

phn

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND,
WIDE BAY, SUNSHINE COAST

An Australian Government Initiative



20 19/20

SUNSHINE COAST HEALTH NETWORK LTD.
ANNUAL REPORT





Acknowledgment

Sunshine Coast Health Network Ltd acknowledges the Traditional Custodians on the land on which we work and live, 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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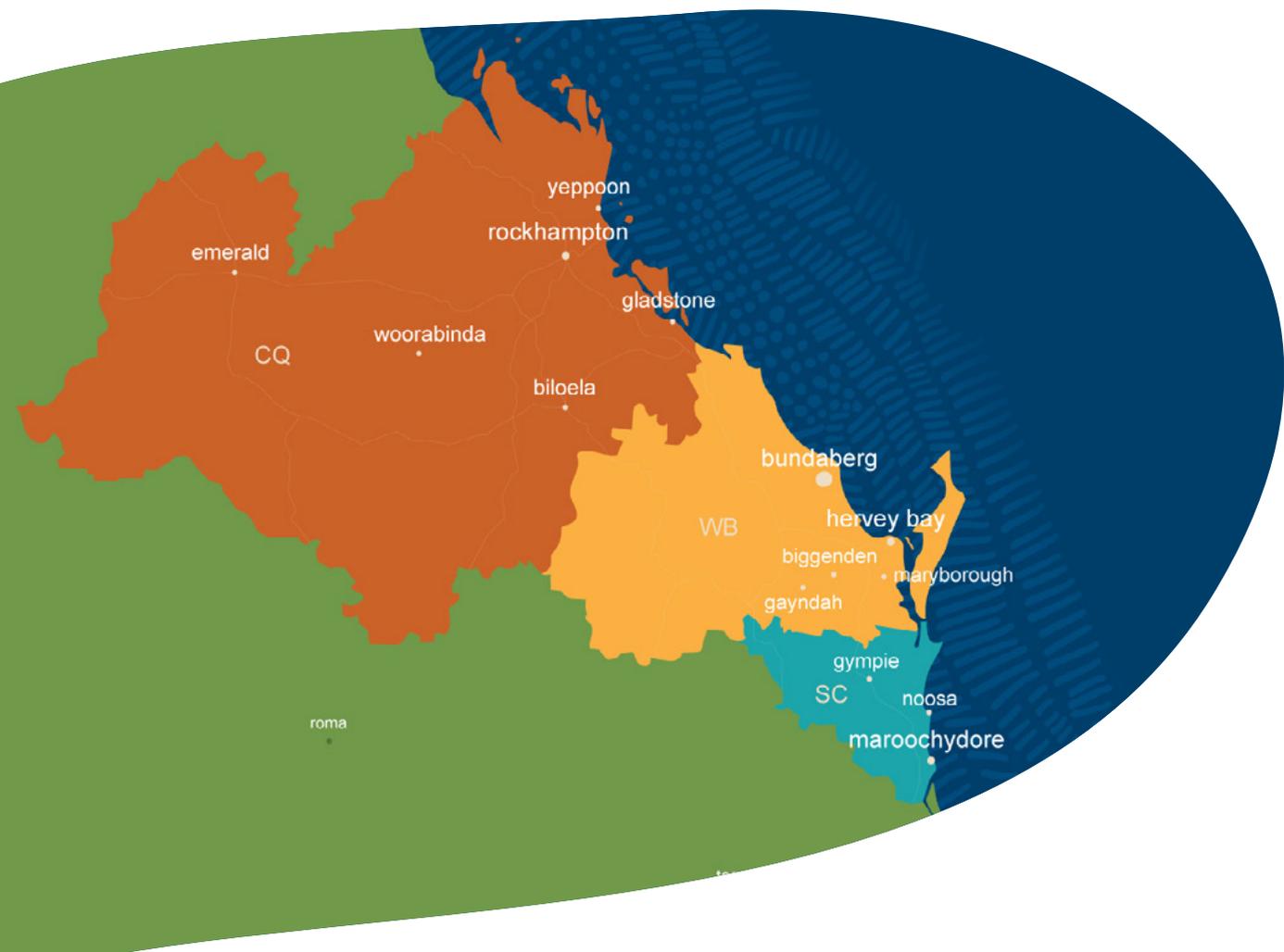
Our region at a glance

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 organisations to provide services that meet primary and preventative healthcare needs.

We identify areas of need, such 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 the community to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.





161,108km²
our region



860,000
residents



3.6%
identify as Aboriginal
or Torres Strait Islander



70%
live regionally or remotely



9%
live in outer regional,
remote or very remote areas



27.1%
live in the most
disadvantaged quintile



19.7%
are 65 years or older



93%
of one year olds fully immunised*
*Health Needs Assessment 2019-22

Report from the Board Chair

Dr Peter Dobson | Board Chair, Sunshine Coast Health Network Ltd

Our PHN, like almost every other organisation around the country regardless of industry, has had to dramatically adapt the way we do business during the last 12 months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What has remained a constant however, is the commitment of primary care providers in continuing to care for their patients despite fears and restrictions, our continued need for external facing engagement with our various stakeholders, and the important role our networks play in building a robust and integrated health system.

We've had to embrace new ways of communicating with each other, and with our stakeholders.

In March, the PHN's Practice Support team had to quickly adapt existing face-to-face practice visits and education and training sessions to digital modes of delivery.

Our Clinical Councils went online too, and continue to provide a very valuable avenue for high-level stakeholder engagement, particularly as the scope of primary care continues to respond to the changing needs of our communities.

"...one of the most exciting achievements of our PHN over the past year has been the continued commitment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Roundtable..."

HealthPathways has also gone from strength to strength in the past 12 months, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, with the creation of a COVID-19 Response Package which, along with a dedicated page on the PHN's website and regular e-newsletters, quickly became an essential resource for clinicians.

Undeterred by the pandemic, one of the most exciting achievements of our PHN over the past year has been the continued commitment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Roundtable, which brings together local leaders in Indigenous primary healthcare to lay the foundation for the work ahead, in a meaningful and methodical manner.

This report is a record of some the challenges of 2019/20, and testament to how working together - along with an unwavering commitment to improving primary healthcare - we were able to overcome them.



Report from the CEO

Adjunct Associate Professor Pattie Hudson

This annual report is one like no other in our PHN's history, and will give you a glimpse into an extraordinary and challenging year which reads like a tale of two halves – before COVID-19, and with COVID-19.

Little did we know when we launched the Gympie Health Hub with local stakeholders in October 2019 that just three or four months later we'd be using terms like 'social distancing', and 'hotspot', and putting in place measures to work from home.

The agility and speed with which our teams were able to adapt to this new virtual workplace meant we were able to continue with our organisational realignment, and implement innovations to other processes within our workforce, like the stepped care approach to mental health and the establishment of the mental health central intake and referral service.

Complex bodies of work like these remind us the need for collaboration with our healthcare providers, NGOs and community remains as vital as ever as we work towards better health outcomes for our community.

With our partners at the Australian Digital Health Agency we have made great strides towards building one of the two Communities of Excellence in Australia, right here in Emerald, to demonstrate the value of digital healthcare in our communities.

If there can be a positive take away from the COVID-19 pandemic, it's that it has accelerated the adoption of different approaches to service delivery. The use of telehealth has fast become the 'new normal' in the primary care setting and sets us on an exciting path to bring healthcare directly to the consumer.

I'm very proud of our collective achievements, and look forward to enhancing primary healthcare, as everyone's health and happiness matters.

Pattie Hudson

"If there can be a positive take away from the COVID-19 pandemic, it's that it has accelerated the adoption of different approaches to service delivery."



Meet the Board



Dr Peter Dobson

Board Chair MBBS, GAICD

Peter is a GP and practice owner 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.

He has consulted as a medical advisor to a multinational health corporation, contributing to the development of in-home monitoring of patients with multi-factorial and complex medical, physical and social needs.

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 and 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.

Rebecca has completed an Executive MBA, is a Graduate of Australian Institute of Company Directors, an Associate Fellow with the Australian Institute of Management, and an Adjunct Associate Professor at UNSW School of Public Health and Community Medicine.



Mr David Conry

Director A Dip Bus UQ, QAY, FAIM

David is Managing Director of Damarcon, a privately owned advisory and investment business. He has over a decade of experience on private-government and community-sector boards including roles as Chair. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and a graduate member of the AICD.

David has a strong community focus and was awarded the honour of Queensland's Australian of the Year 2007 and EY Social Entrepreneur of the Year for his work in founding the national disability organisation Youngcare, and in 2019 an Order of Australia for his community and arts sector contributions.



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 healthcare and has been closely involved in improving healthcare delivery through her involvement at local and state government levels.

Fiona held the position of Chair of the Sunshine Coast Division of General Practice from 1998 to 2008, and was a Director of CheckUP from 2008 to 2015. She has had extensive governance training through a number of programs including the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Fiona 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, AFACHSM

John is an experienced hospital and health service consultant who has over 30 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 from UNSW.

Currently an independent hospital and health service consultant, John was the General Manager of the Health Roundtable for three years, and prior to that was the senior medical and hospital consultant for Abt Associates, working on many health projects in developed and developing countries.

All John's work has involved enhancing primary care services for communities.



Mr John Woodward

Director BPharm (Hons), 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. He has previous experience in hospital pharmacy.

John is Chairperson of Sundale Limited, a provider of residential care, in-home care, retirement living, social house and rehabilitation 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 Queensland.

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

During the year to 30 June 2020, 9 Directors' meetings were held.

Board Members	Eligible to Attend	Number Attended
Dr Peter Dobson, Chair	9	8
Ms Rebecca Bell*	6	5
Mr David Conry	9	7
Mr Grant Dearlove	9	7
Dr Fiona McGrath	9	8
Dr John Menzies	9	9
Mr John Woodward	9	8

*Ms Bell was granted a leave of absence 01/8/2019 – 19/11/2019







Subcommittees and working groups



Finance, Audit & Risk Subcommittee

Directors

Mr Grant Dearlove
Dr Peter Dobson
Ms Rebecca Bell

Management

Ms Pattie Hudson
Mr Terry Plant



Clinical Assurance Subcommittee

Directors

Dr John Menzies
Dr Fiona McGrath
Mr John Woodward

Management

Ms Pattie Hudson
Ms Emma Whitehead
Ms Donna Waterford
Dr John Harper



Remuneration Working Group

Directors

Dr John Menzies
Ms Rebecca Bell
Mr Grant Dearlove



Independent Nominations Committee

Directors

Dr Fiona McGrath
Independent representatives
as required

COVID-19 response

An unprecedented challenge

Within the primary healthcare sector, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN was well-placed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as the conduit between the Australian Government Department of Health, Queensland Health, our Hospital and Health Services, peak bodies and general practice.

The PHN's COVID-19 response was already well underway by the time the World Health Organisation declared the spread of the virus a pandemic in March 2020. As early as December 2019, the PHN was already sharing communications and clinical advice with general practice in preparation of a likely outbreak, via regular e-newsletters, face to face practice visits and the creation of a dedicated COVID-19 webpage.

PHNs across the country were charged with distributing face masks from the National Stockpile to general practices and pharmacies who were unable to procure the personal protective equipment (PPE) themselves. The PHN's practice support team effectively coordinated this activity by converting a large meeting room at the PHN's Cotton Tree office to a busy distribution centre.

In addition to managing all enquiries relating to PPE and its daily distribution, the practice support team were by and large the first point of contact for general practices. Queries ranged from seeking information on infection control guidelines, testing guidelines and centres and commercial sources of PPE, to calls from those needing support to relieve anxiety around the uncertain nature of the situation.

The practice support team developed resources to help guide general practice through the pandemic, including a pandemic checklist and practice triage guide. A mental health pack for GPs was also developed, to support both patients and clinicians.

The initiative integrated with a range of PHN programs, such as HealthPathways and suicide prevention activities, and well as the Australian Government Department of Health's COVID-19 national health plan initiatives.

As social distancing measures were introduced, practice support visits were cancelled in favour of phone calls and emails. Training, education and networking events were rescheduled and delivered via online platforms like GoTo Meeting, Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

By April 2020, in accordance with state government recommendations, the PHN's workforce moved to a working from home model.

With so many activities moving to a remote location and/or online platform, and as positive cases in Queensland remained low, testing numbers also decreased, and the need to encourage patients with chronic diseases or pre-existing conditions to continue visiting their GP increased.

The PHN published several media releases, including one urging people to continue visiting their GP, and another encouraging people to get tested for COVID-19 for even the mildest of symptoms, both of which generated a strong amount of local newspaper, radio and television coverage.

In April 2020, the PHN ran a customisable content trial with ten general practices on the Sunshine Coast. Each participating practice identified vulnerable groups of patients over the age of 60 who were at high risk of contracting COVID-19 in the event of an outbreak.



Each patient was then sent an alert to their mobile phone with an accompanying short video of facts about the signs, symptoms and necessary precautions to take. In excess of 4,000 patients received this material, the cost of which was subsidised by the PHN.

To further facilitate an increase in the testing rate, the PHN was responsible for scoping the suitability of GP-led respiratory clinics across the region, to complement the existing Queensland Health-led fever clinics.

By the end of the financial year, five respiratory clinics were established, in Rockhampton, Gladstone, Emerald, Bundaberg, and Sippy Downs. While the COVID-19 response continues, it is impossible to overstate the impact of the pandemic on the day-to-day activities of Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN in 2019/20.

But one thing is clear: the success of the PHN's COVID-19 response has relied on three core tenets: the quality of information, the consistency of communication, and the continued cooperation and collaboration between internal departments and external stakeholders.



Photo credit: State of Queensland 2020





64

e-newsletters to GPs



53,473

visits to PHN's COVID-19 webpage



35%

increase in overall website traffic
from previous year



95,160

face masks delivered to general practice



15,600

P1 face masks delivered to respiratory clinics



1,349

total orders for PPE



3,485

practice engagements during the COVID-19
period from 1 January to 30 June.

*This includes practice visits, emails,
phone calls and video calls.*

Emerald respiratory clinic

At the start of April 2020, the Central Queensland town of Emerald, population 14,119, became home to the first respiratory clinic to open in rural Australia, as part of the nation-wide COVID-19 response.

The new clinic was operational just one week after the federal government announced it would fund 100 private practice clinics around the country to assess people presenting with mild to moderate symptoms of the novel coronavirus.

The quick turnaround was a remarkable achievement, not in the least due to some early confusion in the sector around the difference between a respiratory clinic and a fever clinic, with several of the latter already operational at the time.

Fever clinics were set up by Queensland Health, and their respective hospital and health services to test suspected COVID cases, while GP-led respiratory clinics were established and contracted by the federal Department of Health for the testing and management of respiratory symptoms.

Both types of clinics were established to reduce the burden on existing services, allowing GPs to continue their valuable work of managing their patients' day to day health needs.

The PHN's role was to assess and propose possible sites based on local need and anticipated number of cases, geographical location and population distribution, accessibility for patients, other testing facilities in the vicinity and site specifications.

In total, five respiratory clinics were contracted by the Commonwealth across the PHN's region, and all met a strict range of operational criteria including separate external entrances, bathrooms and ventilation systems, multiple isolation rooms, and onsite parking; as well as commitment to minimum opening hours.

Sites were assessed in person where possible but largely via virtual means, due not only to social distancing restrictions but the remoteness of some locations - Emerald is nearly 300 kilometres, or an almost four-hour drive, west of Rockhampton.

Assembled in just three days by local tradespeople, construction on the first rural clinic in Australia was coordinated by Emerald Medical Group, led by Dr Ewen McPhee who is also the president of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

The clinic was initially staffed up to four hours a day, seven days a week, by local primary healthcare professionals, including Dr McPhee, kitted out in full personal protective equipment (PPE).

Their efforts helped reduce presentations at the emergency department as well as protect general practice by providing somewhere for patients to go.

The Emerald respiratory clinic is a great example of how that community, in partnership with health professionals, often leads the way in terms of innovation in healthcare delivery.



HealthPathways

Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN's HealthPathways went from strength to strength in 2019/20, demonstrating its value via a swift region-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A suite of clinical information and resources was created and released over several months in early 2020. This COVID-19 Response Package ensured up-to-date guidance for clinicians in alignment with state and national level guidance.

The COVID-19 Response Package on all HealthPathways sites included a dedicated COVID-19 information resource page to provide quick access to all COVID-19 resources. It offered three tiers of information including guidance for local hospital and health services with links to the COVID-19 specific pages on the sites and local HHS publications.

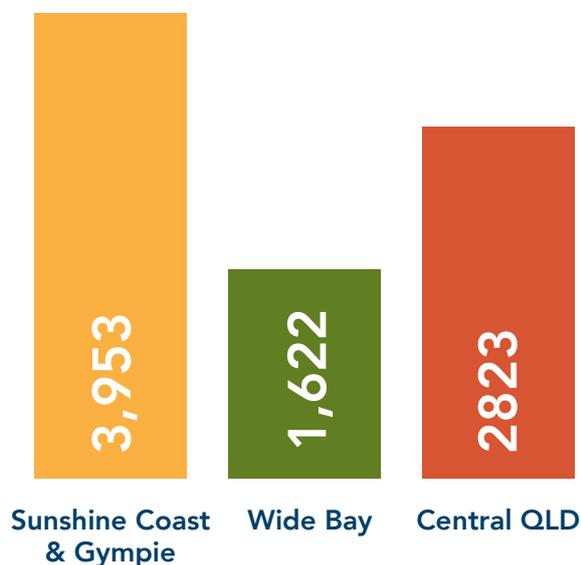
This page also provided access to state and national guidance with links to department and college guidelines, and to international guidance with links to WHO, CDC, and other relevant international publications.

A COVID-19 Practice Preparation page was developed and shared across the HealthPathways community. The page provided guidance and resources to assist practices prepare for and manage COVID-19.

A COVID-19 Assessment and Management clinical pathway covered what clinicians need to know when a patient presents with possible COVID-19,

Visits to all COVID-19 related HealthPathways

*From 1 March to 30 June 2020,
individual page views*



while a COVID-19 request page provided frequently updated guidance to assist navigation of patients requiring testing or management for COVID-19.

In addition to clinical information, the HealthPathways COVID-19 Response Package also detailed the impact of COVID-19 on local services which aggregated changes to services on individual request pages, and provided an overview of service impact for clinicians.

Over the course of 2019/20, the PHN's HealthPathways teams continued to localise non-COVID-19 pathways, and the Central Queensland and Sunshine Coast teams both achieved a significant milestone by localising over 600 live pathways.

Healthdirect Video Call

In March 2020, as social distancing measures were introduced and enforced right across Queensland, the PHN facilitated access to the healthdirect Video Call service to 254 clinics and almost 900 users across the region.

The healthdirect Video Call service is a comprehensive, secure and reliable video consulting service, and helped safeguard the health and wellbeing of general practitioners and their patients. The service provided a virtual platform for 11,870 consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic between March and June 2020.



254
Clinics registered
across region



897
Users registered
across region

Month, 2020	No. of Video Consults
March	522
April	5,288
May	3,849
June	2,211



Emerald Community of Excellence

In 2019, the mining town of Emerald in the Central Highlands was one of the first communities across the country to have widespread digital connectivity across the healthcare system after it was chosen as one of just two trial sites for the Australian Digital Health Agency's Communities of Excellence program.

The aim of Communities of Excellence is to improve local health outcomes through the use of technology, by connecting both health providers and community members with digital models of health including My Health Record, Telehealth and electronic prescribing.

Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN is one of the lead delivery partners in the initiative. In 2019/20, the PHN embedded a full time Digital Health Officer in Emerald to facilitate engagement activities on the ground. A local Emerald physiotherapist was also appointed as a Project Officer to assist allied health professionals and visiting specialists register and use MHR, as well as other digital health tools.

These engagement activities help to keep healthcare providers informed about project updates and the latest information regarding digital health. The activities also support community members and local organisations to raise awareness of the project and highlight the benefits that digital health can provide.

Emerald was chosen as one of two pilot sites across the country due to its population size, which at approximately 14,000 people is large enough to have a variety of local and visiting services, a high level of engagement from local healthcare professionals, as well as community support.

Access to patient information via platforms like My Health Record is critical to making good decisions about care anywhere, and is of particular value to people living in regional areas who might have to travel to see clinicians and/or specialists across their healthcare journey.

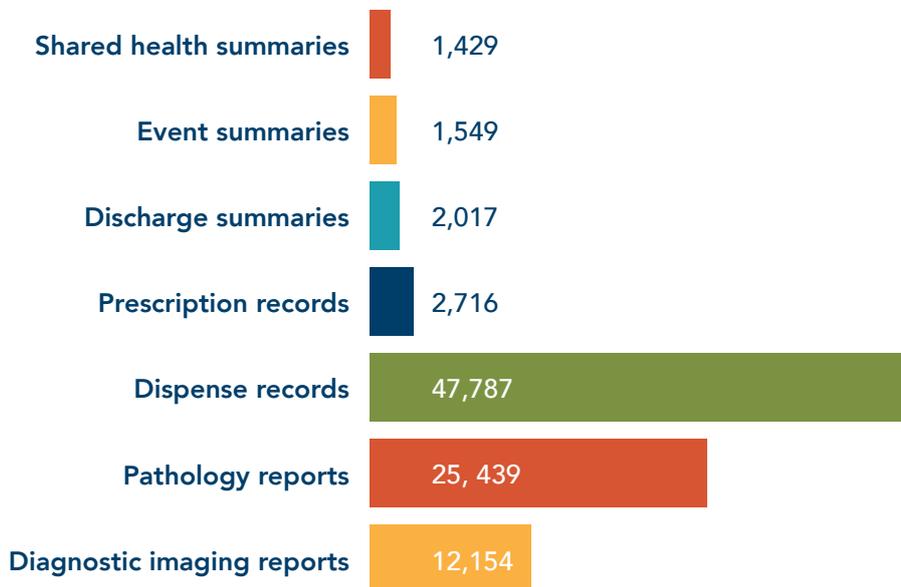
Not only has the Communities of Excellence trial shown strong results in connecting and engaging healthcare providers and patients with digital health technologies, it has also developed an innovative model which can be replicated in similar communities nation-wide.

No. of providers connected

- All 4 general practices are registered with MHR
- All 4 pharmacies are registered with MHR
- Currently there are 6 out of 10 allied health organisations registered with MHR
- Emerald Hospital is registered and using MHR

No. of documents uploaded

(data from week ending 30/06/2019 - 28/6/2020)



Zak Nichols and Caren Bennett
Emerald Communities of Excellence

"I live in Emerald, Central Queensland and have travelled to Brisbane for multiple specialist appointments, and surgeries for my daughter over the last four years, after she was diagnosed with a brain tumour.

My Health Record has been extremely helpful reviewing overwhelming results, when initially received by the specialist as I never took information in.

Also, having all her medical history in one location has enabled me to provide important information required to daycare/school for enrolments with ease."

TAYLAH,
Emerald mother.



Change in approach to stepped care

Mental health

The PHN's Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs team faced a challenging year in 2019/20, with the decision to remodel the stepped care approach to mental health service delivery and establish a new central intake and referral service. Stepped care is an evidence-based approach to the delivery of mental health services characterised by a hierarchy of interventions, ranging from the least to the most intensive, matched to an individuals' needs.

External providers contracted to the PHN delivered stepped care services across the region, along with the intake service for the program, from early 2018. However, by mid 2019 it had become clear the service was not able to adequately meet the needs of regional communities, especially in the Wide Bay. Based on our local service information, our relationships with our HHS partners and emerging best practice, we consulted with communities and providers about how the service could be developed to be more responsive.

In late 2019, the PHN went to market for providers to deliver stepped care services, through the PHN's new Mental Health Clinical Services Panel.

In total, 347 mental health providers from across the region, including sole traders, were invited to apply to be part of the Panel.

This new model engages a cross-section of both larger providers as well as sole practitioners. This gives the PHN access to a larger pool of providers to draw upon if, as, and when demand for mental health increases. It also improves access to services for people living in hard to reach rural areas.

At the same time, the PHN established a central intake and referral service run in-house by the PHN, to help direct patients to the mental health services best suited to their needs. This model was based on emerging national best practice around improving primary mental healthcare intake, assessment and onward referral.

Position descriptions, service manuals, a clinical governance framework, and clinical escalation pathways were all developed to ensure the new intake service was backed by robust and fit-for-purpose systems and processes. New staff were also recruited to manage the central intake and referral line.

This shift in approach means mental health services are even more locally-focused. This aligns with the priorities developed jointly with each of the Hospital and Health Services across the PHN's region for 2020-2025.

The new approach also supports local workforce development by enabling the PHN to more clearly identify service and workforce gaps and direct more funding to local community organisations to deliver certain parts of the stepped care program.

Since its launch at the start of April 2020, the new intake service has received ongoing positive feedback from referrers and has consistently met a key performance indicator of acknowledging 100% of referrals, and providing pathways within two business days.

With mental health expected to become even more of a priority in the months and years ahead in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the change in approach has proven timely, responsive to community needs and is a credit to the resilience and adaptability of the PHN's Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs team.





Clinical Councils

Engagement and Health Planning

Over the course of 2019/20, engagement and health planning across the Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN region was informed by three GP-led Clinical Councils. The Councils are made up of more than 60 members from across the sector, including general practice, pharmacy and allied health.

The PHN facilitated 18 Council meetings over 2019/20, which worked to enhance communication and engagement between the PHN and Council members, resulting in better understanding of the healthcare needs of our local communities.

These meetings are a valuable opportunity to utilise Council members' skills and expertise across the commissioning cycle to help address service gaps, ensure value for money, and ultimately improve commissioned program delivery. This in-depth local knowledge can be seen in better outcomes for consumers and a reduction in unnecessary admissions to hospital.

With the adoption of digital technology initiatives across the country, 2019/20 saw a greater need to increase the knowledge and understanding of smart technology solutions within our Councils, to improve primary healthcare delivery, and the efficient transfer of health information.

As a result of these regular meetings, there is now dynamic strategic planning within each Clinical Council, including a new, streamlined interface between SCHN's Board and the Clinical Councils.



“Linking into the WB Clinical Council provides an opportunity to review, present and discuss gaps and how we, as a collective of clinicians across the region may work together to address them.

In some instances, we assist to provide oversight and confirm that data presented is a true record of our needs. In other ways we identify opportunities to ensure services engaged locally are addressing our local community needs.”

LISA BAKER

Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service, Allied Health
Wide Bay Clinical Council member

“I have really enjoyed being on the Council for another year. I can see that this is a working council and there is good flow of information bi-directionally.

I love the discussions about primary health and am heartened to see things that we talk about being implemented in the community.

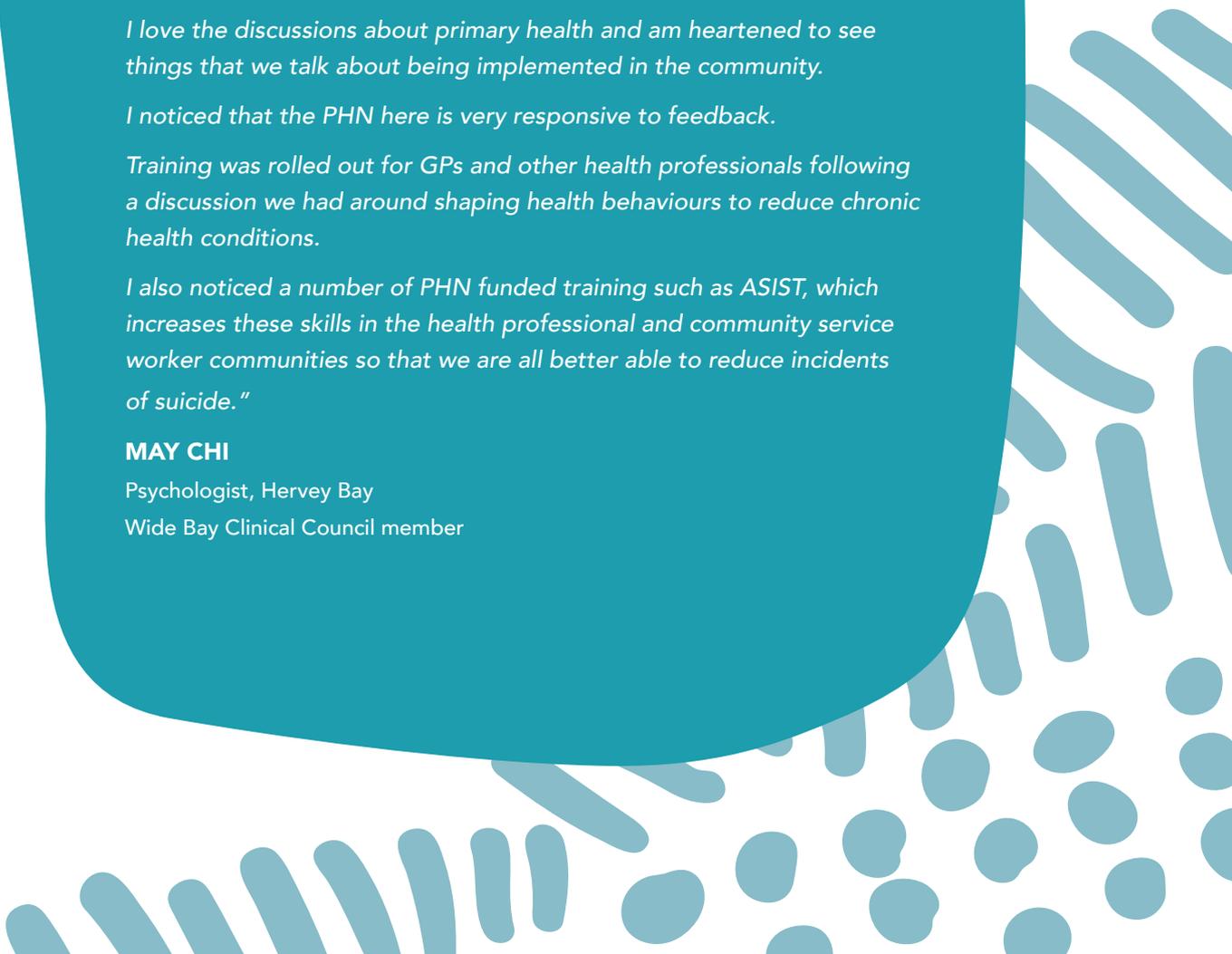
I noticed that the PHN here is very responsive to feedback.

Training was rolled out for GPs and other health professionals following a discussion we had around shaping health behaviours to reduce chronic health conditions.

I also noticed a number of PHN funded training such as ASIST, which increases these skills in the health professional and community service worker communities so that we are all better able to reduce incidents of suicide.”

MAY CHI

Psychologist, Hervey Bay
Wide Bay Clinical Council member





Palliative care

During 2019/20, the Greater Choice for At Home Palliative Care program enabled effective collaboration across health sectors, with the intention of improving access to palliative care in the home.

Health workforce was identified as a major issue in some of the rural areas, and the PHN has worked closely with stakeholders in the region to address some of these challenges. The PHN has been working alongside specialists to develop HealthPathways to improve referral processes between primary and acute care. This now ensures timely access to services, where patients may have otherwise travelled outside of their local areas to see a specialist.

Through our partnerships, including with HHSs, our PHN has been able to link specialist palliative care services with GPs and patients in providing face-to-face consultations. HHS-funded programs such as 'SpaRTa' and Pall Consult have provided telehealth services for patients, and clinical telephone support for primary health providers in rural and remote areas. Additionally, with a co-funding arrangement in place, we are able to offer clinical placements to improve the GP workforce knowledge, skills and confidence to support patients to die in their place of choice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership Roundtable

In April 2019, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN brought together the most senior decision-makers from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary healthcare providers to form the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership Roundtable (Roundtable) to improve the provision of safe, quality care to Indigenous people within the PHN's footprint.

With representation from groups like Bidgerdii Community Health Services in Rockhampton, and North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health on the Sunshine Coast, Roundtable partners committed to collaboratively supporting all local mobs across the region, to achieve greater social and emotional wellbeing outcomes in the areas that members can each influence the most.

In 2019/20, the group met quarterly, with each meeting themed to prompt and promote the discussion and exploration of innovative ways of working together to meet the primary healthcare needs of one of our most vulnerable populations.

These themes have included mental health, alcohol, other drugs and suicide; workforce; culturally informed direct commissioning processes (such as Nukal Murra in Western Queensland); and the impact of, and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic across the region.

Roundtable partners provide advice, feedback and guidance to the PHN on a range of subjects including PHN-funded programs and services, commissioning and contracting processes, community stakeholder engagement and culturally appropriate service design and provision.

As a result of the Roundtable meetings, the PHN has gained a greater understanding of the needs of urban, regional, rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the role we can play by working collaboratively with our partners.



Partners in turn have developed their understanding of PHN commissioning processes including the health needs assessment, analysis, prioritisation and evaluation procedures, and now have a direct conduit to inform, influence and engage with senior PHN stakeholders.

Creating stronger relationships to improve the line of communication between the PHN and our partners is essential to the success of the Roundtable, as some projects, like the creation of culturally appropriate commissioning processes, require a long-term vision.

The PHN relies on the vital input and feedback from our partners; their unique perspectives will inform the development of such activities into the future.

There is an increasing level of optimism that together we can make the necessary changes to the way we do our business to continue improving the social, emotional wellbeing and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Roundtable in action - Rites of Passage camps

The Rites of Passage camps engage school-aged young people, fathers and significant male role models to build a strong community of men.

The first Rites of Passage for Butchulla boys on Butchulla Country in 200 years was held in August 2018.

Presentations and lengthy discussions at the Roundtable have allowed Gordon Browning, the PHN's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Coordinator, to bring together stakeholders around the Rites of Passage camps in all three regions for the first time.

Gympie Health Hub

Gympie residents now have access to a range of vital health and community support services all under the one roof, with the opening of the Gympie Health Hub in September 2019.

Located behind headspace Gympie in a refurbished church, the Gympie Health Hub was made possible through an investment of \$400,000 from Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, and in a unique business model, also serves as the PHN's Gympie office.

SCHN has long had a presence in Gympie, first as a Medicare Local and then as a PHN with an office space in Mary Street, shared with other community-facing organisations.

Collaboration is part of the PHN's integrated approach to service delivery, and with the creation of this Hub, the PHN is able to work inclusively with the community to offer support to groups with increased level of health needs.

Partnering businesses in the Gympie Health Hub include REMARKability, Community Solutions, Cooloola Human Services Network, Drug Arm, Gympie Region Volunteer Centre, James Cook University, KEIHs (Keys to early intervention in homelessness service), Lifespan Health, NCACCH (North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health), QulHN (Queensland Injectors Health Network), and RAQ (Relationships Australia Queensland).

The Gympie Health Hub encourages and enables a sharing of resources, a coordination of services, and helps to promote the connection between services to those who need them.

By putting local service providers all under the one roof, in a welcoming, well-maintained environment, the Hub has become a 'go to' place for smaller organisations to provide safe accessible services to some of the communities most vulnerable without funding their own premises, which can be prohibitively expensive.

This approach was taken based on the need (identified in the health needs assessment) to support the integration of both health and non-health services within the community that impact short- and long-term health outcomes.

To support the Gympie community, the PHN has developed a range of resources such as flyers with information about health and transport options for people in remote areas; a locally-specific suicide prevention booklet; and a guide to aged care services in the region.

These resources are on display in the Hub, alongside a range of community-focused brochures and information on issues such as housing, domestic violence, family, health, aged care, children services, youth services, mental health, homelessness services, multicultural services, men's services and counselling.



400m²
total floor space



12
service providers



497
visitors in February*

*the last full month prior
to COVID-19 closures

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