

THE DIFFERENCE WE MADE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) respectfully acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the Gold Coast - the Yugambeh-speaking people - who are the Traditional Custodians of the lands, winds and waters of this region.

We honour the ongoing connection these Nations have to the land and community, and we are committed to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the spirit of respect, partnership, and reconciliation.

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Acknowledgement of Artwork
The artwork used throughout this report was painted by Narelle Urquhart, a proud Wiradjuri woman. The artwork depicts a strong community, with good support for each other, day or night. One mob. This artwork was commissioned by GCPHN.

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Gold Coast location photography in this document is courtesy of Destination Gold Coast.
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Data:
The figures in this report are drawn from a range of data sources. As such, they should not be aggregated or directly compared across sections.



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BUILDING ONE WORLD CLASS HEALTH SYSTEM FOR THE *Gold Coast*

FROM THE CEO

The past year has been one of outstanding growth, collaboration, and achievement for the Gold Coast Primary Health Network as we continue to support a healthier, more connected community.

In November 2024, the Southport Medicare Urgent Care Clinic (UCC) opened, following the success of the Oxenford Medicare UCC a year earlier. Both services are open seven days a week, fully bulk-billed and operate extended hours, helping ease pressure on Gold Coast University Hospital, the busiest emergency department in the country. Since opening, Southport Medicare UCC has recorded 8,527 presentations, while Oxenford has seen more than 22,000.

Another milestone was the release of the Gold Coast Joint Regional Needs Assessment (2024-2026), a comprehensive 342-page analysis developed with Gold Coast Health, Queensland Ambulance Service, and Kalwun Development Corporation. This landmark report provides the most detailed assessment ever of the region's health needs and sets a strong foundation for integrated, person-centred planning under the Queensland-Commonwealth Partnership.

We also invested in workforce capacity through initiatives such as the Disaster Response and Mental Health Training Subsidy, enabling health professionals to better respond to crises such as ex-Cyclone Alfred. Our Healthy Ageing programs – Bond University Allied Health (BUnyAH), PainWISE Frailty Care in the Community, and Mungulli Yarn & Walk – were recommissioned after strong outcomes, with more than 150 participants reporting significant improvements in wellbeing and quality of life.

Prevention remained a priority. The Winter Wellness campaign boosted immunisation uptake and Immunisation Ready Grants awarded to 13 local providers to strengthen systems and awareness. Primary Sense, our data-driven clinical tool, continued

to empower general practice teams to deliver safer, smarter and more coordinated care.

We also strengthened primary care capacity and aged care readiness through workforce training and emergency preparedness initiatives, including the hugely successful Aged Care Symposium, webinars on digital health integration such as My Health Record, and tailored support for practice-level emergency response planning.

Looking ahead, our work with Gold Coast Health on the Joint Regional Plan for Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, and Alcohol and Other Drugs (2025-2028) will guide integrated responses to some of the region's most complex challenges.

On a personal note, this will be my final report as CEO of the GCPHN. After 20 years with the former Gold Coast Medicare Local, Division of General Practice and today's GCPHN, I will retire at the end of 2025.

It has been a privilege to work alongside such dedicated staff, Directors, partners, and community members. Together, we have built a strong foundation for the future, and I am confident that the GCPHN will continue to thrive and deliver meaningful change for the people of the Gold Coast for many years to come.



Gold Coast PHN

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

In 2025, the Gold Coast Primary Health Network celebrates some key milestones.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN). Established in 2015, PHNs formally transitioned from Medicare Local, which themselves evolved from the Division of General Practice in earlier years. From the outset, GCPHN has benefited from the guidance of astute and dedicated directors, collaborating with three founding members whose organisations were instrumental in shaping its success: General Practice Gold Coast (GPGC), the Primary Care Partnership Council (PCPC), and the City of Gold Coast (CoGC). We continue to value this strong partnership, together with Gold Coast Health and work towards our shared vision for a healthy and resilient Gold Coast community.

Steering the evolution of GCPHN from its beginnings nearly a decade ago, is our accomplished CEO, Matt Carrodus. Under his leadership, GCPHN's budget and responsibilities have grown significantly, reflecting not only the trust of the Commonwealth but also the organisation's reputation for strong governance, innovation, and community impact.

His tenure has been marked by achievements that will have an enduring legacy:

- **Building partnerships** through initiatives such as the Joint Regional Needs Assessment and Joint Plan with Gold Coast Health for mental health and older people. Collaboration with key stakeholders including Bond and Griffith Universities, local GPs and community service providers, elected Members of Parliament and most importantly consumers.

- **Driving innovation** through the inception, development and deployment nationally of Primary Sense (a point-of-care clinical decision aid and real-time population health management data extraction tool) to 14 PHNs and 18 million Australians.
- **Strengthening resilience** in our local health system in times of challenge including disaster preparedness. Matt guided the organisation through the pandemic, positioning GCPHN as Queensland's primary care reference point for COVID-19 information. He has also led the implementation of Urgent Care Clinics, an Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinic and a Medicare Mental Health Centre.

As GCPHN marks these milestones and achievements, it is with both gratitude and sadness that we farewell Matt. After decades of extraordinary leadership, he leaves behind an organisation that is stronger, more connected, and well respected across the health system. His legacy of collaboration, excellence, and unwavering commitment to the health of our community will continue to guide our organisation into the future. On behalf of both current and past Board members, I extend our best wishes for your continued success Matt, whether in your next professional endeavour or in the surf enjoying a well-earned rest.



The difference we made 2024-2025

ABOUT GCPHN





Gold Coast Primary Health Network is an independent, not-for-profit company established by the Australian Government. Our mission is to assess and address local health needs, working with diverse partners to create a cohesive healthcare system for the Gold Coast.



We aim to improve health services for residents by:

- **Needs Assessment and Solutions** – We identify local health needs and design solutions, from planning to establishing new services.
- **Funding Services** – We fund organisations across areas like mental health, aged care, and immunisation, enhancing access and support for the community.
- **System Support and Improvement** – We foster collaboration among healthcare professionals, improving patient care quality.

Our strategic goals

-  Improve coordination of care to ensure people receive the right care in the right place, at the right time, by the right person.
-  Increase efficiency and effectiveness of primary care services, particularly for those at risk of poor health outcomes.
-  Actively engage and advocate for the primary care sector to facilitate improvement in our local health system.
-  Operate as a high performing, efficient, and accountable organisation.

A DECADE OF IMPROVED HEALTH ON THE GOLD COAST

This year marks 10 years since Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) was established as part of a national initiative to strengthen the coordination and delivery of primary health care across Australia.

Since transitioning from Gold Coast Medicare Local in 2015, GCPHN has partnered with general practice, allied health, hospitals, community organisations and consumers to meet the evolving health needs of the Gold Coast region.


Over the past decade, key milestones have included establishing a strong commissioning framework, leading the local COVID-19 vaccine rollout, expanding mental health support, and introducing data-driven tools to drive improved planning and outcomes.

The following pages highlight year-by-year achievements that reflect GCPHN's ongoing commitment to innovation, collaboration and healthier futures for Gold Coast residents.




CELEBRATING 10 YEARS



 1 July marked the formal establishment of GCPHN.


Development of local needs assessment identifying service gaps and commissioning priorities across mental health, chronic disease and Indigenous health.

Initiation of stakeholder and community engagement via clinical and community advisory councils.

 Implementation of early commissioned service funding for mental health, AOD, Indigenous health and other programs.

2013/2014

Transition from Medicare Local to the new Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) structure under the National PHN rollout.

 Advanced collaboration with Gold Coast Health on health needs assessments, laying the groundwork for better coordinated primary care (although formal PHN status wasn't yet in place, local joint planning began this year).

2014/2015




2015/2016



 30 June marked the completion of Primary Care Gold Coast Limited's first year as GCPHN.


90% of general practices on the Gold Coast had interactions with GCPHN.

Strategic planning was completed in line with the Australian Government Department of Health key objectives, and the 'Building one world class health system' vision was adopted.

 A move from three separate office sites to a new unified office accommodation.

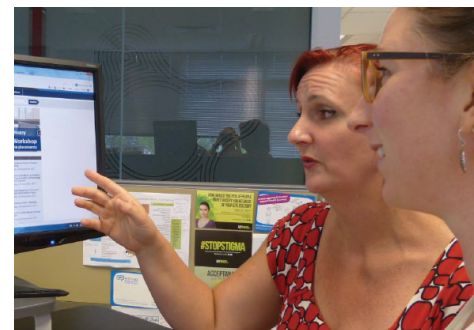
 Strengthened integration of primary and acute care, via a growing General Practice Liaison Unit (GPLU) that helped reduce Gold Coast Health outpatient waitlists and improve patient flow through GP hospital collaboration.

Formal joint commissioning planning between GCPHN, Gold Coast Health, local universities and GP practices.

 ISO 9001:2015 quality certification achieved, underpinning continuous improvement.

GCPHN continued its priority focus on Digital Health, ensuring health information could be shared securely online to deliver safer, better-quality healthcare.

2016/2017



2017/2018

1,050 clients

commenced treatments with GCPHN-commissioned Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) services.

New commissioned services included a variety of health and wellbeing groups, to support balanced social, emotional and mental wellbeing.

 The Clinical Placements Program, in partnership with Bond and Griffith universities, supported 189 final-year and 286 introductory medical student placements across 126 practices.

2,252 clients

received support in their recovery from mental illness.

1,371

residents enrolled in the My Health for Life program to reduce their risk of chronic disease.

My Health Record engagement included face-to-face meetings with 935 healthcare providers, and 156 consumer events.

 Deeper engagement with lived experience stakeholders and local providers in co-development of regional mental health responses, with 394 clients accessing complex mental health services run by Primary and Community Care Services (PCCS).

219

requests for support received via the GCPHN practice support helpdesk.

2018/2019





Led the COVID-19 immunisation rollout, providing strong support to general practices on allocation, stock management and cold-chain processes.

Primary Sense, data extraction and population health planning tool, was commercialised and installed in 82 practices, with 110 GPs using the tool daily.

Launched the foundational Joint Regional Plan for mental health, alcohol and other drugs and suicide prevention.

The Northern Gold Coast Community Suicide Prevention Service commencing client care.



The Psychological Support Program was extensively redesigned by GCPHN to enhance access of these services to vulnerable people.

The Way Back Support Service received a \$1.1 million expansion commitment to June 2026 from the Commonwealth Government and Queensland Health.

254 people were supported through the Care Finder Program since its commencement in January 2023 with 53% of delivery occurring face-to-face.

March 2023, GCPHN launched a refreshed RAP commitment towards reconciliation for the Traditional Custodians of the Gold Coast region.



Launch of the Joint Regional Needs Assessment (JRNA) 2024-2026, collaborating with Gold Coast Health, Kalwun and QAS.

700+ education and training events with 11,000+ attendees over the past 10 years.

Development of the second iteration of the Joint Regional Plan 2025-2028 for Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and AOD.

Strengthening primary care and aged care readiness through workforce training, the Aged Care Symposium, digital health webinars, and customised support for practice-level emergency planning.

2019/2020

551 people were supported through the Way Back Support Service.

2021/2022

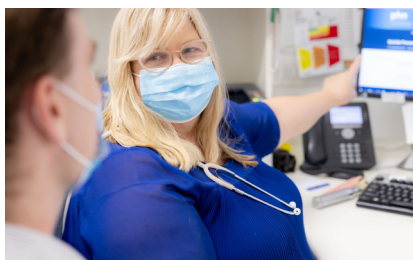
April-June 2020 saw four respiratory clinics established with our support, testing 6,000+ people across Nerang, Upper Coomera, Hope Island and Burleigh Waters.

915 primary care professionals attended 51 education and training events, supporting the local workforce.

headspace Southport continued to be one of the busiest headspace centres in the country, supporting 2,772 young people who received 11,406 occasions of service.

100% of the 219 clients in the Turning Pain into Gain program reported a high level of satisfaction.

2020/2021



Continued support of the COVID-19 immunisation rollout, 1,377,266 vaccines administered on the Gold Coast – 80% first dose, 77.8% fully vaccinated.

In partnership with Gold Coast Health and PCCS, a new Safe Space Hub was launched at Southport to provide after-hours mental health support.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) embedded cultural understanding into our internal and external activities, striving for equal health, social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The After-Hours AOD Program supported 932 people, 73% of whom reported significant improvement.

2022/2023



The Gold Coast's first Medicare Urgent Care Clinic opened at Oxenford in November 2023.

\$5,500,000+ in 186 Strengthening Medicare grants were distributed to expand patient access and support safe, quality care.

Primary Sense generated 13,505 medication safety alerts, with 22% of those alerts resulting in behaviour change.

The Reconnection for Resilience Community Grants Program provided 15 community grants for local not-for-profit organisations, healthcare organisations, sporting clubs, and primary care providers affected by the 2023 Christmas night storm.

2024/2025



GOLD COAST HEALTH *profile*

698,017

residents live
in our region

13,901

identify as Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
people

88,076

use a language other
than English at
home

4,595,773

GP services provided
to Gold Coast residents
in the past 12 months



19

people are born per day

39

is the median age
of residents

84

is the average life
expectancy



853

General Practitioners

206

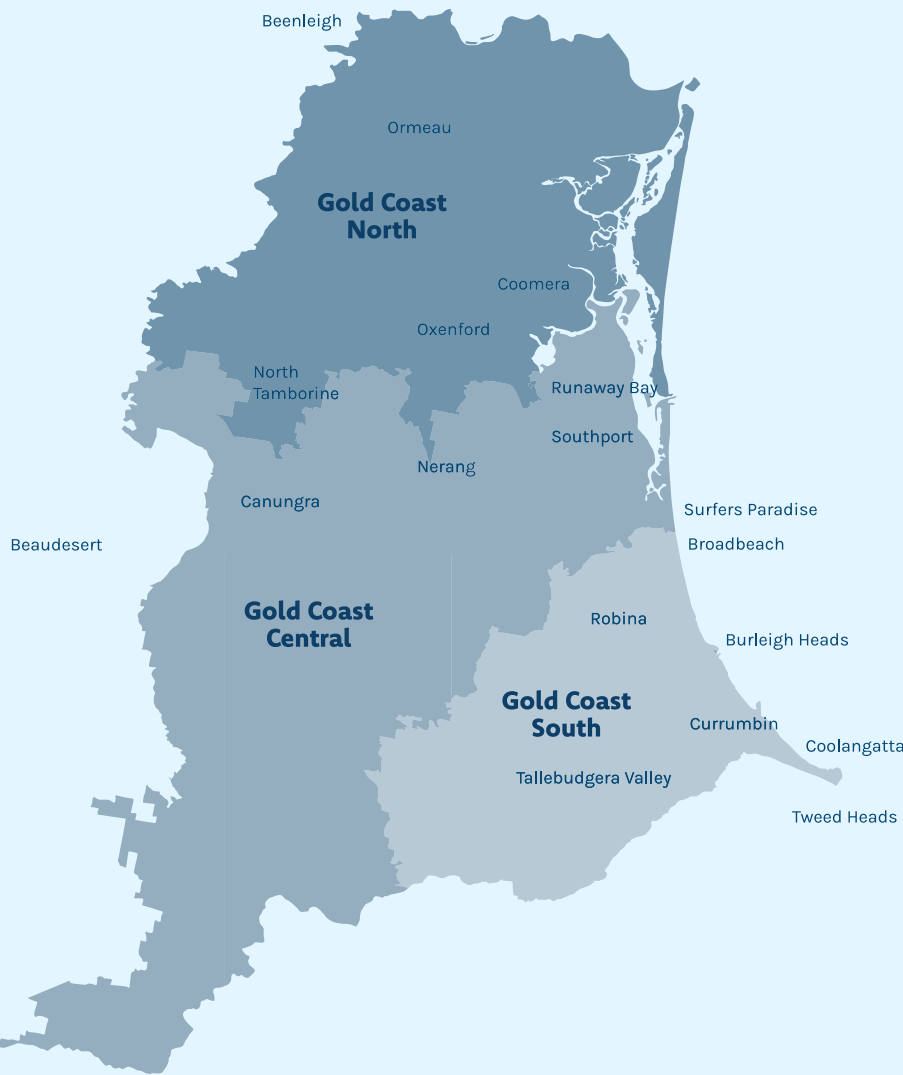
General Practices

85.4%

of adults saw a GP
in the past 12 months

OUR REGION

The GCPHN region covers 1,402km², stretching from Ormeau in the north to Coolangatta and Tallebudgera Valley in the south, east to Broadbeach and Surfers Paradise, and west to North Tamborine and Canungra.



58.1%

of people who assessed
their health as very good
or excellent

30.8%

of adults who reported
having at least one long-
term health condition

28.8%

of adults saw a
specialist in the past
12 months

GCPHN AND SONIA *champion* REGULAR BREAST SCREENING

Energetic 59-year-old Sonia Shreeve is a mother of three, grandmother of four, a high school industry liaison officer, and an avid traveller who loves exploring the world. But late last year, while on holiday in Italy, Sonia’s health journey suddenly took an unexpected turn.

“I was in the shower when I felt a lump in my breast. It was tiny, but I thought, ‘Oh, that shouldn’t be there’, and as soon as I got back to Australia, I went straight to my doctor,” Sonia said.

Sonia had been diligent about breast screening, booking in every two years since her early 50s. Her last screen was in early 2023, with the next due earlier this year.

But this time, her own self-awareness proved critical as an ultrasound and biopsy confirmed the lump was breast cancer.

Some 99% of her cells were positive to the oestrogen hormone receptor while 90% were positive to the progesterone receptor.

“I was 58 at the time, with no known family history of breast cancer. But my doctor said about one in seven women my age contract this kind of breast cancer,” she said.

According to the Cancer Council, about 20,700 people are diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia every year, making it the most prevalent cancer in women aside from skin cancers.

For Sonia things were about to get moving.

“Just days after diagnosis I was admitted to the Robina Hospital for surgery, but the margins weren’t clear afterwards and I had to have another,” she said.

“From there I had to wait five weeks to heal enough to undergo 15 courses of radiation at Gold Coast University Hospital.”

Today, Sonia’s recovery is well on track, and she is looking forward to many more adventures.

“At my post-surgery consultation, my oncologist told me not to look in the rear-view mirror, because all the signs going forward are good,” she said.

Sonia’s experience has reinforced two important lessons: never delay breast screening and never ignore changes in your body.

“I was lucky mine was found early; at 13 millimetres, it was small but big enough to feel. That moment in the shower probably saved my life,” she said.

“My message is to keep up with your regular breast screens as if your life depends on them, because it just might.

“Bodies can change in the blink of an eye, and if you notice or even suspect any change between scans, trust your intuition and get it checked immediately.”

Sonia will be ever grateful for the outstanding medical care she received.

“Everyone at Robina Hospital and Gold Coast University Hospital were amazing, from admissions staff to surgeons, and my nurse, Emily, guided me every step of the way,” she said.

Now, with treatment behind her, Sonia is back planning her next trip, embracing life, family and new horizons.



Sonia Shreeve,
breast cancer
survivor



Boosting ACCESS TO CERVICAL SCREENING SELF-COLLECTION

A facilitated quality improvement activity, delivered in partnership with Queensland Health from November 2024 to May 2025, supported general practices to broaden the use of self-collection and increase access for under-screened populations.



9 PRACTICES

participated to broaden adoption of self-collection and improve screening uptake.



7 OF 9

practices had a GP complete the Optimising Self-Collected Cervical Screening clinical audit.



As of May 2025

63.3%

of Gold Coast general practices integrated with the National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR) – surpassing the national average of 50%.



74%

proportional increase in self-collection use, and growth in average cervical screening tests per month.



BENEFITS

- More practices now routinely offering self-collection.
- Greater use of QI resources and practice data to drive improvement.



Protecting babies FROM RSV STARTS BEFORE BIRTH

For Nerang bookkeeper Tamara Hopkins, choosing to get the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine during pregnancy was an easy decision.

“I’ve had vaccines for whooping cough and flu, and adding RSV just made sense for peace of mind. I didn’t even know the RSV vaccine existed until I heard about it at the Gold Coast University Hospital. The nurses said RSV cases were rising, and I wanted to do everything I could to protect my baby,” Tamara said.

As Tamara and husband Justin prepare to welcome their fourth child, she said this pregnancy feels particularly special.

“After we conceived Elijah naturally, we had two ectopic pregnancies and both tubes were removed, so this baby, like Scarlett, was conceived through IVF. So, he or she is technically a fraternal twin to Scarlett, from the same cycle, which is pretty amazing,” she said.

Tamara’s story highlights a growing effort to raise awareness of RSV, a highly contagious virus that can cause serious illness in infants. In 2024, Queensland reported 42,669 RSV cases, with 26% in children under two.

Gold Coast Primary Health Network Board Chair, Dr Ka-Kiu Cheung, said while RSV affects people of all ages, certain groups are more vulnerable to complications.

“Respiratory syncytial virus is a leading cause of respiratory illness in children, with infants under six months being particularly at risk. Vaccination is recommended for women between 28 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. There is also RSV protection available for infants under eight months of age,” Dr Cheung said.

Dr Cheung explained the RSV vaccine works by helping the mother’s immune system produce protective antibodies, which are passed on to the baby through the placenta.

“This passive immunisation helps shield the newborn from RSV during the first six months of life, which is when babies are most at risk,” she said.

Dr Cheung said vaccination during pregnancy is safe and strongly recommended.

“Staying up to date with vaccinations during pregnancy and early childhood ensures strong protection against serious diseases, giving children the best possible start in life,” she said.

The national respiratory syncytial virus vaccination program was officially introduced on 3 February 2025 under the National Immunisation Program.



Boosting IMMUNISATION ACCESS ACROSS THE GOLD COAST

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) delivered grants of up to \$10,000 each to support initiatives to increase immunisation rates across the Gold Coast.

Awarded to 13 local primary care providers, medical organisations, not-for-profit groups and endorsed health professionals, the Immunisation Ready Grants helped improve the community's knowledge on the benefits of immunisation.

The funding, provided by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, covered training and education, staffing and operations and other resources.

One grant funded an all-day pop-up immunisation clinic at the Paradise Point Parklands in November 2024, coordinated by Gold Coast Medical Centre at Runaway Bay.

“We provided free immunisations for COVID-19, influenza, shingles and pneumonia to eligible people and our practice staff provided plenty of information on why people should immunise, along with the importance of keeping their immunisations up to date,” Dr Reza Madah said.

“Staff included one doctor, two administrative staff and two supporting medical staff who identified some at-risk and vulnerable population groups beforehand. They then promoted the pop-up day through phone calls, flyers and opportunistic promotion within the practice.

“And being out in the park on the day, it was a fun way for people to get to know their local doctors a little better.”

Rudri from the Parkwood Family Chempro Chemist said the pharmacy had used grants funds to establish a short-term after-hours immunisation program targeting priority populations.

“The goal was to increase access to vaccinations for working families, low-income groups and people who require access to a COVID-19 vaccination program outside of normal business hours,” she said.

“And we even managed a bit of international reach. While promoting our program, a 19-year-old fellow who was born in the USA reached out about the COVID vaccine, saying he had never been immunised for anything as his parents are against vaccinations.

“But now at adult age, and with a Medicare card, he wanted to get as many free catch-up immunisations that he was eligible for, which we were happy to help with.”

GCPHN CEO Matt Carrodus said the grants are helping to strengthen systems and processes and enhance the community's immunisation literacy.

“It's vital that people of all ages know which immunisations they need to stay healthy and help protect the community,” Mr Carrodus said.

IMMUNISATION KEY TO PROTECTING THE COMMUNITY

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) continued to promote the benefits of annual immunisation in protecting against influenza and COVID-19, while also raising awareness of other vaccine preventable diseases such as respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and measles.

Broadbeach GP and GCPHN Chair, Dr Ka-Kiu Cheung, promoted World Immunisation Week (24-30 April 2025) and encouraged young families to take advantage of the many free vaccines available ahead of winter.

“There's been a slowdown of immunisation uptake in our community after the stress of COVID-19, but the health of our children, especially vulnerable newborns, is something we should all be invested in protecting,” Dr Cheung said.

“As the cooler months arrive so do many respiratory viruses. Whilst most cause a mild cold, influenza can be more severe and last longer.”

Between 1 January and 29 June 2025, Queensland recorded **29,514 flu cases** – 19% higher than the same period in 2024. Nearly **3,000 people were hospitalised**, and **92% of these had not been immunised**. The week of 23-29 June saw the highest spike, with more than 2,800 cases recorded.

Dr Cheung also highlighted the importance of protecting against the highly contagious airborne disease, measles.

“Young children under five, pregnant women, adults over 20 and those with compromised immune systems are most at risk of measles complications. Given how quickly it can spread, immunisation against measles has become an increasingly important part of our community's preventative health management.”

Influenza data source: www.health.qld.gov.au/newsroom/doh-media-releases/queensland-respiratory-infection-update

MEDICARE URGENT CARE CLINICS THERE FOR *families*

When 12-year-old school student Samson Jansen arrived home from a GPS tennis tournament with a deep cut between his eyebrows, his mum Vanessa knew he needed more than a sticking plaster and a good lie down.

“Samson had finished his last match when he ran and tripped into the corner of a table, which cut him right between the eyes,” Vanessa said.

“He caught the school bus back home, but the moment I saw him, I knew he needed proper medical treatment.

“Kids accidents always seem to happen after hours, and fortunately the new Medicare Urgent Care Clinic at Southport was up and running, and not far from home.”

Vanessa said the care was exceptional.

“The people were so lovely; they guided us into a private room, and they spent so much time making sure Samson was comfortable and looked after properly.

“They found the cut was down to the bone and although Samson was traumatised, the doctor and staff were so good with him, and, really, it couldn’t have been a better patient experience,” she said.

There was even a touch of déjà vu.

“About four or five years ago, Samson went over the handlebar of his pushbike and had a small stone lodged in his lip and we realised the doctor who treated him that time was the same doctor this time. That added a bit to Samson’s confidence during his latest experience.”

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics are making a real difference for adults of all ages and families with children, offering urgent, accessible care and peace of mind when minor injuries or illnesses happen outside regular GP hours.

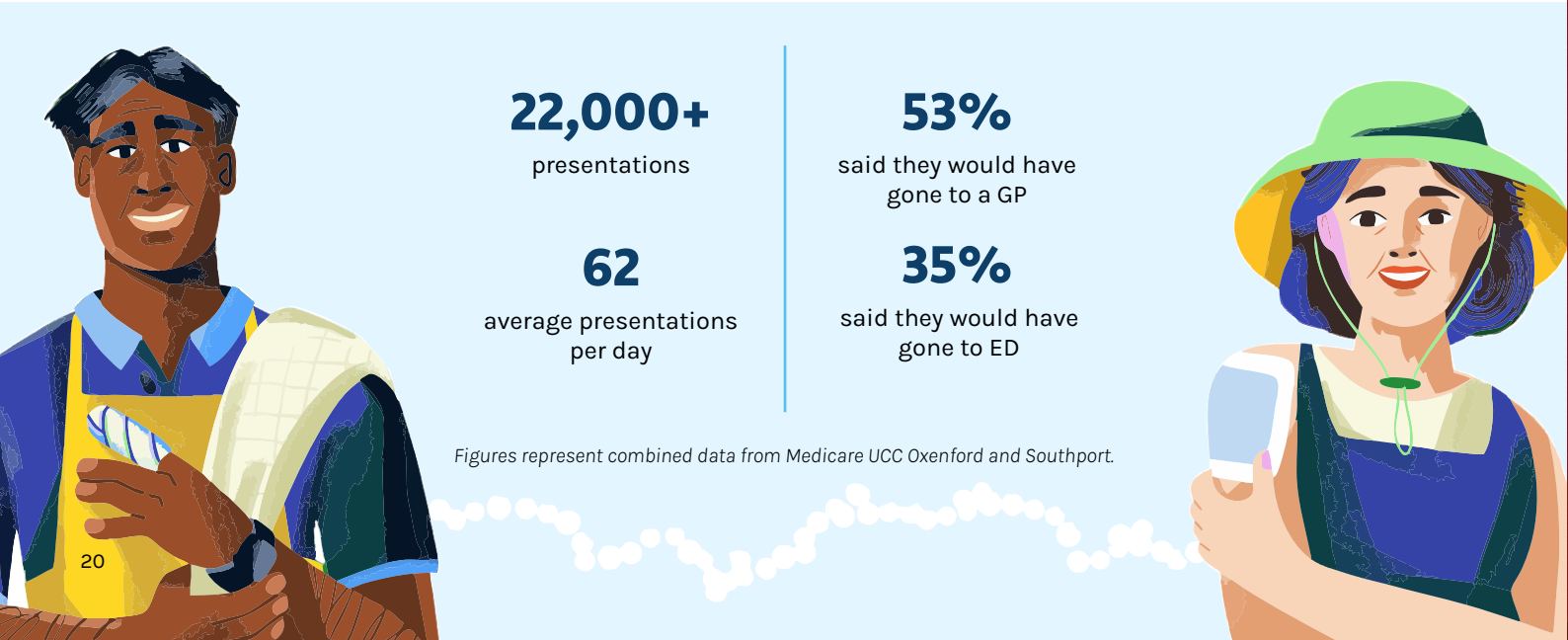
For parents like Vanessa, they provide a safe and reliable place to ensure children get the treatment they need, without waiting at an emergency department.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics at Southport and Oxenford provide bulk-billed urgent care for minor injuries and illnesses that aren’t life threatening, including sprains, cuts, rashes, burns, fevers, infections and more.

Both clinics are open 365 days a year from 8am-10pm. No appointment or referral is needed and all care is bulk-billed.

COMMISSIONING OF A SECOND MEDICARE UCC

The Southport Medicare Urgent Care Clinic (UCC) opened in late November 2024. It’s the second Medicare UCC commissioned by Gold Coast Primary Health Network on the Gold Coast, following the Oxenford Medicare UCC opening in November 2023. The Medicare UCC’s extended hours and bulk-billed model help reduce pressure on the region’s busiest emergency department, the Gold Coast University Hospital.



Samson Jansen
and his mother,
Vanessa Jansen



CYCLONE ALFRED RESPONSE: *a true team effort*

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) staff played a pivotal role in responding to ex-Cyclone Alfred in March 2025, supporting immediate healthcare delivery, mental health support, general practice workforce retention, and long-term recovery across the community.

Almost as soon as the winds subsided, GCPHN collaborated with local health services to ensure continued primary healthcare. The organisation facilitated the Continued Dispensing Emergency Measure, allowing pharmacists to provide essential medications to patients without immediate access to prescriptions. Training and resources were also delivered to general practices to help manage physical health issues arising from the disaster.

Recognising the cyclone's psychological impact, GCPHN partnered with Gold Coast Health to disseminate mental health resources and promote services. This included the Head to Health Phone Service, a free and confidential service connecting individuals to mental health support and referrals. This service aimed to address the emotional and psychological needs of the community.

To maintain healthcare services during the recovery phase, GCPHN introduced a Disaster Recovery Workforce Support Grant. This program provided up to \$5,000 to general practices, pharmacies and allied health providers, helping them continue operations and care for the community.

These coordinated efforts demonstrated a strong and compassionate response to ex-Cyclone Alfred, addressing immediate primary healthcare needs while laying foundations for long-term recovery across the Gold Coast.



Building RESILIENCE THROUGH TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) supported disaster-affected communities in 2024-25 by funding training and education for primary care providers, allied health workers and non-governmental organisations through the Disaster Response and Mental Health Training Subsidy.

The subsidy enhances professional skills and builds workforce resilience, helping providers better support patients and clients impacted by natural disasters and critical events.

One Gold Coast start-up, PathStart, used the subsidy to enhance its ability to support clients facing significant challenges. Business partners Linda Callender and Carmen Thomson began a key course just as ex-Cyclone Alfred struck.

PathStart helps individuals with acquired disabilities, including acquired brain injuries, transition into employment.

"We focus on empowerment, helping people who aren't quite ready for employment by first equipping them with essential life skills. After all, if your home life isn't stable, it's much harder to succeed in the workplace," Linda said.

Only months after opening, ex-Cyclone Alfred damaged their Southport premises, forcing the business to relocate.

With support from GCPHN's subsidy, Linda completed an online Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) course, designed to provide valuable tools for supporting clients with complex needs.

The eight-hour course, presented by leading experts Paul Gilbert and Dennis Tirsch, explored the science of compassion and how to respond to suffering with care and commitment.

"We saw the CFT course as a great way to expand our approach and offer even better support to clients caught up in unexpected life-changing events," Linda said.

"For us, any course that enhances our ability to serve our clients with greater compassion, empathy and understanding is invaluable."



The difference we made 2024-2025

TAMBORINE MOUNTAIN MEDICAL PRACTICE *stands tall* IN THE WAKE OF EX-CYCLONE ALFRED

When ex-Cyclone Alfred blew onto Mount Tamborine in March 2025, it revived stark memories of the devastating Christmas night tornado in 2023, which caused widespread damage and a significant blow to the morale of the tight-knit community.

From those experiences, resilience has grown. Nowhere is it more evident than at the Tamborine Mountain Medical Practice, where doctors and staff not only prepared for days ahead of the big blow, but left their own darkened homes as soon as it was safe to return to work.

With electricity down at the practice, recovery efforts even included some old-school solutions, like handwritten prescriptions on dusty script pads discovered at the back of a cupboard.

Practice GP Dr Leann Carr-Brown said early planning was key.

“Preparation was something we didn’t get a chance to do two Christmases ago, so this time it was very different. With phones down and roads to the mountain cut, word of mouth and the local Facebook community page – at least for those who could access it – were how many of our patients knew we were open,” Dr Carr-Brown said.

“Conversely, one elderly patient had a fall at home, and we found out because her daughter posted about it on Facebook. And because we had plenty of warning that Alfred was approaching, we printed out hard copies of patient lists and histories and contact details in advance.

“We even got in some telehealth appointments before the worst of the weather hit and at the end of the day our patients were very grateful for what we were doing in trying circumstances.”

Practice manager Kylie Robinson, who has lived on the mountain for 20 years, said the team was up and running by the Monday with a GP, nurse and receptionist.

“We were there for urgent appointments, wound care, emergency pathology and radiology, and scripts that we could write by hand,” she said.

The team also provided minor wound dressings for people injured while clearing fallen trees and debris. They treated chronic ulcers, asthma flare-ups and removed sutures that were due to be taken out to prevent infections.

“For many of our patients, and probably everyone else in the community, it was a case of ‘oh no, not again.’ But everyone knew they had to get back on with things, and our patients thanked us for opening so quickly,” Kylie said.

Gold Coast Primary Health Network CEO, Matt Carrodus, praised the work of the practice.

“As Cyclone Alfred bore down, it was our job to ensure general practices, primary healthcare providers and commissioned service providers had the information they needed to prepare for this severe weather event,” Mr Carrodus said.

“To see teams like those at the Tamborine Mountain Medical Practice go above and beyond to serve their communities in such trying circumstances speaks volumes about the dedication and skills of our local health professionals.”



Dr Leann Carr-Brown,
Tamborine Mountain
Medical Practice

DISASTER RECOVERY WORKFORCE SUPPORT GRANTS PROGRAM

In a major boost to the city’s recovery after the destruction wrought by ex-Cyclone Alfred in March 2025, the Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) provided general practices, pharmacies and allied health providers in the GCPHN region grants of up to \$5,000 per practice.

This funding supported workforce retention in affected areas, which provided access to vital healthcare services, especially vulnerable populations impacted by the disaster.

This included hiring additional staff to maintain operations or manage increased demand, extending opening hours to improve access for disaster-affected patients or clients and more.

The successful applicants:

- Coomera Family Practice
- Our Cassia Medical
- Mermaid Family Practice
- Coomera Town Medical Centre
- Chemist Outlet Broadbeach
- Robina Family Medical Centre
- Tamborine Mountain Medical Practice
- Labrador Park Medical Centre
- Doctors at Australia Fair
- Doctors at Southport Park
- Michigan Drive Medical Practice
- Miami Family Medical Centre
- Parkwood Family Chempro Chemist
- Myhealth Burleigh Waters
- Myhealth Ashmore Plaza
- Merrimac Medical and Skin Cancer Clinic
- Coolangatta Medical Centre
- Worongary Medical Centre
- Monterey Keys Medical Centre

Primary Sense

YEAR IN REVIEW

170 PRACTICES

utilising the clinical decision-support tool to help give patients the right care at the right time



3,025

users nationally of Primary Sense, **833 GPs** and **647 nurses**, across the Gold Coast region



84.5%

increase in number of reports downloaded, identifying patients at highest risk of morbidity and mortality



BENEFITS TO THE HEALTH SYSTEM

Preventing hospital visits for adverse drug reactions – medication alerts:

- **14,161** medication alerts triggered
- **20%** indicated change in prescribing by GPs
- **\$16.6 million** in potential savings to the local health system



Improving bone density deficiency

– nurse prompts:

- **22,884** 'Due bone density' prompts triggered
- **339** nurse response to prompt 'Agree-action'
- **\$42,597** in potential savings to the local health system



Gold Coast PHN

SMART TOOLS, enhanced care

When it comes to delivering high-quality, timely care, having the right tools can make all the difference. For one local Registered Nurse working in general practice, the difference has been clear since staff at the practice started using Primary Sense – a smart, intuitive tool designed to support better decision-making, streamline day-to-day tasks and ultimately improve patient outcomes.

“Primary Sense has been an invaluable tool for our practice, enhancing our ability to track and improve quality measures across multiple health indicators. One of the features I appreciate most is how seamlessly it extracts and monitors data, especially missing patient information such as blood pressure, BMI, allergies, smoking and alcohol status. This has helped us stay on top of critical data needed for accreditation,” said Registered Nurse Ricki-Lee.

“The recent update that provides prompts for children’s immunisations has been a game-changer, alerting nurses and doctors if a patient’s immunisations aren’t up to date, making preventive care management more efficient.

“Primary Sense not only helps us enhance patient health outcomes, but also supports broader research efforts, contributing data that can shape studies at state and national levels. It’s a powerful tool for any general practice team committed to quality improvement and excellence in patient care.”

Primary Sense makes essential clinical information easy to access and act on. Using real-time data, it provides alerts and prompts at the point of care, helping GPs and nurses identify high-risk patients and those due for tests, immunisations or care plans.

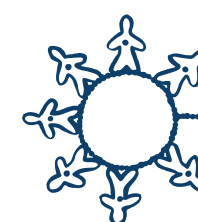
This eliminates the need to search through multiple systems or risk missing updates.

With one click, practice staff can access reports that support accreditation, identify care gaps and improve chronic disease management. For time-poor clinical and administration teams, this means less admin and more time focused on what matters most: patient care.

The tool also supports practice revenue through care coordination and increased identification of Medicare-eligible services. And for general practitioners, it includes a dashboard that makes it easy to log CPD hours with the RACGP.

Most importantly, Primary Sense empowers the whole practice team to work smarter. Whether it’s nurses identifying patients with complex care needs, missing items of care, doctors responding to clinical alerts, or practice managers and the administration team preparing for accreditation, Primary Sense streamlines the process and lifts the quality of care.

As Ricki-Lee’s experience shows, using Primary Sense can transform how practice teams operate, helping to deliver proactive, informed and efficient care every day.



Ricki-Lee,
Registered Nurse



The difference we made 2024-2025



TRAINING PROGRAM HELPS KEEP PRACTICE NURSES *on point* WITH IMMUNISATIONS

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) hosted a one-day training course in November 2024 to help a group of practice nurses to enhance their immunisation skills.

Facilitated by Vaxworks Health Services and adapted from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Immunisation Training Program, the course comprised modules to help the nurses deliver successful immunisation services, including the administration of injections.

It covered key topics such as the principles of immunisation, addressing myths and barriers, vaccine administration and post-vaccination care, childhood vaccines for preventable diseases, and more.

VaxWorks Director Damian Gray led the session, which welcomed Melanie Schulz and Anna Canton from Southport Medical and Dental Centre, Arrabella Richardson and Tayla Cox from Robina Medical and Dental Centre, Robyn Garden from Robina 7 Day Doctors, and Ashlee Sills from MedCentres Pacific Pines.

They joined the ranks of over 9,000 health professionals who have already completed the program, contributing to the successful delivery of more than 17 million immunisations across Australia.

Arrabella and Ashlee said they'll take plenty away from the experience.

"As a recent graduate I'm always keen to expand my knowledge about immunisations. The guidance on communicating with parents [uncertain about vaccines for their children] was especially valuable," Arrabella said.

Ashlee also enjoyed learning more about childhood immunisations.

"I'm in my first year working as a nurse, so I found the training helped me gain some confidence in administering immunisations; the main takeaway being childhood vaccines and how to deal with stressed parents," Ashlee said.

"Another takeaway was learning how to do catch up immunisations, and I found working in pairs or in a group really helped me understand things better."

GCPHN CEO Matt Carrodus said the course highlights the importance of clinical upskilling.

"It's a great example of the Gold Coast Primary Health Network working with partners to ensure we have a local workforce well equipped to deliver better outcomes for our community," he said.



GOLD COAST'S HEALTH AND SERVICE NEEDS *laid out* IN NEW REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

The Gold Coast Joint Regional Needs Assessment (JRNA) 2024-2026 offers a comprehensive 342-page analysis of the region's current and future health and service needs.

Developed collaboratively by Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN), Gold Coast Health, Queensland Ambulance Service, and Kalwun Development Corporation, the JRNA identifies priority health issues and supports strategic, person-centred planning across the Gold Coast community.

"This is the most detailed health and service needs assessment ever undertaken for the region," said GCPHN CEO Matt Carrodus.

"It reflects the depth of collaboration between health and community partners and will help guide collective action to

address the Gold Coast's growing and ageing population, complex health needs, and workforce pressures," he said.

The JRNA aligns with the Queensland-Commonwealth Partnership, a national-first initiative to deliver unified regional assessments.

Mr Carrodus said providing optimal primary, advanced and emergency healthcare for the Gold Coast going forward is the number one priority of the collaborating organisations.

"Using local data, service mapping, and stakeholder consultation, the JRNA supports better planning and delivery of services in a time of unprecedented population growth.

"By acknowledging the challenges we face, we can provide care that is responsive, person-centred and aligned with our shared vision of achieving best health outcomes for the Gold Coast community," he said.



Support WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST

The After Hours Safe Space (AHSS) continues to offer a vital lifeline for adults experiencing distress outside of usual service hours. Built on a welcoming, community-based model, AHSS provides a safe alternative to hospital emergency departments, with support from both lived experience workers and clinical staff.

Across the two sites at Mermaid Beach and Southport (the latter co-commissioned with Gold Coast University Hospital), the impact over the past financial year has been clear. The service recorded 5,187 occasions of support, with 4,116 people saying they would have gone to the emergency department if the safe space had not been available.

Central to its impact is the intentional model that places lived experience workers alongside clinical staff. Their empathy, understanding and shared experiences create a sense of safety and connection that encourages people to seek support earlier and more often.

“I went to After Hours Safe Space and got support from the mental health clinician, they listened without judgement, and I got the support I needed. It is nice to know the space is there if I need to escape the chaos in my home and feel supported.”

By creating a calm and supportive environment, the AHSS is helping those in distress to feel heard, connected and equipped with strategies for ongoing wellbeing, while also reducing the demand on emergency services.

38,811
SERVICE CONTACTS
THROUGH GCPHN
COMMISSIONED SERVICES

AFTER HOURS SAFE SPACE

5,187
occasions of support

4,116
avoided emergency
department visits

HEADSPACE SOUTHPORT

994
young people supported

600
first time clients

HEADSPACE UPPER COOMERA

637
young people supported

446
first time clients

VIRTUAL PSYCHOLOGIST

1,450+
sessions to over 250 people

26%
by text

37%
by video

37%
by audio

11AM
busiest time



“I have done therapy more than 5 times. This is the first time I have consistently participated and shockingly, it’s working. The reason for this consistency is because of the person I was assigned, there are no additional charges to visit, it’s at home so travel and childcare aren’t an issue and it’s so easy to access. It truly has changed my life and the lives of my children and I cannot state how much I appreciate this service.” – Virtual Psychologist client

VIRTUAL PSYCHOLOGIST’S *innovative* MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

Twenty-five-year-old James* reached out to the innovative Virtual Psychologist team during a particularly challenging time in his life. A traffic controller and father of three, he faced relationship challenges at home, financial pressures and the stigma around mental health in a male-dominated industry. He also carried the weight of past trauma, including periods of homelessness and abuse, alongside ongoing struggles with autism, depression and anxiety.

When James first engaged with the service, he described himself as “just getting by.” His days were marked by irregular sleep, inconsistent meals, and a lack of focus and motivation. Relationship challenges at home and financial pressures added to his stress.

Virtual Psychologist’s digital-first model gave James access to therapy that was private, flexible and free of the barriers of traditional face-to-face care. Using secure text and audio-based sessions, he worked with his clinician to set short-term behavioural goals, establish routines and develop self-care strategies.

Within just a few sessions, James began to see real change. He reported feeling accomplished as he kept the home tidy, engaged more with his children and developed a stronger relationship with his partner. The stability of his full-time work and growing confidence reinforced these positive changes.

While financial pressures and family dynamics continue, James now approaches challenges with greater resilience. He has built stronger bonds with his children, communicates openly with his partner, and is actively exploring ways to strengthen his professional and financial stability. His clinician notes his progress in building self-esteem, managing emotions and sustaining motivation.

Virtual Psychologist removes barriers to access, provides continuity of care and adapts to the client’s needs in real time. The service is not only convenient and confidential but also effective in delivering evidence-based interventions such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, goal setting and positive reinforcement.

*Name changed on request.

GOLD COAST SUICIDE PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE

Established in early 2024 through the Targeted Regional Initiatives for Suicide Prevention (TRISP) and the Black Dog Institute (BDI) Capacity Building Program, the Gold Coast Suicide Prevention Collaborative brings together 22 members, including people with lived experience of suicide and mental ill-health.

Meeting quarterly, the group focuses on strategic, community-driven action, supported since mid-2025 by a dedicated Project Lead. Four working groups meet regularly to guide activity across communications, membership development, means restriction and Gold Coast Wellbeing Week.

GOLD COAST WELLBEING WEEK 2024

From 9-15 September, the Collaborative launched its first public initiative – Gold Coast Wellbeing Week – aligning with World Suicide Prevention Day and R U OK? Day. Seven events over seven days aimed to ‘meet people where they are’ and promote protective factors for mental health.

HIGHLIGHTS

- LIVINWell mental health educational program delivered at Event Cinemas Coomera.
- Out of the Shadows Walk held in partnership with Lifeline on World Suicide Prevention Day to honour lives lost to suicide and to support those in crisis, with SkyPoint lighting the Q1 tower in recognition.
- Healing through nature – Eco-Art Therapy activity at the SWELL Sculpture Festival.
- Acts of Kindness for R U OK? Day supported by Robina Town Centre and local businesses.
- Seniors Morning Tea hosted by the Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast Care Finder program.
- Crafted Beer Festival partnership with non-alcoholic brewery SOBAH, with proceeds supporting the Black Dog Institute.
- Ride and Vibe Youth Day at Pizzey Park pump track, delivered with the City of Gold Coast’s Active & Healthy program.



IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- 890 community members attended the events with an estimated total reach of over 5,640 people through the R U OK? Day Acts of Kindness.
- 38 local organisations and businesses supported the event.
- Targeted engagement with seniors, men and young people.
- Media coverage from ABC Gold Coast, Gold Coast Bulletin, and 7NEWS Gold Coast.

LEGACY AND NEXT STEPS

Gold Coast Wellbeing Week 2024 strengthened community connections, showcased the role of local partnerships in suicide prevention, and demonstrated how incidental participation can spark important conversations.

By meeting people in familiar spaces, the Collaborative built trust, broadened awareness, and laid the groundwork for future Gold Coast Wellbeing Week events, ensuring sustainability through genuine community ownership.

FINDING STRENGTH

around the Table

Gold Coast Primary Health Network continued its commitment to suicide prevention in 2024-25 by commissioning three new Men's Tables through the Targeted Regional Initiatives for Suicide Prevention funding.

Each life lost to suicide represents a person – someone's friend, partner, parent, or colleague – and a community deeply affected by their loss. Men are impacted by suicide at higher rates than women. Increasing awareness, reducing stigma and promoting access to support remain critical priorities. The Men's Table creates a safe space for men to connect over food and conversation. Two local participants shared how being part of a Table has helped them.

BEN, 46

"I had originally heard about The Men's Table when I was working in NSW on bushfire and COVID recovery. I really liked the idea and it was highly rated among Sydney councils, so when I moved to the Gold Coast I thought it was a good way to meet people and get involved in my new community.

"Our Table is a diverse group of men which is great, because they are not men I would have met any other way. The group provides a supportive and non-judgemental environment that I don't get anywhere else. It's one place where being open and honest is welcomed and encouraged. Normally if you go to the pub to relax and ease your stress people don't want to hear what's really happening, so I value having a place for this deeper connection.

"Sitting at a Table has given me the opportunity to regularly check in with myself. Knowing our meeting is coming up makes me reflect on my month and think deeply about how I actually am and what I want to share.

"I've made some good mates, we meet for bike rides and help each other with things, so it has definitely met my needs for making friendships outside of the ones I have with my partner. The Gold Coast is a place where people often come from somewhere else, so we're all sort of in the same boat struggling to settle in, make friends and build a new network. A Table is a good place for men to be able to share their struggles and triumphs with others that have been in similar situations."

Need help? Support is available.

If you or someone you know is in distress, contact:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- MensLine 1300 789 978

GREG, 74

"When I found out about The Men's Table from an ad in my local shopping centre I was in a bad way. My daughters were in unsafe relationships, my ex-wife had died by suicide and I had been hospitalised from a physical assault by a neighbour. I was feeling mentally overwhelmed and my sense of physical safety at home had been impacted.

"With my background as a lawyer, I was used to being the fixer, not the victim and I was struggling to find the tools I needed to cope with everything that was happening around me. The idea of a group centred around food, conversation and a room full of strangers appealed.

"The first thing I felt was that I wasn't alone. All of the men in the room were there for their own reasons, with their own issues. They are all kind, caring, gentle people and I am sure I dominated the conversation for a while each month, but they kept listening. They showed such concern that it gave me the impetus to go and see professionals to help me with everything I was going through.

"Now a few months in, I am building friendships with a couple of the men I share common interests with, and I am learning to listen better and be more empathetic, because I know how much it helped me.

"Going to my Table is the highlight of my month and I always get there early so I don't miss any of it. That's how eager I am. I can't tell you it's been a miraculous cure, but it has enabled me to take steps in the right direction because of the care from the men at my Table."

"The first thing I felt was that I wasn't alone." – Greg

Photo supplied by The Men's Table.

FINDING RECOVERY THROUGH *connection*

In 2012, the Gold Coast Drug Council merged with the Alcohol and Drug Foundation Queensland to form Lives Lived Well, a not-for-profit committed to helping people overcome alcohol, drug and mental health challenges.

Today, Lives Lived Well continues to deliver key programs, including group therapy services, with funding support from Gold Coast Primary Health Network.

For Clinical Services Manager Vicky Mouatt, it is more than just work, it's personal.

"I came here as a client and recovered here. It's an amazing place that helped change my life," Vicky said.

With almost 20 years in the sector, Vicky has seen how recovery journeys look different for everyone.

"Some people want to quit all at once, others gradually cut back, but the important thing is to reach out and find what works for you. Whether that takes one treatment, two, three or more, we want people to know they can come back and keep trying."

A LOOK INSIDE A GROUP THERAPY SESSION

On a rainy Wednesday night, a group of nine participants gathered at Lives Lived Well's new Coomera site for an alcohol and other drugs (AOD) group therapy session.

Facilitated by registered clinical counsellor Kirston Butcher, the group explored practical strategies for breaking the alcohol cycle.

Participants spoke openly about loneliness after relocating to the Gold Coast, grief, work stress, and practical steps they'd taken to remove alcohol and other substances from their daily lives.

"I come for the connection. In this room I can be myself without wearing a mask," one participant said.

Another said, "These people are my medication. They remind me why I want to keep going."

Some were new, while others had been attending for extended periods to maintain progress while supporting others.

One participant shared proudly: "Because of this program, I've been three and a half years clean and sober. You must want to do it, but there's so much support and no judgement."

Sessions are designed for people who are employed full-time or are full-time carers and cannot access counselling during standard business hours.

"If you can't make Wednesday, you can come Saturday or the other way around," a participant explained. "That flexibility makes a big difference."

Each session blends relatable case studies, whiteboard exercises, and encouragement to stay mentally and physically active. Over time, the safe, supportive environment has helped many participants shift their mindset and rebuild their lives.

"I'm 18 months sober now, and I'm loving the change in my mindset," one participant reflected.

SERVICE IMPACT

411

unique clients accessed AOD services

2,371

occasions of service, with 1,462 after-hours

468

episodes of care, with 229 after-hours

194

after-hours clients

Choosing HEALTHY LIVING OVER ALCOHOL

The time is always right to pause and reassess a relationship with alcohol. For 32-year-old Mermaid Beach administrative officer Katie*, a re-set started abruptly on New Year's Eve.

"I've always been someone who likes a social drink, but I was out at a public bar and just two drinks in I'm certain my glass was spiked and that was a huge wake up call. I literally woke up on New Years Day as sick as anything and asking myself if it was all worth it," Katie said.

It wasn't the first time. Katie's drink was also spiked when she was 19. "I probably didn't realise how much that affected me psychologically until now," she said.

Katie believes social pressure, and the fear of being judged, plays a significant role in drinking habits.

"When you first stop drinking, you can't help but wonder: 'Will I be boring? Will people still want to hang out with me if I'm not drinking?'"

She says alcohol's unique social status makes the decision even harder.

"It's the only legal drug where you feel the need to explain why you're not using it," she said.

Fortunately, Katie has found support from family and friends, with many exploring sobriety themselves.

"Plenty of my friends are sober curious and instead of catching up at the pub, we're more likely to grab a coffee and go for a walk," she said.

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) supports Katie's observations. While alcohol still holds a unique place in Australian culture, growing awareness of the harms of excessive drinking has led more people to cut back in recent years.

The AIHW also notes that lapses are normal when changing habits and many people experience setbacks before achieving their goals.

For Katie, the decision to step away from alcohol "for as long as I can and want" feels right.

"I'd been thinking about it even before the spiking incident; now it's all about starting the year with a clear head and a healthy outlook," she said.

*Name changed on request.

Joint Regional Plan **FOR** **MENTAL HEALTH, SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AOD**

Gold Coast Primary Health Network, in partnership with Gold Coast Health, advanced the Joint Regional Plan for Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, and Alcohol and Other Drug Services 2025-2028, strengthening integrated planning, budgeting and commissioning across the region.

This collaborative approach incorporates lessons learned, stakeholder feedback and emerging priorities identified through extensive consultation and the Joint Regional Needs Assessment 2024-2026.

The Plan reflects a shared commitment for a compassionate and connected Gold Coast, where individuals can access timely, person-centred support across all sectors, embedding shared priorities and accountability, creating a clear roadmap for coordinated and improved service access and equity for the Gold Coast community.

This renewed partnership is grounded in genuine collaboration and supported by robust governance structures, including a Strategic Oversight Committee and four dedicated partnership groups.

Together, these groups will drive transformative outcomes in service access, equity and integration, particularly for vulnerable populations such as First Nations peoples, children and youth, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Implementation is already underway, with joint governance, annual planning and performance measurement mechanisms ensuring the plan remains responsive and impactful.

The Joint Regional Plan 2025-2028 is more than a roadmap – it's a shared vision for a healthier, more inclusive Gold Coast.

Building a Compassionate and Connected Gold Coast

**A Joint Regional Plan for Mental Health, Suicide Prevention,
and Alcohol and Other Drug Services — 2025-2028**



ART CLASSES HELP *brush pain aside*

Living with chronic pain can be isolating, but for participants in the Turning Pain into Gain program, art is helping turn difficult moments into brighter ones.

Funded by Gold Coast Primary Health Network and delivered by PainWISE, the program offers education, peer support, case management, goal setting and better understanding of community health services. It also offers psychological support for people experiencing anxiety caused by pain.

Kay Ritchie has been part of the program since 2017, after a shoulder operation, knee replacement, broken humerus and hand palsy following a serious fall at home.

“Right at the start of my recovery, I joined the program which was one of the most uplifting things I’ve ever done in my life; it helped me realise I wasn’t alone, and that a lot of other people suffer chronic pain,” Kay said.

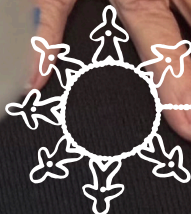
“Years later, every day is still painful, but I just get on with things a lot more. It’s great that we can get together and have a laugh and a joke and forget what’s happening in the outside world for a while.

“The PainWISE team makes sure our brains are in the right space and I recommend this program to people every single day; it’s the most wonderful thing that’s come into my life. It turns my bad moments into happy ones.”

Exercise physiologist and clinical facilitator Katherine Ma said the program helps people build skills in pain self-management.

“Chronic pain is quite different to acute pain and how most people interpret pain; it’s complex, involving changes within the body physically and neurologically,” Katherine said.

“Chronic pain is often invisible; people who’ve lived with it for years are very good at masking it, and that’s one of the reasons it’s so often misunderstood. But the people in this art class are comfortable because they totally understand each other and can validate that their pain is real.”



Kay Ritchie,
program participant



TURNING PAIN INTO GAIN PROGRAM IMPACT

365

unique clients

90%

of participants said
they improved

Suzy Weeks,
Indigenous art tutor



Suzy Weeks, a proud Biripi woman and award-winning autistic mixed media artist, is the program’s Indigenous art tutor. She has been with the program nine years and says she understands her students better than most.

“About 15 years ago I was diagnosed with a chronic pain condition, and my art has helped me through every day since,” Suzy said.

“The classes allow us to not only share our experiences of pain but discover how art can help us navigate the way forward. The classes are an inclusive place where we can all forget about pain and connect to and accept each other.”

PainWISE founder Joyce McSwan said the program treats chronic pain as a disease in its own right.

“The best way to support our patients is to provide a wraparound service of knowledge that supports our allied health referrals, the GPs and their patients,” Joyce said.

“Managing chronic pain is difficult because people can feel very lonely, so one of the key benefits of the program is the patients get well supported in a comfortable peer setting with compassion and the confidence that their treatment is right for them.

“The key message I have for people living with chronic pain is your pain is real, it is not made up and conquering pain is certainly possible.”

HEALTHY AGEING EARLY INTERVENTION *programs*

The Bond University Allied Health (BUnyAH) Interprofessional Healthy Lifestyles Program, PainWISE Frailty Care in the Community, and Mungulli Yarn & Walk (part of the Mungulli Clinic) continued to see strong participation, helping older adults stay active, informed about the risks of frailty and socially connected.

Following a service review in May 2025, all three healthy ageing programs have been recommissioned for an additional two years of service provision.

The service review identified key lessons and opportunities to enhance these programs across the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years.

A key highlight has been the strong engagement from general practitioners, who are actively referring eligible participants and receiving discharge updates.

This collaboration continues to strengthen links between primary care and allied health services, supporting better outcomes for older adults.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS HAD TO SAY

- “In just a short time, it’s motivated me to get back to the gym and swimming again. The staff are amazing. The health professionals we meet teach us about how our hearts and lungs work, nutrition, and all those important things.”
- “I had a heart attack, and this program gets me out of the house and meeting people.”
- “I feel I have more flexibility [and I] can climb stairs better than before.”

8,743%
**INCREASE IN FRAILTY
DIAGNOSIS RATES**
among quality improvement
participating general practices

82%
of participants
reported significant
improvements

124
participants took
part in healthy ageing
programs, reporting
high satisfaction and
improved quality of life

1,000,000+
digital impressions and
7,700+ website clicks
achieved through a
community-facing frailty
awareness campaign,
driving increased referrals



Des Weatherhog,
local retiree

Gold Coast PHN

STRIKING THE RIGHT *chord* IN RETIREMENT

For 79-year-old Des Weatherhog, retirement is all about embracing new adventures, staying active and making meaningful connections.

"I lost my wife, Barb, to breast cancer 16 years ago, which really slowed down my motivation for a lot of things," said Des, a former children's clothing agent and business owner.

"Then a few years later, I came across an advertisement in a local newspaper inviting people to learn the ukulele, sing and have fun. I didn't have a musical bone in my body, but I thought it would be a chance to meet people and learn something new, so I went along, and it was wonderful."

That decision was indeed life changing. The ukulele group, which met at the home of Wendy Chappell, not only introduced Des to music but also to Wendy (74), who is now his trusted companion in a quest to live life to the fullest.

Exercise plays a big role in their active lifestyle, after a recommendation from their doctor led them to joining the Bond University Allied Health (BUnyAH) program for healthy ageing.

"We've done every aspect of the program, and it's been fantastic. I particularly enjoyed exercising at the Avanti Health Centre in Southport because they operate on the 'use it or lose it' principle, which really resonated with me," Des said.

"I wasn't as steady on my feet as I once was, and Wendy and I were both keen to keep frailty at bay, and so far, so good."

Des is a big fan of the program's social aspect.

"I could see the improvements it made to so many people, especially those with physical disabilities or those who were hesitant to try new things.

"It wasn't just the exercises – it was the camaraderie and support; some introverted people really come out of their shells during the group sessions."

The guest speakers on the BUnyAH program also left a lasting impression.

"They shared so many practical tips, like what to do if you fall at home and general advice on staying safe.

"The enthusiasm of the BUnyAH instructors, which included Bond University students and academics, was contagious, and their energy fed down to all the participants – it made such a difference," he said.

Des and Wendy's zest for life extends well beyond the program.

"Too many people put things off for a tomorrow that never comes. We both love travelling, and our ukulele sessions have taken us to the Blue Mountains, up north to 1770, the Sunshine Coast – just about everywhere."

The couple own a motorhome, which they use to explore Australia at their own pace.

"Some people our age hardly ever set foot out their front door except maybe to go to the shops, but Wendy and I just jump in the van whenever we want and take off. It's magnificent – life is too short to just sit around and watch the world go by," Des said.

Closer to home, the couple walk and cycle daily along the beautiful Southport Broadwater, while music continues to be a source of joy and creativity for them both.

"I went to a workshop on the Sunshine Coast on how to make your own ukulele. Mine is made from Tasmanian Oak, and it looks and sounds and feels and plays the best out of the eight I own," Des said with a smile.

Whether it's Des strumming his handmade ukulele, cycling along the Broadwater together, or setting off on their next adventure, Des and Wendy are certainly loving life.

"The ukulele playing is all about meeting people, staying active, and enjoying life – and that's exactly what the BUnyAH healthy ageing program is about too," Des said.



Listening TO SAVE LIMBS AND LIVES

Two of the nation’s leading wound care specialists say poorly managed diabetes is costing Australia billions of dollars each year – and, they say, much of the damage is avoidable.

Bundall Medical Centre GP and chronic wound specialist Dr Stephen Yelland, and vascular specialist nurse practitioner Nicola Morley, say type 2 diabetes is a preventable disease, yet many people continue to develop chronic wounds due to poor management and a lack of education.

“If you have arterial disease, the mortality rate is above that of prostate cancer and breast cancer. If you’re a type 2 diabetic, it’s a preventable disease, and we should be looking at prevention rather than the treatment of wounds,” Nicola said.

“But what we are unfortunately seeing are the implications of chronic wounds across Australia – extended lengths of stays in hospital, loss of limbs, the pain and suffering and social isolation.

“For instance, for some patients, just the bandages alone can cost \$300 a week, so it’s a massive financial burden that too few people outside of the healthcare system realise, and that sort of cost can lead to patients delaying care.”

Chronic wounds are wounds that do not progress through the normal stages of healing within 30 days; they heal slowly, often only partially, and may recur.

Dr Yelland says better diabetes management and foot care could dramatically reduce the number of ulcers, amputations and deaths.

“It’s that simple: save a limb, save a life and the reality is the severity of so many of these wounds are preventable. We recently had a case where a patient’s surgeon wanted to amputate his leg, but we worked on and with him twice a week and saved the limb and effectively his life,” he said.

“All of us working in wound management know the most important thing is the diagnosis about why that wound is there and then we can treat the underlying problem; that’s our job as doctors and nurses.”

A strong case for more training

“There’s still the need for greater general practitioner education, nurse education, and the training of GP registrars and medical students,” Dr Yelland said.

“They generally don’t get a lot of education and skills in this area and that’s one thing we continue to work on with the Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN), which funds an education program that’s been very successful for a few years now.

“There’s no other model like it anywhere else in Australia, where a PHN funds both a chronic wounds clinic in primary care and education programs. GCPHN certainly deserves a lot of credit for the work they’ve done to fund the education programs and other initiatives.

“Possibly the biggest takeaway for the participants is that we explain how we sit with our patients and listen to them and how most times we can detect what is wrong simply from what they tell us.”

“A lot of the time we can do a diagnosis even before we look at the wound just by talking to the patient, which a machine can’t do,” he said.

Nicola agrees the human touch is essential.

Palpation is crucial in enabling diagnostics such as arterial disease, rather than use machines that deliver a reading without the ability to look at the root causes.

“Stephen and I live by the old medical school adage; listen to the patient, take their history and then do the examination,” she said.

48

GPs and nurses in general practice participated in Wound Management Training sessions in 2024-25

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID ABOUT THE TRAINING

“It’s been extremely helpful and exceeded my expectations. I’d recommend it to any new nurses starting in general practice as well as those who have been in general practice for a while.”

– Mikalia McMillian, Robina Town Medical Centre

“I’d recommend it to our GPs and our clinics as the doctor [friendly] version of wound education; it brings it back to basics. When we diagnose what is going wrong with a patient, we can sometimes be swept up with how to fix the wound rather than figuring out and understanding the underlying condition. It would definitely be worth the GPs going through this course with the treatment room nurses, particularly when it comes to preparing care plans.”

– Erin Barnes, Robina Town Medical Centre

CHRONIC AND COMPLEX WOUND CLINIC

52

clients accessed the GCPHN-funded wound clinic

100%

of clients discharged with a diagnosis and wound management plan

BILL SWEETENHAM: SUPERCOACH

standing tall

Bill Sweetenham AM (75) has been a leading force in world swimming for more than 50 years.

He's coached at five Olympic Games, mentored 27 Olympic and World Championship medallists, and developed nine world record holders.

His leadership has shaped elite swim programs in Australia, Great Britain, USA, Spain, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong and Argentina, and helped launch stars like Ian Thorpe and Grant Hackett.

Sweetenham began coaching in his hometown Mount Isa, before moving to Brisbane, where he trained champions like Michelle Ford, Stephen Holland and Tracey Wickham.

In the 1980s, he built a powerhouse at the Australian Institute of Sport, later heading to Old Blighty to boost British Swimming's global stocks in the early 2000s as their National Performance Director.

His honours include Australian Coach of the Year, an Order of Australia Medal, a Churchill Fellowship, and induction into the International Swimming Hall of Fame.

But behind that storied career lies another story – one that began on a staircase in Perth and nearly ended on the side of a German autobahn.

Two tumbles that turned everything

Sweetenham's leg injury is the kind of story that sounds too extreme to be true – until you sit with him for a coffee near his home at Paradise Point and hear him tell it.

"My first accident was in 1981, after Tracey Wickham broke the 1500 world record in Perth, and I may be biased, but I do not believe a better world record has ever been set," he says.

"It was blizzard conditions poolside and at the same time I heard my house in Brisbane had been burgled. I was walking down the steps at Beatty Park wearing Dr. Scholl clogs – don't ask why – and I tripped, snapping my leg just above the ankle."

But it was a second leg injury in 1983, that would irreversibly alter the trajectory of his life.

Sweetenham was in Germany for a meet between Sweden and Germany, accompanying an AIS squad.

It was a blistering 38 degrees and riding in the back of a retired police Kombi van outside Karlsruhe, he leaned over to close the sliding door that had come open on the bumpy cobblestone road.

In a freak and fast sequence of mechanical failure and bad timing, the rear seat gave way, and Sweetenham was thrown from the van.

"I hit a signpost and ended up face down in a fertilised field. My leg was impaled in the ground, hanging by the skin. There was a mushroom-sized clump of mud sitting on the exposed bone and my ankle was where my knee should've been," he recalls.

Incredibly, a helicopter flying overhead landed at the scene, but as his travelling companions freed his leg from the hole it had made in the ground, the rotor wash blew more dirt and fertiliser into the wound.

The prognosis wasn't good, he had eight operations over the next 13 weeks in Karlsruhe Hospital, and he was told the leg would almost certainly need to be amputated.

"But I wouldn't let them take it. I've had over 20 major surgeries since, and I've been managing the wound for 42 years now despite the bone deteriorating and being slowly eaten away as if it has white ants," he said.

The leg that wouldn't be lost

Despite decades of pain and medical complexity, Sweetenham never let the injury define him – he's continued coaching, consulting and travelling the world.

"I made a decision early on, my leg was going to have to keep up with me, I wasn't going to let it dictate my life."

That mindset has taken him far. In recent years, Sweetenham has developed a passion for Africa, travelling regularly with a small crew that includes at various times exercise physiologist David Pyne and his university sport lecturer wife Naroa, and a pharmacologist/doctor couple, Larry and Kim Laursen.

"They are friends who share my passion, look after the wildlife and sometimes look after me," he says.

Sweetenham has written books about endangered species and formed friendships with African sporting leaders like swim coach Rocco Meiring who famously coached dual Olympic gold medallist and world record holder Tatjana Schoenmaker.

"I just got back from another trip to Africa, and I'll be off again soon," he says.

His wife Cheryl, his childhood sweetheart from Mount Isa and partner of more than 50 years, is content to let him roam.

"She came with me a couple of times early on, but she says there are no shops where I go, so she's happy to stay at home most times," he laughed.

The team that keeps him kicking

As determined as Sweetenham is, he knows he couldn't have kept moving without exceptional medical support.

"I've had great doctors around the world. But none better than Dr Stephen Yelland and nurse practitioner Nicola Morley at Bundall Medical Centre," he said.

"Honestly, without them and the Gold Coast University Hospital's vascular team I wouldn't still be upright, I wouldn't be travelling, I wouldn't be living the life I'm living."

For the past eight years, every six weeks or so, Morley has been helping him manage the chronic wound.

"She understands that I need to live as normal a life as possible. The infection will always be there; we're just keeping it in check," he says.

"Nicola and Stephen treat the person ahead of the wound, and that's a rare skill."

Father of three forty-something grown up children, Tim, Ben and Karen, Sweetenham has stared into the abyss more than once.

He's defied amputation, serious infections and the ever-present risk of systemic complications, but with expert care and unwavering grit, he's still on his feet, and still making plans.

"Nicola and Stephen have kept me out of hospital for years and their deep knowledge of wound management literally keeps me on my feet," he says.

No excuses, no regrets and still a leg to stand on

If you ask Sweetenham how he's accomplished so much while carrying such a burden, he'll tell you it's about mindset.

"I've learnt that in all adversity, there's potential for triumph, it just depends how you think."

That philosophy has powered a career that spans continents and champions, and it's helped him teach more than 50,000 children to swim.

Even now, the man who built his legacy poolside continues to inspire with his wisdom, resilience and refusal to be beaten by anything life throws at him.

"I don't do self-pity; I do what's in front of me, and then I go again," he says.



LOCAL GP FINDS HER CALLING

IN *aged care*

Dr Simone Wright is a general practitioner who works exclusively in aged care – a calling she’s turned into her own mobile practice for the Gold Coast residential aged care homes sector.

“I have been working in a general practice for about 13 years now, and very early in my training I was introduced to aged care. When I became a GP Fellow, I was asked to be the GP at the BUPA Runaway Bay aged care facility a morning a week and I really enjoyed it,” Simone said.

“A couple of years ago I was asked to go to another nursing home facility, but I found I didn’t really have the time to add it to my clinic schedule. It takes time with rounds, notes, calling families and liaising with care staff, and on top of the clinic pressures it becomes quite difficult.

“But they convinced me of the value of regular visits by a female GP, so I thought, ‘perhaps I can make this my business’, and I set myself up as a mobile GP.”

Each week Simone visits five Gold Coast aged care homes, one a day.

“The residents and families know what day I visit, and the care staff have my notes ready for my rounds and it works well,” she said.

Simone says the mobile clinics are well tailored to her personality.

“I like all kinds of general practice, and sometimes I miss the young families and babies and teenagers and general healthcare for adults.

“But what I found with focusing my time on aged care is I can spend time with the residents – I can sit and talk with them without having to rush off to a waiting room full of patients, and I feel my work is appreciated and worthwhile,” she said.

Simone says the job also gives her the flexibility to spend more time with her two teenage daughters, catch up on reading books for pleasure and fit in some regular exercise.

“And being mobile, I get to work with talented in-house teams at so many different locations.

“For me the most rewarding things each day are the conversations with the residents, and it doesn’t have to be about their health. They might tell me about something that has happened in their lives; they simply want to be listened to.

“By finding the time to provide good holistic care, there are rewards in that,” she said.

Simone is sometimes shadowed during her residential aged care home visits.

“I often bring my dog Shadowe along on my rounds; she’s a five-year-old cavoodle and not technically a therapy dog, but she’s a great dog. You can see the happiness in the faces when Shadowe comes in the door, particularly with the residents who might not get too many visitors,” she said.

“At Estia Robina Rise there’s a resident who is not even under my care, but she looks after Shadowe while I do my rounds.

“She has treats and water ready for her, she takes her outside to meet other residents, and she says it’s the highlight of her week.”

Lessons learned from the residents

“The residents can surprise you with the things they’ve done in their lives,” Simone said.

“For instance, one of my female residents was the mayor of a country town and I was just blown away to find that out. And there are the places the residents have travelled and the things they’ve done and the amazing life experiences they’ve had.

“And they all seem to genuinely care about me as well.

“They ask about my children, the holidays I’ve been on and all those sorts of things because they want to connect with the outside world, and I help them do that; those are the kinds of relationships that you build.”

Relationships with residential aged care homes staff

Simone works closely with facility staff and families to provide the right care for those unable to make their own healthcare decisions.

“We involve the families and the number of them that are appreciative of a simple phone call still surprises me,” she said.

Simone says the residential aged care homes staff, particularly those that stay on the same wards, are really onto all things health.

“They know what’s going on with residents and their families and they are the best people to notice any changes.

“Residential aged care homes staff are the key and that’s one of the reasons I enjoy my work so much, because I can rely on them.

“And when I finish my rounds each day I’m not stressed because I know the residents are well cared for by the staff at the facility,” she said.

Simone says communication is the key.

“With residents who are verbal or non-verbal, you can still show that you care about them, that’s what it’s all about.

“Spending time with the residents, making them feel important and listened to is vital to their proper healthcare.

“For me, working in the residential aged care homes sector is both a calling and a lifestyle,” she said.



Dr Simone Wright,
Bupa Aged Care
Runaway Bay





Upskilling AGED CARE STAFF

An innovative program is helping aged care home staff better assess and manage various medical issues, reducing after-hours presentations to Gold Coast hospital emergency departments.

Commissioned by Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) and delivered by a specialist Gold Coast Health team, the Residential Aged Care Home (RACH) After Hours Project focuses on workforce education and onsite clinical training in areas such as catheterisation, management plans, IT platforms, palliative care and dementia behaviours.

The aim is to upskill aged care staff, especially during nights, weekends and public holidays, when support is minimal and residents' GPs are typically unavailable.

"Our role is to bring the resources to the homes, so the staff can make informed decisions, and more residents can remain in familiar surroundings," says RACH After Hours Project Lead, Kelly Ellis.

"The aged care homes already have most of the tools and the staff have their own competencies, but we're providing more clear-cut tools from the hospital side of things.

"Many presentations occur after hours when the nurses and others on-site have minimal in-house support. There's often a higher number of casual or junior staff on shift, and they might not always know what to do, who the on-call doctor is, or what the escalation point should be; this program aims to change all that."

Initially funded for 12 months in 2023, the project has been extended following strong engagement and promising early results.

And to make it sustainable, Gold Coast Health and GCPHN have co-designed a 'train the trainer' model, empowering senior staff and educators in select facilities to deliver training to their colleagues.

A key part of the program is practical training, and Kelly says the recent addition of hands-on instruction for catheter insertion has been particularly well received.

"We have two mannequins, male and female, cut off at the waist, so staff can practise catheterisation through the genitalia. It's as close to lifelike simulation as possible without involving a real patient," she says.

Kelly has also developed a comprehensive workbook outlining resources, procedures and escalation points for staff to follow in after-hours scenarios.

But she says the ultimate success of the program depends on strong relationships.

The team works closely with GCPHN, RACHs and services such as the Gold Coast Health RACF Acute Support Service (RASS), which provides a rapid response as an alternative to the ED for RACH residents.

"It's partnerships that count; we can't work in silos. This only works with the support of the RACH staff and as much as they want to partner," Kelly says.

She acknowledges the intense daily pressures faced by aged care workers and says the program is designed to support, not add burden.

"We're all busy in our roles and aged care staff have huge responsibilities, so we're mindful of that in how we deliver the education and engage with the facilities.

"But the engagement is there, and we're looking forward to developing it more because, like everything in patient care, it can always be better."





AND THAT'S A RAP

Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) continued to advance its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) throughout the 2024-2025 financial year, building on its longstanding commitment to reconciliation since 2013.

RAP development and implementation

In March 2023, GCPHN launched its Innovate RAP for the two years to March 2025, following endorsement by Reconciliation Australia. This plan emphasises embedding cultural understanding across internal and external activities, and aims to achieve equitable health, and social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The RAP is led by a dedicated committee with support from all teams within the organisation. As part of its implementation, GCPHN collaborates with local Elders advisory groups to enhance representation on the RAP committee.

Key outcomes and activities

In 2024-25, initiatives to promote reconciliation included NAIDOC Week sponsorship, an innovative and well-supported staff Yarning Circle and the development of resources featuring local First Nations artwork, reflecting the rich culture and history of the region.

Future directions

Looking ahead, GCPHN is drafting its next Innovate RAP for the period 2025-2027, which is currently under review by Reconciliation Australia.

A 2024 review included staff consultation through an all-staff survey and several workshops to capture feedback on GCPHN's combined vision for reconciliation and discussion on tangible actions to achieve.

This forward-looking plan aims to continue strengthening relationships, build respect, and expand opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the Gold Coast community.

Through these efforts, GCPHN reaffirms its commitment to advancing reconciliation and fostering a culturally informed, welcoming and proud environment for all.



GCPHN BOARD

GCPHN is governed by an independent, skills-based board with significant experience in primary health care, the community, governance and the private sector.



Dr Ka-Kiu Cheung
Board Chair



Dr Tammra Warby
Deputy Chair



Grant Dearlove
Director



Damian Green
Director



Alison Ewens
Director



Dr Luke Ward
Director



Laurence West
Director

LAURIE WEST, *a proud* KALKADOON DJKUNDE MAN

Second-year Board member Laurie West shares a life in healthcare inspired by generations of family, connection to Country, a drive for cultural system change, and his own health and fitness journey.

As Senior Lead, Quality and Accreditation with Kalwun Development Corporation, Laurie oversees the implementation of quality frameworks and continuous improvement.

He has held several other influential roles within the Southeast Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Sector, working closely with Queensland Health and mainstream GP practices to advance healthcare delivery.

Laurie holds a Bachelor of Nursing Science, is a qualified quality auditor, and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD).

Early inspiration and career path

My mum, Karen West, was a health worker in Mount Isa for 50 years.

She started as a Community Aboriginal health worker and became district manager, leading Indigenous health in our area. In 2022, she won the Workforce Legend award from the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP).

My twin sisters and I are all Registered Nurses, inspired by mum’s leadership and a shared passion for improving our people’s health. Roianne is now a professor of nursing, winner of the 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award, and a Director at Sydney University. Our other sister Leeone continues nursing in Mount Isa.

Our dad, Laurie West Snr, was a hardworking man who, alongside mum, gave us direction, motivation and leadership.

First-generation beginnings

I’m the youngest of four children, and I’ve always been lucky to have those strong women in my life. We grew up surrounded by family and culture in Mount Isa, and those roots shaped who we were and what we wanted to do.

My grandmother used to say, “It doesn’t matter what job you get or what title you hold, just remember who you are and where you come from.”

We carry that advice with us always, even as we take on more influential roles.

Culture is core to who I am. Listening to my Elders share their challenges reminds me why I have the opportunities I do today and why I’m so grateful to be in my roles with Kalwun and GCPHN.

Advocacy and system change

Through collaboration with community, executives and strategic partners, I want to help drive positive system change for the health of the Gold Coast.

I’m passionate about improving cultural safety standards and training across the health sector and ensuring cultural safety is a genuine priority.

My health and fitness journey

Outside work, I love spending time with my wife Rachel, stepdaughter Eva and our puppy Bentley.

I also play competitive netball, and I have represented the Gold Coast in men’s and mixed teams for many years, including 15 years at Super League level and I also coach and umpire.

I put a lot into staying healthy with regular gym sessions, magnesium baths, massage, saunas, compression, cupping, acupuncture, and cryotherapy twice a month.

I’m now 46, and a family cardiac history and family members suffering diabetes drives me to look after myself, so I can keep showing up for my family, my community, my sport and my work.





Elizabeth McCray, former
Community Advisory
Council member



ADVISORY GROUPS

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Gold Coast Primary Health Network Community Advisory Council is an influential body that ensures GCPHN's decisions, investments and innovations are person-centred, cost-effective, locally relevant, and aligned to local care experiences and expectations. Its membership reflects the diversity of the Gold Coast community, and includes people from different backgrounds, education levels, experiences, and areas of the Gold Coast.

CLINICAL COUNCIL

The Gold Coast Primary Health Network Clinical Council plays a critical role by providing clinical advice to the Board, to assist in future decision-making. The Council meets quarterly, and its membership includes experienced local health professionals from general practice, specialist and allied health providers.

COLLABORATION

Our long-standing contribution to health on the Gold Coast has fostered strong partnerships with hospitals, the health sector, universities, health consumers, general practices, and local residents. These collaborations ensure that we constantly strive to meet the health needs of the community; delivering the right care, in the right place, at the right time, and by the right people.

Community voices SHAPING LOCAL HEALTH CARE

The Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) Community Advisory Council (CAC) membership represents the diversity of the Gold Coast, drawing on the voices of people from many different backgrounds, education levels and communities.

People like Bilinga local Elizabeth McCray, who recently retired from the CAC after five years of service.

With a Bachelor of Business from QUT, Elizabeth began her career at Telecom in Newcastle before moving to Darwin with her husband Robert, who served in the Royal Australian Air Force.

There, she worked as a career advisor with the Darwin Institute of Technology before spending several years working at the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) in Brisbane.

Elizabeth describes her community service journey as one that grew from family and lived experience.

"It was after moving from Darwin to Brisbane, and when my children began school, that I started volunteering, first as secretary at the preschool and primary school parent committees, then producing school magazines, which tapped into my love of desktop publishing," she said.

"Then, both my parents developed dementia in the late 1990s - early 2000s and it was difficult at times caring for them and my young family.

"When they passed away, I was in a bit of a spot wondering what to do with myself, so I got involved with volunteering at Haemochromatosis Australia.

"Haemochromatosis is a genetic disorder where people with the condition absorb too much iron from their diet, which builds up in the body and causes iron overload over time.

"Unfortunately, it's still under-diagnosed in Australia, and although I have no personal connection to the condition, it is a very worthwhile cause.

"When I put my hand up to help, and with my love of publishing, they put me straight to work on their newsletter and social media.

"Where the newsletter was a no brainer for me, the social media was new, but I learned how to do it and I am still quite proud of the increased clicks generated on the website and social platforms," she said.

Elizabeth later joined the Haemochromatosis Australia Board, and it was during this time that she looked further into GCPHN.

"When I saw the CAC was calling for members, I thought I could contribute my lived experience of health needs within the Gold Coast community there as well," she said.

"When I first joined, meetings were online due to COVID but these days we meet in person.

"At first, I felt overawed, but before long I found my rhythm; it's a lovely group, and I've learned so much about healthcare and health needs on the Gold Coast and I have tried to make a positive contribution."

Elizabeth is particularly passionate about ensuring consumer voices are an integral part of the decision-making process.

"People working closely in a health area sometimes forget that the general population often has limited health literacy.

"Having consumer input means messages can be crafted in ways people understand."

"For example, our CAC gave feedback that shaped the final rollout of a frailty campaign, making it, I believe, far more effective," she said.

Aged care is another matter close to her heart.

"Too often decision-makers don't see what it's really like for patients and families. No one aims to end up in aged care, these people had rich and active lives before," Elizabeth said.

"They deserve meaningful activities, especially on weekends and evenings when staffing is thin and, having cared for my parents, I feel my lived experience brought value to those discussions."

Elizabeth encourages others to consider joining the CAC.

"You learn a great deal, it's great for your own personal development; I've learned about other medical conditions, I've learned of so many health issues on the Gold Coast that need attention and it's great that you can make such a difference to the health and wellbeing of your local community," she said.

"It's one of the friendliest groups I've ever been part of, and everyone is listened to and respected. You don't need medical knowledge, more a thirst for knowledge and a genuine community spirit."



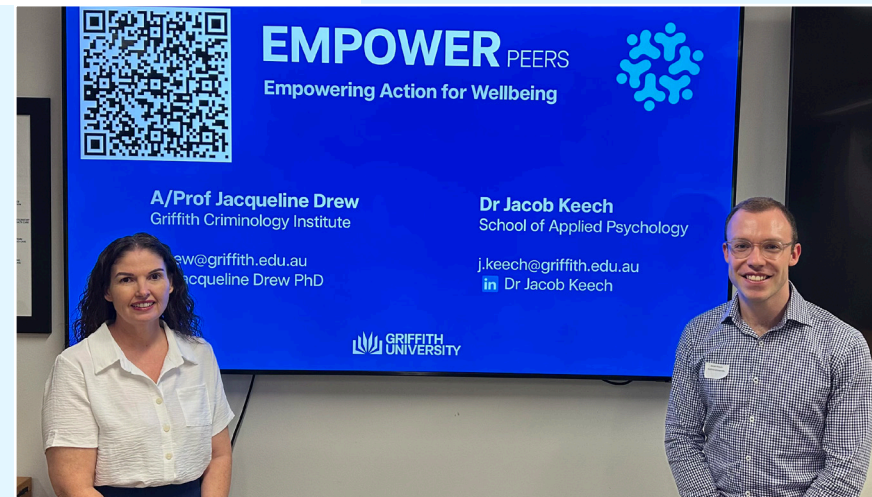
Left: Fourteen participants completed a two-day Youth Mental Health First Aid Training workshop in March 2025, building confidence in responding to youth crises.

80
EDUCATION AND TRAINING EVENTS DELIVERED IN 2024-25



Left: Psychological First Aid training, facilitated by Australian Red Cross, equipped participants with practical skills to support individuals immediately after a disaster or critical event until professional help is available, or until they can effectively cope on their own.

“It was an absolutely incredible workshop. I loved the delivery and facilitation and the amount of information I got out of it; it should be mandatory learning given the access and support that is required and provided through organisations.” – Peer Support Training participant



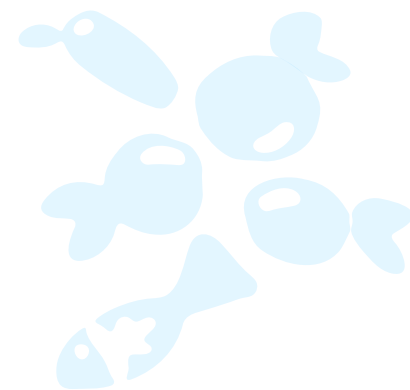
Right: Mental Health First Aid training delivered in March and April 2025 was praised for being informative, engaging and relevant to real-world situations.

“It was excellent and a great learning opportunity. Trainer was very knowledgeable, approachable and shared her knowledge easily.” – participant



Above: A series of Disaster Recovery and Resilience events were delivered in partnership with Gold Coast Health and City of Gold Coast, including Peer Support Training.

GCPHN EVENT highlights



120+

Aged care professionals attended the inaugural Gold Coast Aged Care Symposium on 28 May 2025. The theme, *Partnering for Quality and Innovation*, inspired discussions on clinical care, reform and workforce wellbeing. Key topics included the new Aged Care Act, medication safety, digital tools, leadership and more – all focused on delivering improved care for older people.



1,193
TOTAL ATTENDEES IN 2024-25

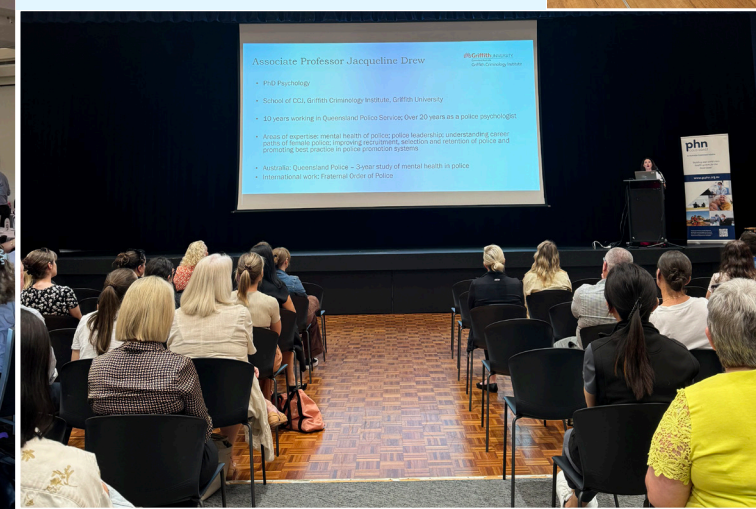


114

Participants attended Residential Aged Care Wound Management training in collaboration with Wound Specialist Services (left).

Left: A Disaster Recovery and Resilience Vicarious Trauma workshop was held in October 2024, supporting workforce wellbeing and resilience.

“Great presentation with helpful and practical tips.” – participant





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