and Other Drugs Joint Regional Plan 2020-2025.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Gympie Cultural Healing Program

Mudburra and Ngarinman woman Anne Humbert, originally from the Northern Territory, is a clinical nurse with the Gympie Cultural Healing Program (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health).

Now in its third year of operation at Gympie Hospital, the Cultural Healing Program is a partnership between the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN and North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health.

"The Cultural Healing Program is a contemporary approach to mental health, addiction and cultural healing," Ms Humbert said.

"By recognising the whole of life view for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it helps everyone to achieve their full potential as individuals, which will then bring about healthier wellbeing for our community.

"The program offers triage and assessment and support for our mob, to ensure safe and supportive clinical and cultural practice.

"My job consists of walking alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer on their mental health journey, and delivering care in a culturally specific way which is very important to me.

“ We typically meet people fortnightly, or weekly, depending on their need and we mainly see people in their homes – face-to-face contact is really important and it’s very difficult to do an assessment over the phone.”

"COVID-19 has been challenging, we try to meet with clients in an outdoor area to physical distance.

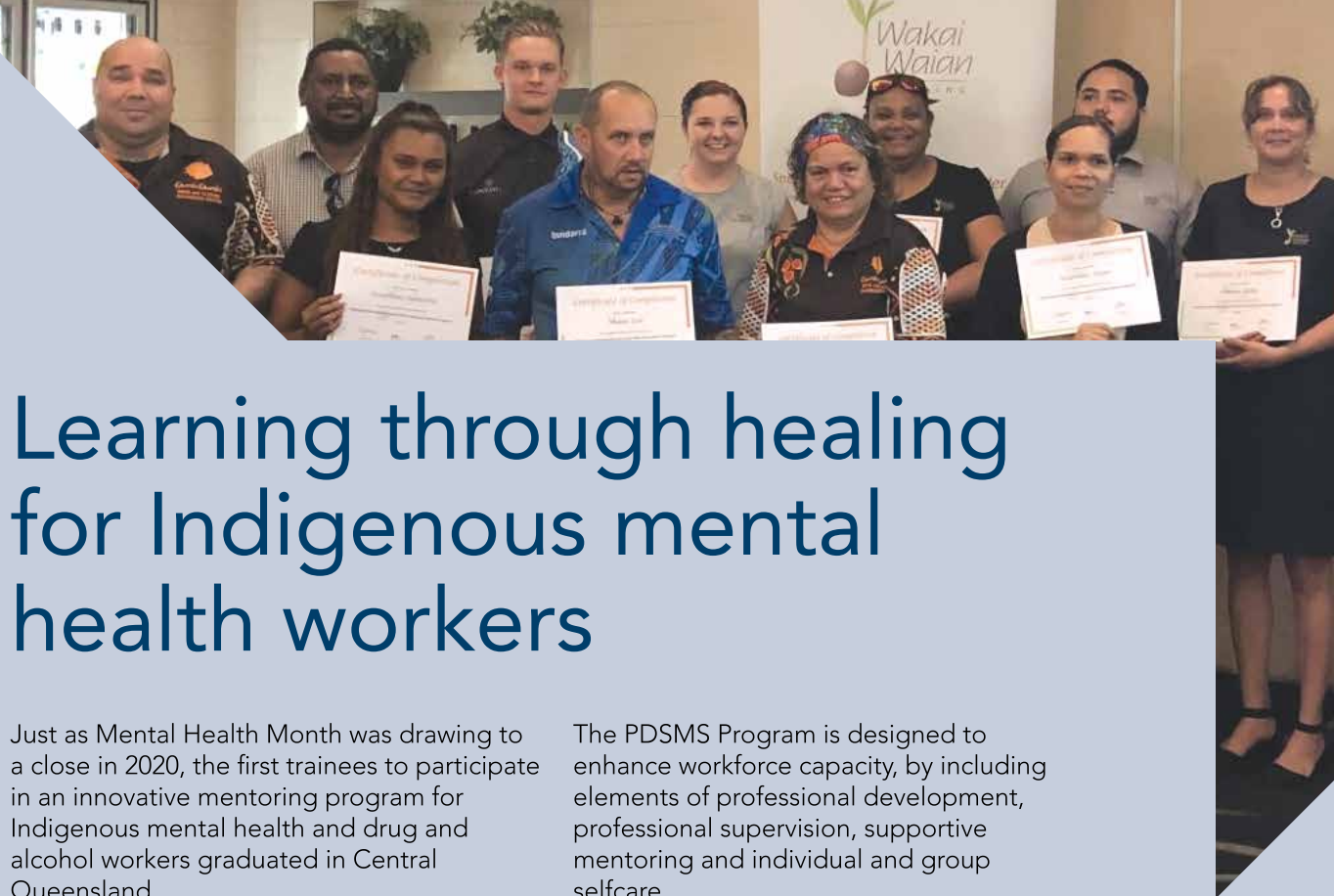
"The program is very holistic – we look at the whole person.

"We complete recovery and care plans, working on individual identified goals and supports. This may consist of Centrelink, housing, counselling, drug and alcohol programs. I am a referrer for North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health so am able to complete Health Access Cards and community health referrals to better link to culturally specific health programs in the local community.

"Every client is linked on closure from the service, whether that be GP, counsellor, community health organisation or drug and alcohol supports.

"It's great to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to know the avenues available to them.

"Much more support for Aboriginal health workers is needed, having a pathway to become a clinician is very much needed to deliver culturally appropriate service provision into the future, and to assist with better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."



Learning through healing for Indigenous mental health workers

Just as Mental Health Month was drawing to a close in 2020, the first trainees to participate in an innovative mentoring program for Indigenous mental health and drug and alcohol workers graduated in Central Queensland.

Known as the Professional Development Supervision Mentoring Selfcare (PDSMS) Program, the training initiative was developed by Rockhampton-based psychological service Wakai Waian Healing to bolster the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

Principal psychologist Ed Mosby, the director of Wakai Waian Healing, said he was delighted with the outcome of the innovative workforce development initiative, funded by Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN.

"We're absolutely thrilled to be here today; we are so proud of all the trainees," Mr Mosby said.

"The PDSMS Program requires a high level of motivation and commitment from participants and brings together not just skills and knowledge but an opportunity for their own self-empowerment and healing.

"We first approached the PHN with the original proposal for the program because demand for our own services was so high, and there was a lack of other organisations in Central Queensland providing culturally specific mental health and alcohol and other drug clinical therapies.

The PDSMS Program is designed to enhance workforce capacity, by including elements of professional development, professional supervision, supportive mentoring and individual and group selfcare.

Trainees, if they had not already done so, were also required to complete a Certificate IV in Mental Health.

Mervin Saunders, who works for Gumbi Gumbi, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Rockhampton, was in the first cohort to complete the PDSMS Program, and also completed the Certificate IV.

"I joined the mental health sector a year ago, the PDSMS Program has given me a lot of skills, a lot of tools, and has enhanced my confidence in dealing with clients," Mr Saunders said.

A total of 14 participants enrolled in the 2019/2020 program, all working within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare organisations who helped facilitate the learning.

The PDSMS Program empowers people to deliver services in their own communities.

Several participants in the training initiative are now continuing their studies, enrolling in the Diploma of Counselling and tertiary studies in psychology.

Following the success of the 2020 program, the PDSMS Program ran again in mid-2021.

“ We knew that workforce was a priority in the region, and particularly Indigenous health workforce, so what we’re doing with this training is building it ourselves, from the ground up.”

Holistic mental health support for young people

Significant steps were taken towards improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people across Central Queensland, the Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast in the 2020/21 financial year.

The PHN helped headspace – Australia’s peak youth mental health and wellbeing group – expand, upgrade and implement services right across the region.

headspace Emerald

In 2020/21, headspace took another step closer to delivering services in the Central Highlands, with the appointment of a lead agent for its first stand-alone site in the region.

Anglicare Central Queensland will head up the new centre in Emerald, providing tailored mental health and wellbeing support to people aged 12 to 25 in a purpose-built space expected to be operational as early as December 2021.

AnglicareCQ CEO Carol Godwin said the new centre would have a strong focus on addressing youth suicide rates in the area.

“headspace Emerald will be a free, confidential service that will offer early intervention across four key areas – mental health, related physical health, social and vocational support, as well as alcohol and other drug use,” Ms Godwin said.

“Given the number of youth suicides in the area, we recognise it’s vital to have more early intervention services available locally.”

headspace Rockhampton and headspace Gladstone

The 2020/21 financial year was something of a fresh start for headspace Rockhampton, with a successful transition to a new service provider, Roseberry, in July, and a refurbishment of the existing Alma Street site.

Roseberry is also the lead agent for headspace Gladstone, which launched services in October 2020.

Both centres deliver Child and Youth Enhanced Primary Mental Health Services an early intervention model, providing support for children and youth within the area at risk of developing severe mental illness, as well as outreach services.

headspace Maryborough

headspace in Maryborough secured a home base in 2020, with the December opening of a satellite centre on Lennox Street in the heart of the heritage city.

Wesley Mission is the lead agent for headspace Maryborough, and continues to operate the nearby headspace in Hervey Bay.

Centre Manager Ricky Goostrey said the Maryborough site, chosen and designed in collaboration with the local youth advisory council, met a detailed list of requirements.

“It’s visible, but provides an element of privacy, it sits on a public transport line, and you will never have to fight for a car park,” Mr Goostrey said.

headspace Maroochydore

The Sunshine Coast headspace centre underwent significant upgrades in early 2021.

"As a Committee member, I feel so proud to see the Maroochydore centre grow with the Sunshine Coast community and its mental health needs." - Alex, Youth Engagement Committee.

"From the moment I first stepped into the refurbished centre it felt much more welcoming and culturally inclusive." - Jesse.

Lead agent Youturn Youth Support (formerly United Synergies) shares the space with the Thompson Institute's Myndset Program also funded by the PHN, an arrangement which PHN Project Officer Fiona Read said has the potential to contribute to positive outcomes for young people.

"The co-location of these services is a great way to form strong partnerships, with plenty of opportunities to brainstorm new ideas and shape strategies to support young people.

"This includes the possibility of warm handovers, and joint group therapy work to name a few."

In addition to headspace Maroochydore, headspace Bundaberg and several others across Queensland, Youturn also operates the Gympie headspace satellite, expected to be expanded to a full centre in the next financial year.



Mental health in-reach to aged care

People living in selected residential aged care facilities across the region now have ongoing access to mental health and wellbeing support, thanks to a targeted initiative.

The PHN is funding Lifespan Health to provide mental health services in several facilities across the Sunshine Coast, from Caloundra to Gympie, and Lutheran Services to do the same with an initial focus on Bundaberg and surrounds.

The program promotes better health outcomes for residents who are living with mild to moderate mental illness, which might be impacting their day-to-day lives.

Services are intended to give residents of aged care facilities access to similar mental health services to those available in the wider community.

Lifespan Health's Director Dr Di Corser, a clinical psychologist, said it was a great privilege to be able to offer a service like this in an area of such high need.

“ My experience working within aged care is that psychologists can enhance people’s quality of life at a time when they are at their most vulnerable,” Dr Corser said.

“Older people are challenged in many ways when living in an aged care centre in Australia and incidents of depression, grief, loss, and anxiety are incredibly high.

“Our psychologists work closely with family, carers, and staff to assist people in improving emotional wellbeing and live their best life.”

One Sunshine Coast residential aged care facility manager said mental health care in aged care had been overlooked until the delivery of this program.


“It was very sad and lots of people suffered as a result,” she said.

“Now we have a psychologist coming to see our residents on a weekly basis and the changes I’ve seen in some people is nothing short of amazing.

“One of my residents who suffered from extreme anxiety now has not only managed to overcome her fears and speak out, she has dealt with a past trauma that has been haunting her for most of her life.

“This will allow her to enjoy the final stages of her life in a more fulfilling and relaxed manner.”





Teaching teachers to ASIST in times of suicidal crisis

Early 2021 saw a role reversal for teachers, guidance officers and counsellors from Fraser Coast schools as they returned to the classroom as students, to take part in the world's leading suicide intervention workshop.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, or ASIST, teaches participants to recognise when someone may be at risk of suicide and explores how to work with them to create a plan that will support their immediate safety.

First developed in 1983, ASIST is run locally by suicide intervention training company LivingWorks in partnership with Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN and Education Queensland.

LivingWorks Director of Suicide Prevention, Marc Bryant, said the training is regularly updated to reflect improvements in knowledge and practice, as well as recommendations from the Australian Government.

“ Thank you for offering this amazing training to all. Such a great way to help equip people to support all of the community when someone is thinking of suicide.”

Participant, ASIST training

“The Productivity Commission’s 2020 report into mental health recommends all schools provide psychosocial support to students and by extension to offer suicide first aid,” Mr Bryant said.

“This is because young people, particularly females, who are experiencing a situational crisis which might lead to a suicide attempt are more likely to talk to the people closest in proximity to them, like teachers, friends or parents as opposed to a health professional.

“Situational crises can occur as a result of circumstances in the home, relationships with friends, drug and alcohol use, natural disasters, anything where people are already vulnerable.

“But often, we only find out people are thinking of suicide when they make an attempt.

“Clinicians aren’t on every corner - we need trusted people in young people’s lives to learn how to recognise the warning signs and offer interventions.”

Suicide prevention skills training, taught as part of an overall prevention plan such as LifeSpan, has been shown to reduce community suicide rates by up to 20 percent.

In March 2021, funding was announced to continue suicide prevention activities across the region for another twelve months.

To maximise the benefit of this extension, the PHN will reflect on current best practices to prevent suicides in the community, and will work with the community to implement these strategies.

Creating Compassionate Communities

Residents across Central Queensland, the Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast can now confidently play a stronger role in the care and support of people at the end of life, with the local launch of the global Compassionate Communities initiative in 2020/21.

Compassionate Communities aims to improve the ageing and end of life experience for people by empowering everyday citizens to draw upon their existing knowledge and networks.

Social approaches to palliative and end of life care, and to grief and bereavement, are a proven way to build strength and resilience in communities, and are growing in popularity around the world.

The establishment of the Compassionate Communities project in Australia is courtesy of The Groundswell Project, which runs educational workshops, develops innovative programs and advocates for a better end of life experience for all.

The Community Connector program activates everyday citizens to draw upon their knowledge of local services and groups to play a stronger, more confident role, in the care and support of people with life-limiting illnesses, at the end of life, or those who are bereaved and grieving.

Groundswell's CEO Jessie Williams said the organisation has received an overwhelming response to the call out for participants to train as lead community connectors.

“

Lead connectors are typically community minded individuals, often retired professionals, health or community service professionals, caregivers, community leaders, or religious leaders who are passionate about contributing to the community and planning well in the face of ageing, declining health and end of life,” Ms Williams said.

They can identify and signpost others to groups, services and other supports that either formally or informally address end of life care, grief and bereavement, like palliative care, hospice care, support groups, social clubs and community services.

A total of nine Train-the-Trainer Lead Community Connectors' workshops were held across Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast in 2020/21, with the Compassionate Communities initiative formally launched with an event in Maroochydore.

This project was funded under the Greater Choices for At Home Palliative Care measure of the Department of Health.



Queensland General Practice Liaison Network

PARTNERSHIPS

In 2019, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN partnered with Queensland Health to provide support for the coordination of the Statewide GPLO Network, now known as the Queensland General Practice Liaison Network (QGPL Network), funded by the Healthcare Improvement Unit, Clinical Excellence Division, Queensland Health.

MEMBERSHIP AND FUNCTION

The QGPL Network is a multidisciplinary collaboration of clinicians who provide leadership and expert direction on all strategic matters relating to the integration of care, identifying and addressing service gaps at the interface between primary and secondary care.

Members of the QGPL Network are appointed to a General Practice Liaison Officer (GPLO) or related position; the success of their role reflects close collaboration with general practices, HHSs and PHNs.

GP REPRESENTATION

Part of the PHN's contract with Queensland Health includes the administration, support, and recruitment of GP representation to Statewide Clinical Networks, subgroups, projects and Quality Councils as required.

In the 2020/2021 financial year in partnership with Clinical Excellence Queensland's Healthcare Improvement Unit, the PHN supported the recruitment of over 20 GP

representatives to actively participate in discussions and meetings, confidently advocate on behalf of GPs and bring a GP perspective to all discussions and decision-making.

ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The QGPL Network role was crucial in strengthening collaboration and communication between primary and secondary care during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/21. New ways of working, the adaptation of models of care and integration at the interface between primary and secondary care developed at a rapid pace and has been critical in ensuring the health of Queenslanders, delivering '10 years work in 10 days'.

Some key achievements of the QGPL Network during this time include the direct messaging of over 9,000 general practitioners in Queensland about COVID-19 resources for the first time using secure messaging, the development of an 'information for General Practitioners' section on the Queensland Health website, development of a COVID-19 suite of statewide HealthPathways and a flowchart for GPs updated regularly.

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Dr Edwin Kruys, GP and GPLO, Sunshine Coast HHS, and Dr Toni Weller, GP and GPLO, Townsville HHS commenced as Co-Chairs of the QGPL Network for the next two-year period, 1 July 2021 to 1 July 2023.

The PHN and Clinical Excellence Queensland thank outgoing Chair, Dr James Collins, GPLO, Brisbane North PHN and Metro North HHS for his leadership and significant contribution to the growth of QGPL Network over the past six years.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Diabetes educator

A diabetes educator from RHealth, whose role is funded by Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, talks about reducing some of the stress and burden of diabetes management with home blood glucose monitoring.

"This story is about a client from one small rural town that I visit. But it is a story that I often hear on my travels across the North Burnett.

Frank (not his real name) is an aged pensioner and married.

His medical history included depression, alcoholism, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, post-traumatic stress disorder, hyperlipidaemia, sleep apnoea.

He was taking various medication for these conditions, but my main area of concern was his erratic insulin usage.

At each visit there was considerable evidence of a pattern of poor lifestyle choices, and he was no longer monitoring his blood glucose even though he was taking insulin with meals.

His pathology levels showed poor control with his blood glucose and cholesterol.

Throughout the several education appointments we had together, I gained his trust and he allowed me to use a continuous blood glucose monitoring system made available free to clients using insulin.

Two weeks after Frank wore the monitoring system, he returned to my clinic where I downloaded the system onto my computer allowing his doctor to view his home monitoring and progress as well.

For the first time since meeting Frank, when I asked him how he was, he gave me the biggest, most fabulous smile and said 'GOOD'!

He looked as if a weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

It was the first time since starting insulin therapy several years ago that he could understand the effects of food, alcohol and insulin on his blood glucose.

And he had the confidence to self-adjust his doses by viewing the tracking.

Frank trialled and embraced everything I suggested to improve his diabetes management.

Every time I can offer someone living with diabetes a free trial of continuous blood glucose monitoring, I am very grateful to be their diabetes educator.

It's a privilege to be able to reduce the stress and distress of their chronic condition - and I get to experience this every day."



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Breathing easier in Hervey Bay

People living with chronic lung disease can breathe a little easier in Hervey Bay, thanks to an innovative pulmonary rehabilitation program funded by the PHN.

The eight-week course was developed and delivered by Fraser Coast physiotherapist Rebecca Andrews.

"I'm an asthmatic myself and first started working on a pilot program in 2017 after treating patients living with acute lung disease in the hospital system," Ms Andrews said.

"There is already a national program overseen by the Lung Foundation, but most are privately or public sector funded, which means there aren't many sustainable pulmonary rehab programs for outpatients in regional centres like Hervey Bay.

“ *The idea for this program was to give my community a sustainable service, which in turn helps reduce the amount of hospital readmissions for this condition.* ”

Pulmonary rehabilitation uses exercise, education, and behavioural intervention to improve the quality of life for people living with chronic lung disease.

After an initial one-on-one assessment, participants take part in one-hour group-based exercise classes twice a week for eight weeks.

"The exercises are strength and cardiovascular based, with the biggest focus on breathing control during exertion," Ms Andrews said.

"There's also a strong focus on symptom management, which means learning how to bring coughing, wheezing, or shortness of breath under control – they're the top three symptoms."

Overwhelmingly, participants report the course has helped them manage their lung condition more effectively, and met their expectations, been worthwhile, helpful, and is pitched at an appropriate level.

"If you have lung function problem, I would recommend you do this course," said one.

"I have better lung function, my heart rate is better and also my oxygen levels are better.

"[The course has given me] the ability to walk and no longer need my electric wheelchair."

Participants also single out Andrews, who has been a physiotherapist for nine years, as the 'most useful aspect' of the course.

"Rebecca is a great trainer and I would recommend her to all, she is a great asset to the program."

For Andrews, it's changing people's mindsets about their own ability she finds most satisfying.

"It's the best part of my job," she said.

"I recently had a participant who had really negative, high expectations of the course, and it is hard yakka.

"She went from not being able to leave her house to walking around the shopping centre.

"Now, she and her husband have joined the gym and she's continuing on that maintenance course - a great result for someone over 75."

Smart Referrals

A SMARTER WAY TO REFER

The Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) and GPs across the region were the first health providers across the state to implement the use of Smart Referrals.

Smart Referrals are digital referrals integrated with GP software to enable the faster, more streamlined management of referrals to Queensland public hospitals.

Since its official launch locally in April 2019, the PHN and HHS have worked together during the 2020/21 financial year to engage over 90% of general practices on the Sunshine Coast and in Gympie, with more than half of that cohort considered very active users.

The PHN's primary health care officers have worked hard to champion the use of Smart Referrals with general practitioners, troubleshooting issues as they arise and collecting feedback from users.

A local governance group of PHN and HHS staff has also been established to escalate that feedback to Queensland Health in order to inform enhancements and improvements.

Over the past two years, usage of the software has steadily increased – 30% of GP referrals to the SCHHS are now Smart Referrals.

This figure shows users in our region are on track to reach the target set by Queensland Health of an 80% Smart Referral rate in the years ahead.



90%
of Sunshine Coast general practices signed on



31%
of GP referrals to SCHHS now Smart Referrals



80%
on track to reach 80% target



Health Needs Assessment

Every three years, all Primary Health Networks are required to produce a Health Needs Assessment (HNA), an evidence-based needs assessment of their region to identify their unique regional and local priorities.

The HNA is a comprehensive compilation of the latest health and wellbeing research and data as well as contextual information from consultations with service providers and community members.

Between November 2020 and February 2021, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN developed and disseminated three surveys as part of our HNA process; an online community survey, an online and hardcopy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community survey, and an online stakeholder survey.

Community and stakeholder consultation is a key part of the Health Needs Assessment process, and completed surveys were received from all major townships and cities in each of the 12 LGAs in our region.

These surveys reveal the issues Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast residents consider important, like having access to fresh food for their household and the learning and development of children, as well as attitudes towards family violence and abuse, safe and affordable housing, and the cost of living.

The questionnaires also explore the demand for, and access to, primary health care services including general practitioner and specialist appointments, and the barriers preventing local people from accessing healthcare.

Information collected by the PHN will assist in developing an understanding of the key health and health services needs and issues, and will be used for planning to identify health care priorities for the region into the future.

Emerald Communities of Excellence concludes

The Australian Digital Health Agency's Communities of Excellence program in Emerald concluded in 2021, after a three-year campaign to improve the health and wellbeing of the community by using digital health initiatives.

Communities of Excellence formed part of the Enhanced Models of Care priorities in Australia's National Digital Health Strategy, which was agreed by all states and territories in 2017.

Emerald was one of two foundation communities across the country, along with Hedland in Western Australia, to implement the Communities of Excellence strategy in 2019, with Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN one of the lead delivery partners locally.

The program was a collaboration between local communities, healthcare providers, organisations and governments.

The project had clear objectives:

- Connect all of Emerald's healthcare providers to My Health Record (MHR);
- Support the expansion and availability of telehealth across all areas of healthcare from general practices, allied health, pharmacies and specialist healthcare providers;
- Increase awareness and use of secure messaging for the exchange of clinical information across different care settings;
- Enable the use of electronic prescriptions in general practices and pharmacies;
- Improve and support digital health literacy and empower healthcare providers, patients and their families to use digital health tools;
- Be visible in the community by hosting community exhibition stands, education sessions, and empower consumers to take control of managing their own health records.



1,400
residents



4
All 4 pharmacies are registered with MHR



10
specialists



5
All 5 general practices are registered with MHR



Emerald
Emerald Hospital is registered and using MHR



Testimonials

Learnings from the three-year Communities of Excellence project in Emerald will be used to create a nationally scalable toolkit to help facilitate the adoption of digital health technologies by other communities right across the country.

“

I utilise virtual avenues to manage not only my physical rheumatoid arthritis but mental health issues I have experienced.

It also enables me access to a greater level of care that may not have been available to me at the time of needing to access.

Consumer, Emerald

“

A patient presented for an initial physiotherapy appointment for a fractured foot following a work-place accident.

She was advised at the hospital fracture clinic that she should see a physiotherapist now that she could be out of her moonboot.

This patient was unsure of the bone that had been fractured.

She did not have a referral, radiology reports, or additional clinical information provided by the hospital.

By accessing her My Health Record, I was able to view the patient's radiology reports that identified what bone had been injured, where in the bone the fracture was and at what stage of healing the bone was at.

My Health Record in this case provided information that altered the course of management and saved time in following up with the hospital directly.

Physiotherapist, Emerald

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