

Health matters

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Helping people to better health and well-being

Automatic trolley washing machine first in Australia

A fully automatic hospital linen trolley washing machine, the first of its kind in Australia, has pride of place at the Fraser Coast's Wide Bay Group Linen Service.

The service's Acting Manager, Vince Fitzpatrick, said the \$110,000 German-made Pharmagg Porter was an environmentally sound unit, which used a fraction of the water and chemicals used in the manual process.

"It has reduced chemical use and water consumption by up to 90 per cent by reclaiming and reusing water up to 10 times," he said

Vince said this was in keeping with Queensland Health's Environmental Policy and was an example of a practical and sound environmental solution to a potential risk area.

He said more than 200 linen trolleys, including sterile trolleys, were in circulation and the service washed an average of 50 a day.

"It was a time consuming and unpopular job when the trolley's were washed by hand," he said.

"The new unit washes two tallboy trolleys at a time in about half the time it took to wash one by hand.

"The unit contains computerised micro-processor controls that have been programmed to complete various cycles and guarantees and proves both thermal and chemical disinfection."

Vince said staff safety had also improved. He said workplace health and safety was an issue when the trolleys were washed manually.

He said personal protection equipment was issued to all staff assigned duties in the area, a necessary but costly exercise.

The automatic washer had solved these problems.

The trolleys are loaded into the unit in the dirty area of the laundry.

The door to the unit is then locked by compressed air and when the cycle is complete, the opposite door, in the clean area, opens automatically, releasing the clean trolleys.

The last part of the process is a steam treatment, which leaves the trolleys almost dry when they emerge.

Vince said the unit had proved to be an economical addition to the service with savings in labour, water, chemicals, waste water and health and safety risks.

He said the unit had enhanced the quality of the overall service provided by the service to five health service districts.



Wide Bay Group Linen Service acting maintenance officer, Ian Allison, loads two tallboy trolleys into the automatic washer.

Shared model set to start

Planning is under way for the 1 July implementation of the Shared Service Initiative involving Queensland Health Corporate Services staff.

The Shared Service Initiative, involving corporate services staff across all State Government departments and agencies, will see corporate services delivered across the public sector by seven new Government 'shared service providers' and two 'technology centres of skills'.

Because of its size, Queensland Health is both a shared service provider and a cluster in its own right, and the majority of corporate services staff will continue to provide services only to this department. However, a new business model will apply, which will change the delivery of corporate services and the reporting lines in Queensland Health.

The Queensland Health corporate services involved are

accounts payable, accounts receivable, HR transactions, asset management, purchasing and payroll.

However, not all functions in the above services will change.

Discussions on the implementation are ongoing, with many decisions yet to be finalised.

All permanent Queensland Health corporate services staff will maintain the same employment security, with no staff redundancies and no requirement for staff in regional areas to change where they live.

A website has been established on QHEPS to provide staff with the latest information available from Queensland Health, and a link to the whole-of-government website, <http://sharingservices.govnet.qld.gov.au/index.html>

Regular updates will be published and staff meetings will be convened with corporate services staff across the State.

Now on QHEPS



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Editor
Ian Ross
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Guidelines for diabetes care

Guidelines to improve the management of diabetes Type 1 in children and adolescents has been released by Queensland Health.

Ruth Cox, acting Principal Allied Health Adviser, said figures from the national diabetes register showed that about 1400 children and adolescents in Queensland have Type 1 diabetes.

She said that the national figure was 7600 and that these young people had a lifetime of diabetes ahead of them.

Ruth said the guidelines were developed by Queensland Health's Allied Health Diabetes Task Group.

"Working groups were formed, consisting of a range of health professionals, from throughout Queensland, with an interest in the development of paediatric diabetes guidelines," she said.

These guidelines support the Queensland Health Outcomes Plan for Diabetes Mellitus (2000-2004) through implementation of strategies within this plan, which address this National Health Priority Area.

Accompanying brochures - Summary for Health Professionals and Parent's Guide - have also been developed.

These documents are available from:

- <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/publications>
- <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/odba/allied/html/diabetes.htm>

Contact: Madeline Avci, Senior Project Officer, Health Advisory Unit on 322 52328.



Gerry Hoogenboom is pictured with facilitator Annette Baldry adding his hand print to a panel of the perpetual 'Hands of Reconciliation Banner'.

Learning Circles popular

Reconciliation Learning Circles have been conducted with very positive results since 2001 in the Bundaberg Health Service District.

Altogether 18 people have completed the learning circles with initially one and now two facilitators.

The Learning Circles have been well received and has made a positive contribution to the process of reconciliation in the Bundaberg district.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the circles was the regular participation in the group by members of the local Indigenous community, including a tribal elder and guest speakers.

Each group on graduation has printed their hands onto a perpetual 'Hands of Reconciliation Banner' to acknowledge the commitment the participants have

made to the process of reconciliation.

Apart from the learning circles program the groups have organised a number of additional activities to increase awareness of issues.

These have included; seeing "Rabbit Proof Fence", visiting the NAIDOC 2002 Art Exhibition which included the Gurrinju Freedom Banners, participating in NAIDOC Week celebrations, and planning a "Bush Talk and Taste" in the near future.

One of the participants Gerry Hoogenboom has been so motivated by his participation in the circles that he has penned a poem called "A First Nation - Reconciliation."

Another new Learning Circle group started recently after being promoted at the monthly staff barbecue, the district managers forum and heads of departments meetings.

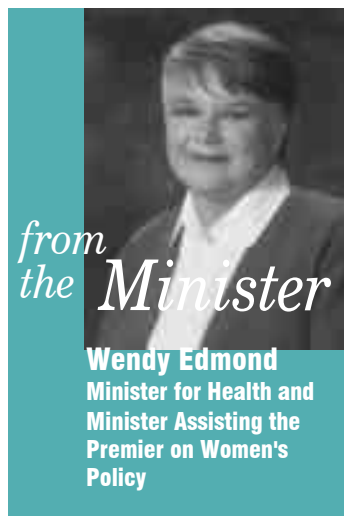
The current Australian Health Care Agreement is due to expire on 30 June and we are negotiating a new five-year agreement.

State and Territory Health Ministers have been working hard on the necessary policy reforms and funding requirements needed to address a range of issues across Australia.

Two examples of much needed reform are the interface between public hospital emergency departments and primary health care services; and the acute hospital sector and the aged care sector.

Primary care services are a Commonwealth responsibility, however our emergency departments have experienced a 13.7 per cent increase in presentations of Category 4 and 5 patients over the past three years.

Queensland Health also continues to provide a significant number of nursing home type stays in some of our public hospi-



Some of these people are awaiting residential aged care placement, a Commonwealth responsibility, so again this is a significant example of cost-shifting.

We need additional Commonwealth funding to ensure that we not only maintain the excellent service provided in our public hospitals, but we are also in a position to expand services where necessary and appropriate.

To ensure that our health system is sustainable in the long term, we are also focusing on addressing the causes of health problems.

Last month, I launched Queensland's first nutrition

strategy Eat Well Queensland: Smart Eating for a Healthier State.

When I became Health Minister, I gave a commitment to placing more emphasis on preventing health problems and maintaining good health.

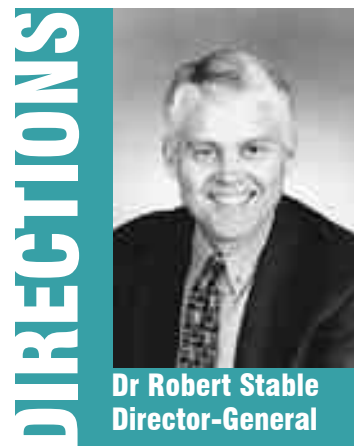
By improving health through nutrition programs, we can minimise some of the factors that cause the chronic diseases, which are so devastating to Queenslanders and our health system.

That is why an extra 27 nutritionists are being appointed to help children and adults around the State to avoid obesity and the health problems associated with being overweight.

The new staff will be located in communities from Cape York down to the South Coast and will include an Indigenous Child Health Program Coordinator for North Queensland.

All of these staff will be at the forefront of helping to ensure a healthier Queensland.

Wendy Edmond
Minister for Health and
Minister Assisting the
Premier on Women's Policy



Dr Robert Stable
Director-General

The Queensland health care system is facing challenges as identified in the Smart State: Health 2020 document.

One of the major enablers for meeting these challenges is the Australian Health Care Agreement which sets in place the level of Commonwealth grants given to the States and Territories to assist in funding health services.

Queensland Health staff in the Health Systems Strategy Branch have been closely involved over many months in formulating proposals to shape the next Agreement.

The current Australian Health Care Agreement expires on 30 June 2003 and the renegotiation process is now well under way.

Health Ministers established nine reference groups in April last year to advise on a new agreement, with a focus on the provision of optimal care and improved health outcomes.

The groups looked at specific areas of health policy.

These included hospital funding and private health insurance, rural health, aged and acute care, preventive, primary and chronic models of care, Indigenous health, mental health, information technology, research and e-health, quality and safety and collaboration on workforce, training and education.

The work of these groups was presented to Health Ministers in November last year.

In contrast to previous renegotiations of the Agreements, an even stronger reform agenda underpins the funding proposal put forward to the Commonwealth by the States and Territories.

Key issues for Queensland Health in the renegotiation include securing an adequate starting grant and adequate annual indexation.

These are particularly important as our health care costs continue to increase well in excess of other sectors of the economy and increased funding is essential to ensure a modern sustainable health system.

It is also important that States and Territories receive adequate funding to undertake many of the specific reforms that have been detailed by the Reference Groups.

I would like to thank all staff involved in formulating such a good case for these reforms as part of a new Australian Health Care Agreement.

Dr Robert Stable
Director-General



Dr Ranjeny Thomas working in her laboratory. Photo courtesy of Chris Stacey, The University of Queensland.

Stuart Pegg honoured

The new burns unit at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital has been named in honour of Brisbane surgeon, The Professor Stuart Pegg Burns Centre.

Professor Pegg, AM, the Director of Burns at Royal Brisbane and Women's and Royal Children's Hospitals, is an international expert in his field.

He has treated burns since 1967 and was an inaugural member and past president of the Australian and New Zealand Burn Association.

He has been involved with the International Society for Burn Injuries for many years and was national representative, regional representative for the Western Pacific Area and vice-president for eight years.

Vaccine closer to 'turn off' disease

Vaccines are closer for auto-immune diseases with a University of Queensland research team based at Princess Alexandra Hospital achieving what is believed to be a world first with the finding of a mechanism to turn off an auto-immune disease, once it has started.

The research provides a possible basis for a vaccine against auto-immune diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile diabetes, where the body's immune system inappropriately attacks healthy cells.

Academic rheumatologist and University of Queensland Centre for Immunology and Cancer Research Deputy Director, Associate Professor Ranjeny

Thomas, said the work, which is still at the preliminary stages, also had implications for treating allergic diseases, such as asthma as well as making allografts (grafting of a tissue from another person) safer.

Although a commercially available vaccine is several years away and human clinical trials are yet to be held, the team believes it is making excellent progress and is on the way to finding a cure.

The research team has found a molecular control mechanism to re-educate the immune system.

"This is not a new idea, but what's different is that this is the first time it has been possi-

ble to suppress an existing response once the immune system has started down a detrimental pathway," Dr Thomas said.

The team made the new discovery while working on dendritic cells.

Their role is to identify infected cells within the immune system.

Although it has been many years in development, the project itself has received Arthritis Foundation of Queensland and National Health and Medical Research Council funding.

For further information on the study contact Dr Thomas phone 3240 5365 or e-mail: rthomas@cicr.uq.edu.au

Rural students shown career choice

Observing some of the hospital's outpatient clinics, touring the emergency department, and learning about accessing a career in pharmacy was just a small part of an intensive two-day health careers workshop for 24 rural Queensland students held at Princess Alexandra Hospital.

Funded by Queensland Health, the Health Careers in the Bush program is conducted each year by the Cunningham Centre, Southern Zone Rural

Health Training Unit.

The workshop was designed to provide a united, informative, and culturally sensitive program of recruitment and retention strategies for rural and remote students with an interest in pursuing a career in health.

The Health Careers in the Bush State Coordinator, Natalie Hindmarsh, said the students had demonstrated an interest in health as a career choice and also a desire to live and work in the bush.

This year's workshop, tailored to meet students' interests, included information sessions on medicine, nursing, and occupational therapy as well as pharmacy and nutrition.

"By being given the opportunity to access professionals who can provide accurate and up-to-date information and guidance on subject selection, tertiary education options, and career development, the students can now look to confirm their choices," Natalie said.

QIEP – striving to achieve excellence

Queensland Health has been working on 23 strategic projects since 2000 to improve the quality and safety of its services. The \$120 million Quality Improvement and Enhancement Program (QIEP), via the Australian Health Care Agreement (1998-2003), provides the basis for quality improvement activities in the department. For more information: www.health.qld.gov.au/quality

Many activities covered

- Six dedicated networks of clinicians and project staff have been working together under the Collaborative for Healthcare Improvements to improve bed management, cardiac services, medical assessment and planning, paediatric day surgery, care for renal and stroke patients, and technology.
- Consumer brochures will soon be available to help districts using telehealth explain the technology to the clients. The new brochures, expected to be available next month, explain what telehealth is, how it works, privacy and other expectations, what to do during a consultation and where to go for more information. The Telehealth Program Area has also produced a bookmark to help engage Indigenous people.
- Clinicians are trialing clinical pathways they developed in orthopaedics, general surgery and maternity and gynaecology across eight hospitals with the view to standardisation across State.
- The Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health

Care endorsed Queensland Health's *Best Practice Guidelines for Falls Prevention in Public Hospitals and State Government Residential Aged Care Facilities* and distributed them nationally.

- Queensland Health developed credentials and clinical privileges guidelines to ensure only appropriately qualified, trained and experienced medical practitioners undertake clinical care in its facilities.
- QIEP has been working with the Royal Flying Doctors Service to produce a clinical services database for rural and remote areas to improve referrals.
- The new process for gaining patient consent is expected to be fully implemented across the State by the end of June. Patients now have easier access to information with procedure-specific patient information sheets, 290 standard procedure-specific consent forms, multi-lingual information, a brochure and a video to help them make informed decisions about their health care. The project has received recognition nationally and internationally.

Remote and isolated staff are being trained on the collection, transporting and storage of pathology specimens. The conditions in these areas are not ideal; staff may have to transport the specimens via boat or helicopter. The training will help them get the specimens to their destination in the best possible condition. The training has been conducted in Mt Isa and Torres Strait.

- Staff are working to prevent the development of pressure ulcers in patients while they are in hospital or in an aged care facility by providing evidence-based guidelines, tools and education state-wide under the Infection Control Program Area. Facilities are implementing these under the Clinician Development Program Area. The pressure ulcer prevention project has also been working with Telehealth to develop a procedure and consent form for digital wound care photography. It is expected to be available on QHEPS in the next few months.



Acting Director of Nursing Leanne Pound examines Madeline Roberts at Moura Hospital.

Rural areas benefit from improved nurse training

Rural and isolated communities will benefit from the broader services their nurses can provide after doing advanced practice training under QIEP

Program Area Manager, Catherine Enriken, said endorsement received after the training allowed rural and isolated nurses to assess, treat and evaluate common illness, and identify health needs requiring more specialised care. "They do this while working with doctors in a collaborative practice environment," Catherine said.

QIEP with the North Queensland Rural Health Training Unit has coordinated training for 150 nurses in the Rural and Isolated Practice Endorsed Registered Nurse course throughout the State since June 2001.

Acting Director of Nursing at Moura, Leanne Pound, said the training helped her develop strategies for dealing

with different situations, either independently or with the doctor where required.

"When a patient comes in I can assess them and then follow the guidelines in the *Primary Clinical Care Manual* (also produced under the QIEP)," she said.

Leanne said practical case studies gave a hands-on approach to a variety of situations, such as how to deal with an emergency patient with a major allergic reactions.

She said it enhanced her skills and knowledge in managing the patient during the emergency, providing after care, patient education, follow-up, and understanding why the reaction occurred.

Leanne said rural and remote nurses may attend a range of cases in the one shift from emergencies, palliative care, deliveries and the children's ward, or conducting x-rays.

Although Moura was only 45 minutes from Biloela, professional isolation was an issue the course helped address, she said.

Banana Health Service District Manager, Monica Seth, said the community would benefit because nurses would be able to provide first-line care where doctors may not be in the facility.

They would then be able to work with the doctor where required to care for the patient.

"All the medical superintendents with right of private practice have been supportive of our nurses undertaking the training," Monica said.

"The nurses really should be congratulated as a significant component of the course was done in their own time."

QIEP has trained Indigenous health workers in the Torres Strait islands, Cairns and Cape York districts since March 2001.

Vital links to community

Queensland Health is strengthening links to the community under a project to enhance community engagement.

Consumer and Community Participation Program Area Manager, Louise Livingstone, said that through QIEP, Queensland Health was working with districts and district health councils to enhance their skills in working in partnership with the community.

"District health councils are a vital link to understanding the needs of the community," Louise said.

"We are conducting workshops and providing resources to support them in their roles.

"The workshops will help the councils and district executives better understand issues requiring community engagement, their roles, the whole-of-government approach and planning activities.

"Four pilot workshops allowed councils to give us feedback so we could make sure future workshops met their needs.

"District executive members were asked to participate so there was a shared understanding of the community engagement roles."

Resources are on QHEPS at <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/hsd/procurement/quality/qiep/16485consumer.htm>

E-mail contact: consumer_participation@health.qld.gov.au

Complaint rate reduced

Queensland Health's new complaints management approach has contributed to a 33 per cent decrease in the number of complaints made to the Health Rights Commission about the State's public health system.

The Commission's annual report for 2001-2002 says the reduction was largely because of improved practices and an increased awareness of complaint handling achieved under the QIEP.

Queensland Health recently introduced a standardised approach for managing complaints state-wide as part of the QIEP.

Patient Complaints and Surveys Program Area Manager Anita Hansen said the Ombudsman's Office had used Queensland Health's system as a case study of excellence.

"Complaints help Queensland Health identify issues and rectify problems," Anita said.

"We have trained 101 district-nominated complaints coordinators throughout the State.

"Now 90 per cent of health service districts have designated and trained staff to manage complaint."

Several other States have also adopted Queensland's system.

She said the success had built on Queensland Health's

first comprehensive patient satisfaction survey in 2001, which showed 89 per cent of patients were satisfied with care they received.

Another survey is planned for next year, and a guide to assist districts conduct local surveys is expected to be available in June this year.

The Complaints Management Policy is available on QHEPS (15184).

Clinicians enhance skills

More than 9000 clinicians across the State have enhanced their clinical skills with training provided by the Clinician Development Program Area (CDPA).

Program Area Manager, Margaret Marshall, said clinicians learnt practical ways to help them make continuous improvements in the delivery of patient care.

"It might be making improvements to a system, or by testing an innovative way of doing something," Margaret said.

"It's about helping clinicians to challenge what they currently do in light of new evidence and apply improvements to their practice – they learn by doing, and own and

manage the change."

CDPA has coordinated 23 training programs including clinical indicators, continuous quality improvement, cost centre management, discharge planning, doctor-patient communication, clinical documentation, team building, and evidence-based practice.

Margaret said all districts had plans that identified training needs and provided opportunities for clinicians to apply their learning to practical improvements.

Clinicians in every district can apply to their district facilitation group to undertake improvement projects.

There are 271 projects under way across 16 districts and more to be approved in more recently engaged districts.



Director-General, Dr Robert Stable, with Australia Day Achievement Medallion recipient Elizabeth Cox (right), pictured with (from left) her sister, Jennine, and mother, Margaret Cox.

Dental program outlined

New programs for oral health and dentistry were outlined at an oral health forum attended by more than 100 oral health and dental professionals at Griffith University.

"The forum outlined the university's plans to offer a suite of oral health programs – including dentistry, dental technology, and prosthetics – to the Gold Coast's senior professionals," said Forum Host and Pro-Vice Chancellor for Health and Science, Professor Max Standage.

"The response has been very positive, as both the professional and public communities recognise the growing demand for oral health services here on the Gold Coast," Professor Standage said.

The university has developed new programs in dentistry, dental prosthetics, dental technology, and dental and oral health therapy.

The undergraduate degrees will be offered later this year through the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre for commencement in 2004.

"With our new programs, we are aiming to plug the gaps in the oral health industry which have grown steadily over the past decades," Professor Standage said.

"So we are not only fulfilling the professional demands but the community needs as well."

The university has developed a special dual-qualification program in which dental students graduate with both a Bachelor of Oral Health degree and a Masters of Dentistry in five years.

The new Bachelor Degrees in Dental Technology have been designed for both undergraduates wishing to specialise in areas such as denture construction, orthodontics and implantology, and for existing dental technicians who want to upgrade their skills to degree qualifications.

The new Master of Dental

Technology in Prosthetics will be the first specialist program of its kind to be offered in Queensland.

"We are proud to offer up to 60 students per year the chance to study these brand new courses in an integrated state-of-the-art dental facility," Professor Standage said.

"These programs will provide students with practical experience that closely matches the realities out there in the dental profession.

"It will also offer the public community a broad range of oral health services in their local area."

Staff achievements recognised

A total of 32 Queensland Health staff and volunteers received Australia Day Achievement Medallions in ceremonies held throughout the State.

Director-General, Dr Robert Stable, said the medallions were made available to each State Government department from the Australia Day Council of Queensland.

He said the Queensland Health medallions were presented to officers and volunteers who had made a noteworthy contribution to the work of the department during the past year or who had given outstanding service over a number of years.

"This is a way of recognising individuals who have gone beyond the call of duty and provided services over and above their normal duties," Dr Stable said.

The medallion recipients are:

Joan Brownlie – Volunteer, member of the Roma Health Service District Council.

Janet Ceron – Staff, Mental Health Unit, Corporate Office.

Pastor Gordon Dobbins – Staff, Honorary Chaplain at the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

Christine Stewart – Staff, Liaison Officer, Mareeba Hospital, Indigenous Liaison Officer.

Ruth Robinson – Staff, Tablelands Health Service District, Operational Service Officer at the Primary Health Centre.

Dylis Turnbull – Volunteer, has worked for the Red Cross Blood Bank in Emerald for about six years.

Julie Thompson – Volunteer/staff, enrolled nurse who

has worked in a voluntary capacity with Sudden and Neonatal Death Syndrome in the Central Highlands Health Service District.

Rae Gate – Volunteer, President of the Gympie Hospital Auxiliary and the Gympie Branch of the Red Cross.

Dr Noel Hayman – Staff, Manager of the Indigenous Health Service for Queen Elizabeth II Hospital Health Service District.

Stan Belas – Volunteer, Queens Elizabeth II Hospital, works for the gardens and grounds maintenance section and has been caring for the indoor plants in the hospital since 2001.

Alexander (Sandie) William Collie – Staff, clinical nurse consultant, Alcohol and Drug Service, Bayside Health Service District.

Ainsley Ringma – Staff, Respiratory Educator, Acute Service, Bayside Health Service District.

Dr Rodney Auer – Staff, Dentist, Royal Children's Hospital, since 1968.

Dr David Cartwright – Staff, Director of Neonatology, Royal Women's Hospital.

Robyn Fox – Staff, Nurse Educator, worked at the Royal Brisbane Hospital for the past 22 years.

Hazel Prideaux – Staff, Clinical Nurse, Royal Women's Hospital.

Judith McDonnell – Staff, Service Director, Integrated Mental Health Service, Bundaberg Health Service District.

Lesley Evans – Staff, Pharmacist at the Bundaberg Base Hospital since 1978.

Dr James (Jim) Eadie – Staff, Director of Medical Services, Kingaroy.

Libby Leu – Staff, Social Work Team Leader, Community Health, South Burnett Health Service District.

Ian Sullivan – Staff, Plaster Technician, Rockhampton Hospital.

Elizabeth Mary (Liz) Young – Staff, Midwifery Endorsed Registered Nurse, Woorabinda Multipurpose Health Service.

Trevor Chippindall – Staff, Principal Internal Auditor, Investigations, Audit and Operational Review.

Stephen Loch – Staff, Senior Internal Auditor, Information Systems Audits, Audit and Operational Review.

Lynn Boundy – Staff, Director of Nursing/Facility Manager, Oakey Health Service.

Joe Chalmers – Staff, Mental Health Nurse Educator, Toowoomba District Mental Health Service.

Natalie Baig – Staff, Director of Health Promotion, West Moreton Public Health Unit.

Kerry Bell – Staff, Principal Advisor Foods, Environmental Health Unit, Public Health Services.

Robert Weare – Staff, Indigenous Liaison Officer, Cairns Base Hospital

Pam Risk – Staff, Team Leader, until December 2002, Pastoral Care Service, Hervey Bay Hospital.

Elizabeth Cox – Staff, Administrative Officer, Legal and Administrative Law Unit.

Brownyn Luxon – Staff, Director of Nursing, Gordonvale Memorial Hospital and Palliative Care Unit/Respite Centre.

\$2m centre to fight heart disease

A new \$2 million research centre to be set up this year at the Princess Alexandra Hospital could reduce Australia's spiralling rates of cardiovascular disease through early detection.

The new centre will bring together five expert groups of medical and allied health researchers from throughout the University of Queensland.

The Centre of Clinical Research Excellence in Cardiovascular Disease and Metabolic Disorders will be set up this year at the university's Department of Medicine at the hospital.

Centre staff are developing cardiovascular imaging techniques that enable abnormalities to be detected in the heart and blood vessels, before the development of serious disease.

Early detection will allow interventions that could greatly improve the outcomes of patients with diabetes, hypertension and

renal disease.

The centre is being established following a five-year funding grant from the Commonwealth Government.

Associate Professor John Prins, Director of Diabetes and Endocrinology at Princess Alexandra Hospital, is a Principal Investigator in the Centre.

He said he was optimistic that the results of the program would be complementary to those achieved with current treatment approaches.

"The problem facing patients with diabetes and/or obesity is that their cardiovascular disease often remains asymptomatic and undetected for long periods of time," he said.

"Current management of these patients relies on treatment rather than prevention, so a program aimed at early prevention of disease should provide substantial long-term benefits for the patients and

the community.

"Researchers will use the new imaging techniques to monitor the effects of preventive measures."

Centre Director, Professor Tom Marwick, said the research could have dramatic effects on the rates of cardiovascular disease, which is Australia's number one killer.

"We currently have an epidemic of cardiovascular disease in this country," he said.

"It is widely acknowledged that we have to act to identify and treat the disease before it becomes clinically apparent.

"Early detection before symptoms appear could change the course of disease.

"We are currently evaluating a program that will teach and promote the benefits of physical activity and dietary intervention for diabetic parents.

"It will be home-based and we will supervise patients through telemedicine."



Fraser Coast's Wayne Raguse and Monica Kaufman recently received their certificates in the areas of cleaning and laundry respectively.

Education key to privacy project

The Information Privacy Project is being introduced across the State in the next six months.

The project will have a strong focus this year on education and training, with a comprehensive training and education program starting this month.

The training and education activities are being coordinated by Senior Project Officer, Glynis Schultz.

"I am trying to ensure that as many Queensland Health employees as possible have an opportunity to attend an information session about privacy," she said.

Glynis and other Information Privacy Project staff will be visit-

ing more than 70 Queensland Health sites around the State in the next six months to conduct information sessions about privacy.

Glynis said posters advising on training session times and dates would be displayed at the various sites.

Glynis said she intended to make the sessions relaxed and informative, and encouraged everyone to attend, bring along an open mind about privacy, and any questions they had about privacy implementation.

The project will be reviewing 11 Queensland Health sites to identify any outstanding barriers to compliance with the National Privacy Principles in IS42A.

Fiona Jackson, Principal Project Officer, said during the review, the team would be talking with Queensland Health staff about how personal information was collected, stored, used and disclosed.

Findings from the reviews will form the basis of an action plan to recommend and implement changes required in order to comply with IS42A.

The Information Privacy Project is updating the department's Privacy Plan and Personal Information Digest.

For information on privacy and our other activities look at the Privacy website on QHEPS at <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/privacy/home.htm>

First certificates issued

The first qualifications certificates in the Assessment and Training Program for Operational Stream Staff have been issued by the Queensland Health Support Services Reform Unit.

The qualification, the Certificate II in Health Support Services, is being awarded to eligible operational services officers who have demonstrated knowledge and skills which meet the competency requirements of the units within the qualifications.

About 40 workplace assessors were registered at the end of January with the Open Learning Institute of TAFE.

The Support Services Reform Unit facilitates support services (linen, cleaning, food, portage, building and grounds maintenance) within Queensland public sector

health facilities.

The program, an initiative under EB4 and continued in EB5, offers OO2 staff in the areas of cleaning, client/patient handling, food, grounds and laundry the opportunity to have their current skills and abilities recognised under the national framework.

The program was released in October last year with the distribution of an implementation kit, and an assessment kit, providing workplace assessment tools, was released in January.

All resources relating to the program were loaded on to the unit's website in mid-January, and are now available electronically across the State via QHEPS.

Contact: Karen Gibb or Claire Moore, Support Services Reform Unit, on 323 41797.

Foundation gains strong support

Each Toowoomba community member contributed an average of about \$2 last year to Toowoomba Hospital, Baillie Henderson Hospital, Mt Lofty Heights Nursing Home, Gatton Hospital and Oakey Hospital.

However, most people donating would not know it.

The donations came through the many ventures of the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation which last year formally handed over \$200,000 worth of equipment to Toowoomba Health Service District.

Foundation Executive Director, Peter Rookas, said in 10 years the Foundation had raised more than \$700,000 in donations to the Toowoomba Health Service District.

"The Toowoomba Hospital Foundation manages the Toowoomba Hospital coffee shop Café Ritazza as well as car parking at the Toowoomba Hospital campus. Profits from these businesses are channelled back into

health services," he said.

"The Toowoomba Hospital Foundation has built a strong funding base over the past 10 years and each year large sums of money are used to buy equipment, fund research and staff development and provide those 'little extras' for patients.

"We also have a number of fund-raising events throughout the year such as our annual Fashion Dimensions night, numerous golf days, obsolete hospital equipment auctions, Toowoomba Hospital Children's Appeal, movie nights and race days."

Foundation Chairman Ray Taylor said the foundation had bought a diverse range of equipment including:

- \$96,000 for four dialysis machines for Toowoomba Hospital Renal Unit
- \$24,500 for two videoconferencing systems for the emergency departments at Toowoomba Hospital and Gatton Hospitals

- \$16,600 for furniture in the Toowoomba Hospital staff dining room

- \$15,000 for education, training and professional development of staff (funds used to ensure staff gain the latest training for clinical care)

- \$9000 for four pulse oximeter machines for various wards at Toowoomba Hospital

- \$5000 for an earscan tympanometer machine for speech pathology services

- \$4000 for a Laryngoscope used in Toowoomba Hospital theatres

Ray said the donations made a great contribution to patient care or to staff services, such as the teleconferencing equipment at Oakey Hospital and Toowoomba Hospital.

He said this meant that if Oakey Hospital had an emergency and require specialist advice they could videoconference to Toowoomba and gain information instantly rather than have staff travelling between the two hospitals.

Health technology boosted

Access to health information for people living in rural north Queensland communities will be improved under a \$500,000 three-year program announced last month by Health Minister Wendy Edmond.

The University of Queensland's North Queensland Health Equalities Promotion Unit based in Cairns, will conduct the project in Yarrabah, Coen, Lockhart River and Aurukun.

The project, funded by the State Government through Health Promotion Queensland, will look at using information technology to make it easier to access health information, specifically about diabetes, arthritis and alcohol.

Health Promotion Queensland advises Ms Edmond on health promotion programs and

applied research to improve the health of Queenslanders.

"We know that many people in rural and remote communities do not have easy access to health information or opportunities to develop skills which allow them to adopt a healthier lifestyle," Ms Edmond said.

"The use of touch screen kiosks and CD Rom are just two ways in which this project will provide these communities with health information through interactive technology."

The project will provide training for health workers, continue the development of databases on alcohol use, arthritis and injury, expand the existing patient recall system, as well as training members of the community in the use of information technology.



Managing Director of TrakHealth, Kerry Stratton (left), and Anton Donker, State Manager, Queensland Health Information Services, at the signing of the MedTrak contract.

Breast screen schedule

Queensland Health, through the Breast-Screen Queensland Program, provides dedicated and accredited breast cancer screening services through a statewide network of screening and assessment services.

Scheduled services are:

Mobile Services

Toowoomba: 17-27 March, Millmerran; April-mid May, Goondiwindi.

Townsville: until 7 March, North Ward; 10-14 March, Cambridge St; 17 March-16 May, Ingham; 2-18 June, Cloncurry; 20 June-26 September, Mt Isa; 29 September-3 October, Julia Creek; 6-10 October, Richmond; 13-24 October, Hughenden; 27-29 October, Pentland; 31 October-January 2004, Charters Towers.

Rockhampton: until 13 March, Gladstone; 17 March-17 April, Rockhampton area.

North Brisbane: until 7 March, Hamilton; 11 March-9 April, Nundah.

Relocatable Services:

Gold Coast: until 3 April, Palm Beach; 7-23 April, Helensvale; 28 April-15 May, Paradise Point.

Bundaberg: until 7 March, Mundubbera; 10-14 March, Eidsvold; 17 March-9 April, Monto.

Cairns: until 24 April, Atherton.

Toowoomba: until May, Dalby.

Statewide Service

Until 4 April, Millwell Rd Community Centre, Maroochydore

Women can arrange a free breast screen by calling 13 20 50, for the cost of a local call, and will be connected to their nearest BreastScreen Queensland Service. Individual and group bookings are also available.

Contact: Women's Cancer Screening Services on 323 41596.

Skilled eye spots malaria

The skill and expertise of a Cairns laboratory technician in the Pathology Department at Cairns Base Hospital (QHPS Cairns) has made a significant contribution to the local management of malarial infection.

Emeteria (Mety) Montales detected the presence of malaria on a routine FBC blood film investigation which was the first case of the locally acquired disease in Far North Queensland identified late last year.

Supervising Scientist, Julie Fielding said: "As the patient had

not been out of Australia, the referring doctor had not requested a Malarial Parasite Screen, however due to Mety's depth of skill and expertise, she detected the presence of malaria on a routine blood film.

"This early detection potentially reduced the number of cases of locally acquired malaria."

Mety was recognised for this outstanding achievement and contribution to the local management of malarial infection, receiving the Cairns Health Service District's "Quality Employee Award."

Short run improves dialysis

The Gold Coast Hospital Intensive Care Unit is using a form of dialysis on acute renal failure patients rarely practiced in Australia.

Known as Sustained Low Efficiency Dialysis (SLED), it is popular throughout the United States and parts of Britain. The unit introduced the method in April last year.

SLED involves a short run of daily dialysis, usually around 8-10 hours until the patient no longer requires it. Before the method's introduction, patients received continuous "round the clock" dialysis until it was no longer required.

ICU Nursing Practice Coordinator, Michelle Foster, said there

were a number of positive outcomes as a result of this new method of dialysis.

"We are able to demonstrate SLED introduces cost savings, both in terms of human resources and consumables and the patients are haemodynamically stable," she said.

"It has also had some impact on workplace, health and safety issues by minimising splash injury and back injury and it appears to reduce the length of stay for the acute renal failure patients."

Another benefit, although it is still at an early stage, is that it seems to have reduced the need for ongoing dialysis after ICU discharge.

\$11.7m computer contract signed

A \$11.7 million contract has been signed by Queensland Health to trial a patient-oriented clinical computer system at the Gold Coast Hospital to improve care for patients in the hospital and eventually across the State.

The contract has been signed with TrakHealth Pty Limited to trial the MedTrack system at the hospital, with TrakHealth establishing an office in Brisbane.

The MedTrack system is an integrated electronic patient record designed for use by doctors, nurses, theatre staff, anaesthetists, specialists and clinicians.

When fully implemented, it will be the largest system in Australia to fully integrate patient administration and

clinical information in the areas of radiology, pathology and pharmacy.

The system will produce huge benefits for clinicians and patients and is a quantum improvement in the way tests and pharmacy orders are placed, as well as how test results are processed and stored.

Doctors use small hand-held mobile computers at the bedside to order pathology and radiology services, view the results, order medications and view records relevant to patient care.

Admissions and consultations will be significantly streamlined with MedTrack and the risks of inappropriate services because of lack of consistency will be reduced.

The system has stringent

protocols to protect patient privacy and guard against unauthorised access to information.

For example, a system of electronic signatures will automatically record which staff have accessed patient records, and this trail can be tracked.

MedTrack is currently used in more than 200 health care facilities worldwide, with another 19 in progress.

The system was selected by Queensland Health after a stringent process involving representatives from a wide cross-section of disciplines, including clinical, nursing, allied health and administration.

The system will be trialed in Gold Coast and another hospital and, when evaluated, will be introduced across the State.

Online services help the outback

A man in his mid 30s over-turns his truck while bringing in supplies for the wet season in far north Queensland. He is paralysed with a spinal cord injury and spends months in hospital.

He survives and can finally go home, but is in a wheelchair, lives in a two-storey house, and doesn't know how his family will cope looking after him.

His name is Joe and he is the central figure in an innovative CD Rom online training program developed by the Independent Living Centre.

Judith Hewitson, the Director of Online Documentary Training and Coordinator of the Mobile Team, said the documentary, Joe's Story, was the first of its kind in Australia.

"Joe's Story has gone some way to empower five Indig-

enous communities to develop self-directed, holistic health care for their communities," she said.

"The CD Rom documents a six-month period during which the communities of Bamaga, Lockhart river, Palm Island, Doomadgee and Horn Island and professional services based in major cities correspond with a fictional character called Joe.

"Through web access, videoconferencing and e-mail they were able to problem solve the real life issues and crises Joe and his family faced in their virtual community.

"The documentary uses storytelling and information technology to teach remote communities how to take care of older people or those with a disability or injury.

"It educates communities

towards self-management and well-being and teaches them how to deal with social issues in their community."

Judith said Joe's Story was available for use in other communities by organisations as a training model or as a cross-cultural reference.

She said a culturally appropriate method was used to facilitate the Indigenous communities to share their local knowledge to provide better care for the aged and disabled, while accessing mainstream information and help through the Internet.

The complete story, including all e-mails between the communities, can be found at www.achre-shores.net/files/yourstory.htm

Judith can be contacted on 1300 885 3397 or e-mail: judithhewitson@ilcql.org.au

Rugby League greats aid research

The who's who of Queensland State of Origin rugby league held a reunion, not to reflect past glories, but to support cancer research at Princess Alexandra Hospital.

The former origin greats, including Gene Miles, Michael Hancock, and Mal Meninga were on hand for the presentation of \$63,000 to the hospital from the Mardi Jackson Cancer Research Fund to assist with research into melanoma.

Researchers at the Centre for Immunology and Cancer Research at the hospital have been working on a clinical trial for a vaccine for melanoma.

The hospital's surroundings were familiar to at least one of the ex-players, Trevor Gilmeister - who, as legend has it, once discharged himself from a hospital to lead Queensland to one of its more famous wins against

New South Wales.

The Mardi Jackson Foundation was established to promote and assist melanoma research after the death of

Mardi Jackson (from melanoma), the daughter of former Castlemaine Perkins Executive, Don Jackson, and his wife, Lyn.



Former Origin Greats, Willie Carne and Mal Meninga (right) with oncology patient, 21-year-old Daniel Barrow (centre).

Info matters

Mental health achievements showcased

Queensland Health's mental health services will showcase recent achievements at a national conference in Brisbane in June.

The *Partnerships for Recovery* conference will be held at the Bardon Professional Centre on Thursday and Friday, 5-6 June.

Acting Director of Mental Health, Dr Arnold Waugh, said many of the reforms introduced by Queensland Health in the first half of the 10 Year Mental Health Strategy for Queensland were at the cutting edge of contemporary practice and service delivery.

Dr Waugh said the conference gave Queensland Health staff a rare opportunity to showcase their achievements and to document best practice across the State.

The conference is open to mental health services providers, the general health sector, other government agencies, non-government organisations, private practitioners and consumers and carers.

It will include a number of concurrent sessions on training and professional development; clinical practice (inpatient and community); service development; consumer and carer participation; policy development, implementation and evaluation; systems and outcomes; productive partnerships; early intervention; and mental health promotion and illness prevention.

Other sessions will cover specific populations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; adults; children and adolescents; people who come in contact with the criminal justice



Staff prepare for disasters

Queensland Health staff attended an Australian Disaster Medicine Course held at the Emergency Management Australia Institute in Mt Macedon, Victoria. A feature in the institute's grounds is a fragment of the US Skylab Space Station which broke up over Western Australia in 1979. Pictured are, from left, Christine Griinke, registered nurse, Toowoomba Emergency Department; Dr Peter Miller, Toowoomba Emergency Department; and Pattie Scott, District Manager, Charleville Health Service District.

system; older people; and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The period for submission of abstracts closed on 20 February but outstanding late contributions will be considered by the conference organisers.

Contact: The Conference Organiser P/L, PO Box 385 Malvern, Victoria 3144 by telephone (03) 9509 7121, fax (03) 9509 7151 or e-mail address info@conorg.com.au

Boost for GPs

A program to enhance general practitioners skills and knowledge of advanced life support has been developed by the Fraser Coast Health Service District.

Critical Care Education Officer, Margaret Cassidy, and Medical Education Officer, Julie Harris, developed a workshop tar-

geted specifically at the needs of local general practitioners.

Local clinicians, Intensive Care Unit/Coronary Care Unit Clinical Nurse, Advanced Life Support Instructor, Julie Haffejee, and Director Anaesthetics and ICU, Dr Gerry Meijer, assist in teaching during the workshop.

Julie worked with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and local general practitioners to identify learning objectives and gain Continuing Medical Education points for the workshop.

She said local general practitioners now had the latest information to help them with clinical decision making.

"The district now has a group of general practitioners who are skilled in advanced life support and can be called upon by the district in an emergency," she said.

Smoke control

Tobacco Control: A Blue Chip Investment – Smoke free: A Healthy Future is the theme of the second Australian Tobacco Control Conference in Melbourne, on 9-11 April.

The conference is being hosted by the Cancer Council Victoria, in conjunction with the Heart Foundation, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, and the Department of Health and Ageing.

Presenters will be from a cross-section of fields, including prevention, cessation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, litigation, smoke free environments and policy and research.

Contact: the conference website, <http://tobaccocontrol03.conference.au>

What's on...

Support group offers creative activity

A seven session post-abortion support group for women affected by experience of abortion is being held by Children By Choice at Women's Infolink, Brisbane, in April and May.

The program has sessions structured around specific art activities which enable expression and opportunity for personal insight through creative activity.

The activities include painting, clay-work, story-telling, and sand and symbolic work.

The group aims to provide women with support and an opportunity to talk about their experience in a safe and non-judgemental environment.

Children By Choice provides counselling, information and referrals on all pregnancy options – parenting, abortion and adoption, and counselling and support after an abortion.

Contact: Emmy or Maryke, Children By Choice, phone: 3357 5377.

Medical care conferences combine

A combined medical care conference will be held at the Cairns Convention Centre on 10-14 September.

The conference will include the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society and the Australian College of Critical Care Nurses 28th annual scientific meeting.

The meeting incorporates the ninth Australian and New Zealand Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care Conference.

Contact: Sonia Higgs, phone: 3858 5580, fax: 3858 5510; e-mail: anzicsasm2003@im.com.au

Diary...

MARCH

- 1-31 Red Cross Calling**
Australian Red Cross, Queensland
Phone: 3835 1222
- 2 Clean Up Australia Day**
Clean Up Australia
Phone: 1800 024 890
- 1-14 Statewide Doorknock Appeal**
Guide Dogs Queensland
Phone: 3264 0226
- 4 Emergency Nurses Day**
Queensland Emergency Nurses Association
Phone: 3240 7523
- 8 International Women's Day**
Women's Infolink
Phone: 1800 177 577
- 8-15 Bow Tie Appeal**
Queensland Muscular Dystrophy Association
Phone: 3016 1800
- 10-14 National Orthoptic Awareness Week**
Orthoptic Association of Australia
Phone: (03) 9521 9844
- 10-16 Brain Awareness Week**
Brain Foundation
Phone: (02) 9437 5967
- 11 Fashion Parade Luncheon**
Autism Queensland
Phone: 3273 0000
- 13-20 Coeliac Awareness Week**
Queensland Coeliac Society
Phone: 3854 0123
- 14-15 Shave for a cure**
Leukaemia Foundation
Phone: 3318 4418
- 17-29 Red Cross Calling Doorknock**
Australian Red Cross, Queensland
Phone: 3835 1222
- 21-28 National Pregnancy Loss Awareness Week**
Bonnie Babes Foundation
Phone: (03) 9800 0322
- 22 World Day for Water**
United Nations Day
Phone: (02) 9262 5111
- 24 World Tuberculosis Day**
Community Health and Tuberculosis Australia
Phone: (02) 9371 7952

In retrospect...

A review of some articles from previous Health Matters

- August** Donor gives man 'miracle of sight'
Major changes in senior executive
Cairns \$130 million rebuilding opens
- September** Old mate helps Andy regain health
\$9m telecommunication boost for rural health
Design ushers in new era for aged care
- October** Research partnership to fight cancer
Excellence Award winners announced
Townsville Hospital gains engineering award
- November** Biloela vaccination move a success
Promoting healthier lifestyles
Leadership scheme's first graduates
- December** Emergency disaster skills put to test
Scholarship scheme praised by nurses
Bowel cancer community study in Mackay
- February** Actors add reality to trauma exercise
United effort reunites family
\$510 million hospital redevelopment completed