

# HealthMatters



## In this issue:

- Mini-budget enhances health services
- Quit Smoking...for life!



## Graduates gain high achievements



I hope all of you are adjusting to the changes which are happening at Queensland Health.

On 25 October 2005, the Government unveiled a Mini-Budget and a five-year Action Plan for the renewal of our public health services. The Action Plan provides a new vision and funding regime for Queensland Health.

I encourage you all to read the Action Plan which is on the QHEPS website, some details of which are provided on pages 4-5 of this edition of Health Matters.

A feature of the Action Plan is the need to restore respect and support for Queensland Health staff. I understand that only consistent actions – and not mere words – will change the culture of Queensland Health and restore trust.

I am determined to make sure that we deliver on promises made and will hold senior management members accountable for their actions.

The Action Plan acknowledges the need to balance local flexibility and innovation with a consistent approach and high quality standards of service across Queensland. It also highlights the need to develop new models of care to meet changing needs and stresses the importance of collaboration with other sectors

of the health industry.

On a different note, let me tell you about the Staff *Quit Smoking ... for Life!* Program, which provides opportunities, activities and support to Queensland Health employees who are ready to improve their health by giving up tobacco.

In the coming weeks you will see posters on walls and noticeboards asking smokers if they are ready to quit and offering to help them do it. Full details are provided in the page 3 story.

Queensland has the toughest anti-smoking legislation in the country, with a total ban in indoor areas to be implemented in July next year. These regulations are supported by the majority of non-smoking Queenslanders, but also 51 per cent of smokers who see the benefits. While only 20 per cent of Queenslanders smoke, many of those who do express want to quit. We know the high risks of disease smokers face and the great financial burden this places on the health system. At the same time we also know that giving up is tough and this program has been designed to support staff who want to quit. Registration forms for the Staff *Quit Smoking ... for Life!* Program are being sent with departmental pay slips.

By encouraging a smoke-free environment in our own workplace, we will be in an even stronger position to spread the “quit” message to the community.

**Eight-nine** students in the 2004 Queensland Health Management Development Program have been presented with a Graduate Certificate in Health Management (Queensland Health).

The certificates were presented at the Queensland University of Technology’s Graduation Ceremony in the Concert Hall at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre.

Queensland Health’s Deputy Director-General, Dr Gerry FitzGerald, presented plaques, at a Queensland Health reception following the ceremony, to students receiving the highest academic achievement in each subject as well as the overall highest academic achievement

in the program.

The plaques were awarded to:

Highest Academic Achievement in Organisational Behaviour: Kate Ahearn, Rockhampton Health Service District, and Rhonda Mead, Bayside Health Service District

Highest Academic Achievement in Human Resource Management: Carl Grant, Townsville Health Service District

Highest Academic Achievement in Financial Management: Ignatius Chan, Public Health Services

Highest Academic Achievement in Operational Management: Michelle Suter, Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital

Overall Highest Academic Achievement: Lara Baldwin, Pathology and Scientific Services.

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## Evidence based practice team reduces barriers

**A team of allied** health practitioners from various areas of expertise in the Logan-Beaudesert Health Service District has joined forces to form the Logan-Beaudesert EBP Steering Committee.

The committee aims to provide a multidisciplinary consultative body for the progression and implementation of evidence based practice within the Division of Community and Allied Health, as well as the Division of Mental Health and its allied health clinicians.

Committee member, Adam Lo, said the committee would seek to reduce some of the barriers faced by clinicians on evidence based practice.

“The Logan Beaudesert Health Service District is the first district to have its own EBP Newsletter and District EBP Webpage,” he said.

“It is also one of the pioneers in starting up the Statewide EBP Committee, in conjunction with the Princess Alexandra Hospital Health Service District.

“There are three staff from Logan Hospital serving on the Statewide Committee.”

Adam said the committee, formed in July 2003, had grown considerably in numbers and diversity. He said it consisted of dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, early intervention officers, pharmacists, clinical measurement scientist, as well as management representatives.

A series of workshops, ranging from beginner’s to advanced level, were held with positive feedback from participants.

Adam said evidence based practice was definitely the new trend and would continue to grow as a significant element of healthcare delivery in the foreseeable future.

“Evidence based practice is becoming more and more significant in the practice and service delivery of contemporary healthcare and is one of Queensland Health’s core values,” he said.

## Peter devoted to science

**Peter Bundesen**, Senior Scientist at Princess Alexandra Hospital, who has worked on-site in pathology since 1967 in the area of haematology, has retired after 38 years of service.

Peter’s pathology work, which encompassed all facets of haematology, began in the old building of the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

In 2001, the department moved from the old building to the new facilities on the ground floor of the main building.

The transition from cramped and dingy to new, well lit, and spacious was excellent for productivity and staff morale.

Peter became a supervising scientist in 1989 and was instrumental in the development of the new automation of haematology, process integral to NATA accreditation.

This process revolutionised QHPS. Peter was heavily involved in the development of pathology manuals as part of the outcome of automation.

## Total ban set for July

**The second** stage of a total ban on smoking in all licensed pubs and clubs in Queensland was phased in on 30 September with the introduction of No Smoking zones in at least two-thirds of their indoor areas.

The smoking ban includes two-thirds of all gaming machines in licensed premises.

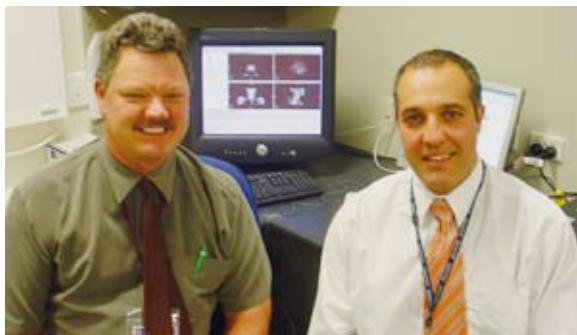
Information Kits are being sent to more than 6000 liquor licensees explaining they must designate the new no-smoking areas, identify these areas to patrons and ensure patrons don’t smoke there.

The first phase of the no-smoking policy was introduced in January 2005, with smoking banned close to all non-residential buildings, near playgrounds, at public swimming areas and in major sports facilities.

Hotels, clubs and other licensed premises were required to make at least one-third of their enclosed area, including gaming machine areas, non-smoking.

This is now extended to two-thirds of all indoor areas, leading to a total smoking ban in enclosed areas at all Queensland licensed premises from 1 July next year.

## \$3.4m grant for research



**National** clinical trials research groups based at Princess Alexandra Hospital have received grants totalling \$3.47 million over the next five years from the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The grants as part of a \$100 million allocation to medical research and clinical trials. The clinical trials group grants have been allocated to researchers in the fields of kidney disease and cancer.

Trans-Tasman Radiation Oncology Group (TROG) has received \$1.39 million, Australasian Kidney Trials Net-

*Trans-Tasman Radiation Oncology Group Scientific Chair, Dr Bryan Burmeister and Principle Investigator, Dr Sandro Porceddu.*

work (ATKN) has received \$1.29 million, and Australian Leukaemia Lymphoma Group (ALLG) has received \$790,000.

The Trans-Tasman Radiation Oncology Group is a clinical trials cooperative group established to facilitate research into all cancers that can be treated with radiotherapy.

Princess Alexandra Hospital is the leading contributor to radiation oncology trials in Queensland and the third largest nationally.

Chairman of the TROG scientific committee and Princess Alexandra Hospital Radiation Oncologist, Associate Professor Bryan Burmeister, said a major proportion of Queenslanders received cancer management through Princess Alexandra Hospital.

## Get a little help and quit smoking

**Back in the sixties** the Beatles sang “*I get by with a little help from my friends...*” As of 31 October, Queensland Health staff who are ready to quit smoking can get a little help and support through the Quit Smoking ... for Life! program available to all permanent, casual and temporary staff members.

Staff registered in the program will get a *Quit kit* from *Quitline* and the support of our *Quitline* counsellors who will touch base with them on a regular basis.

They will also be eligible for a one-off course of free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) – patches or gum – for up to 16 weeks (at four-week intervals), subject to suitability.

Research has shown that people who use NRT to quit smoking are more successful than those who don't. And those who also have the support of a trained counsellor have an even better chance of success.

Staff wanting to register for the program can down-

load a registration form from <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/staffhealth/smoking.htm> or contact the local district office and to request one.

The Staff Quit Smoking Program is one component of the Queensland Health Smoking Management Policy launched last month by Director-General, Uschi Schreiber.

The three-stage policy, scheduled to be introduced during the next nine months, includes the Staff Quit Smoking Program; Managing nicotine withdrawal for inpatients; and Addressing where people smoke.

Ms Schreiber is encouraging district managers to get involved in the promotion of the policy through local launches, displaying posters, and making the registration form and information brochures readily available to staff.

The Staff Quit Smoking Program was developed by the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Unit and is being implemented as a “Healthier Staff” initiative.

## BreastScreen schedule

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

### Scheduled services:

#### Mobile Services

Brisbane North: until 1 December, New Farm.

Ipswich: until 18 November, Goodna.

Toowoomba: until 2 December, Warwick; January to March, Stanthorpe.

Townsville: until 4 November, Hughenden; 7-9 November, Pentland; 10 November to 20 January, Charters Towers.

Rockhampton: until 3 November, Capella; 4 November to 16 December, Yeppoon; January, Yeppoon.

#### Relocatable Services

Bundaberg: 4-9 November, Cherbourg; 10-18 November,

Goomeri; 22-25 November, Kilkivan.

Cairns: 1-8 November, Yarrabah; 9-16 November, Kuranda; 17 November to 2 December, Smithfield; 5-16 December, Edmonton; 3 January to 31 March, Mareeba.

Gold Coast: until 15 December, Beaudesert.

Nambour: until 25 November, Tewantin; 28 November to 9 December, Cooroy.

Toowoomba: until 2 December, Gatton.

New services have been opened at Taringa, Keperra and Brisbane City at Shop 11, City Plaza and Nambour Service is now located at Block 4, Nambour Hospital.

Women can arrange a free breastscan 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:** Cancer Screening Services Unit on 3234 1596.

## Three steps in campaign

The Queensland Health Smoking Management Policy sends a clear and consistent message about smoking hazards, not only to staff, but to inpatients and the community as well.

Once the policy has been fully implemented it will apply to all Queensland Health staff, volunteers, contract services, inpatients, residents and visitors.

It will be in effect in all Queensland Health facilities, including hospitals, community health centres, residential care centres, and all offices, buildings, grounds and motor vehicles belonging to or leased by the department.

The policy has three components:

*Staff quit smoking program* – effective 31 October 2005. The Queensland Health Staff Quit Smoking program: *Quit smoking ... for Life!* program is designed to offer support to staff ready to quit smoking.

*Managing nicotine withdrawal for inpatients* – scheduled to start 1 January 2006. Queensland Health will provide free nicotine-replacement therapy (NRT) to all eligible nicotine-dependent inpatients of public acute hospitals during their hospital stay. Staff will have a brief chat with inpatients who express a desire to quit smoking, offer advice about quitting and, if it seems appropriate, refer to them to the *Quitline* Service for more information, assessment and counselling.

*Addressing where people smoke* – scheduled to start 1 July 2006. Starting July 2006, smoking will be banned in all Queensland Health facilities, grounds or motor vehicles, with the exception of specifically nominated smoking places. The ban will apply to everyone, including staff, volunteers, contract services, inpatients, residents, patients and visitors.

## Putting a human face to numbers



Julie-Ann Barker's painting, entitled Claire, was the people's choice winner in the annual staff art "A Bit of Fun" competition at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

The competition had 24 entries from staff and members of their families.

Julie-Ann said the work was a portrait of her daughter who had meningococcal a few years ago, and was in the Royal Children's Hospital for quite a long time receiving treatment.

"The number on the painting represents her medical records number, and the portrait is my attempt to put a human face to the number," she said.

"I wanted to recognise hospital services, especially after seeing how all of the nurses are so supportive of patients and their families. They certainly made a difference."

*Julie-Anne Barker pictured besides her winning painting.*

The competition is organised every year by the hospital's Art Venture Committee – staff members responsible for acquiring art for the hospital, through events such as this annual staff art competition, as well as other events such as the annual student art awards with the Queensland College of Art and Queensland University of Technology.

District Manager Professor Richard Olley said areas specifically for art display were created in the design of the new hospital buildings during the recent redevelopment.

"We are very fortunate to have a dedicated Artspace here at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital," he said.

"This is an important part of creating the right environment in the hospital – an environment where people feel comfortable, and cared for."

The entries were displayed in the hospital Artspace until the end of September, before finding permanent homes within the wards and departments in the hospital.

## Drug problems addressed

**Abstracts** on research, policy and practice are sought for the 19th annual Australian Winter School on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and addictions at the Carlton Crest Hotel, Brisbane, on 3-5 July.

Closing date for abstracts for the conference, organised by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, Queensland, is 13 January.

The conference brings together professionals addressing alcohol and other drugs across health, education, law enforcement, corrections, policy and research.

Its major emphasis is on the practical implementation and implications of research and policy, combined with showcasing of innovative programs.

**Contact:** Australian Winter School Secretariat, PO Box 332, Spring Hill, Qld, 4004, phone 3343 4820, fax 3349 9600, e-mail:

winterschool@adf.org web: www.winterschool.info

*The fifth International Conference on Drugs and Young People, organised by the Australian Drug Foundation and its Centre for Youth Drug Studies, in partnership with the Ted Noffs Foundation, will be held next year in Sydney.*

Theme of the conference, to be held at the AJC Convention Centre, Randwick, on 24-26 May, is the culture and context of young peoples' drug use across various settings. Some of these settings include bars and clubs, workplaces and schools, public spaces, juvenile justice settings, the web, and sports settings.

**Contact:** Conference Secretariat, phone (03) 9278 8137, e-mail DYP@adf.org.au web <http://www.adf.org.au/browse.asp?ContainerID=5dyp>

# Queensland Health reforms

**The Premier** and Treasurer, Peter Beattie, unveiled a \$6.36 billion injection into Queensland's public health system when he delivered the mini-Budget on 25 October 2005.

Launching the Health Action Plan, Mr Beattie said Queensland Health would be transformed to provide better hospitals and better health care for Queenslanders.

The Plan includes recruiting 1200 additional doctors, nurses and allied health staff over 18 months and spending an extra \$127 million in the next five years on training programs to strengthen the health workforce and improve patient care.

On 27 October Mr Beattie and Health Minister Stephen Robertson appeared on a Queensland Health satellite broadcast to thank staff for their efforts.

They also provided details of the Health Action Plan, launched 25 days after Peter Forster handed over the Queensland Health Systems Review Final Report.

Addressing State Parliament, Mr Beattie said in April the Government had begun examining all aspects of the health system, and exposing and fixing problems.

"We instituted a major review of our health systems and a Commission of Inquiry to examine issues largely involving Jayant Patel," he said.

"The Final Report of the Review by Peter Forster found that we have a dedicated, professional and committed workforce with a strong ethos to do the best for patients.

"I recognise and appreciate this fact and take the opportunity to thank them all again for their dedication, professionalism and commitment.

"The Forster Review also confirmed that we have a good health system – as good as any other



Mr Beattie



Mr Robertson

system in the country – but more funding and reform is needed to help address unprecedented growth pressures.

"Soaring health costs and an ageing population have contributed to stresses on Queensland Health.

"That is why I commit my Government to the largest increase in health funding in the history of Queensland.

"We will build a better health

system through a range of innovative and far-reaching measures which will transform the provision of public health services in this State," Mr Beattie said.

Health Minister Stephen Robertson said the restructure of Queensland Health would give clinicians more say in how hospitals are run and administrative positions would be shifted

closer to patient care so that doctors would do more clinical work and less paper work.

"Queensland Health's most valuable asset is its workforce," Mr Robertson said.

"I have visited more than 20 different hospitals around the state, some on several occasions, to listen carefully to the concerns of our staff.

"I have also thanked them for their hard work and passion in

what they do. Our Health Action Plan builds on their hard work."

Mr Robertson said the new training initiatives commencing in 2006 would increase the professional development of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals.

He said part of the \$127 million package would be spent on an additional 55 specialist training positions in public hospitals.

"Together with the 20 registrar positions already allocated for next year, they will help develop a strong specialist workforce Queensland," he said.

"We will also create 43 additional medical intern positions in hospitals across Queensland and recruit a co-ordinator of physician training in each area to ensure the rotation of medical registrars to regional areas and support for their education and training."

Mr Robertson said far-reaching and expanded training for nurses would also be implemented over the next five years.

**“ We will renew the Queensland public health system with an immediate and massive increase in funding.**

This funding allocation of \$547.6 million in 2005–06, of which \$431.1 million is new money, will grow in the following five years to an extra \$1.5 billion in 2010–11.

This will mean a total investment over the period of \$6.367 billion, of which \$4.431 billion is new money.

This funding will:

## Action Plan Highlights

### The Queensland Government's Action Plan – Building a Better Health Service for Queensland – highlighted the following major commitments

- provide immediate relief to health service staff across the state
- allow investment in urgently needed new services in the future
- provide for the phased implementation of reforms to ensure future sustainability.

There will be additional funding in just over five years for new services and maintenance

of existing services:

- elective surgery – \$259.7 million
- emergency departments – \$280.3 million
- intensive care units – \$229.8 million
- cancer services – \$463.7 million
- cardiac services – \$210.9 million

- mental health services – \$201 million
- renal services – \$44.5 million
- workforce training – \$127 million.

With this package, Queensland Health funding over the 10 years from 1998–99 to 2008–09 will have increased, in nominal terms, by 109 per cent.

The increased funding for car-

diac and cancer services will be guided by the Cancer Management Plan and Cardiac Services Plan. These plans have been developed jointly with clinicians and seek to balance the delivery of services between prevention, early intervention and treatment.

An additional \$500 million ongoing by 2010–11 will be allocated, based on a Statewide Health Services Plan to be developed in 2006.

These additional funds will deliver new services and drive

system reform. New models of care will be developed that emphasise prevention, early intervention and enhanced clinical roles.

Integration between the community and hospital services will be improved through better liaison with general practitioners. There will also be a \$15 million Research and Innovation Fund to provide seed funding for innovative practice.

In 2005–06, the Health budget is set to grow to \$5.75 billion. Additional services from the \$431.1 million of new money will target system pressure points and provide immediate relief to health service staff across the state including:

- \$42.2 million for elective surgery
- \$37.5 million for emergency

departments

- \$30.9 million for intensive care units
- \$24.1 million for cancer services
- \$6.7 million for cardiac services
- \$11.6 million for mental health services.

Also, to improve recruitment, retention and training and to suitably reward and recognise our staff, \$633 million is provided over the period to 2008–09 for an enterprise bargaining agreement with Queensland Health medical officers and \$100 million for Visiting Medical Officers. Funds have also been allocated for an initial four per cent wage increase for nurses and other staff.

Investment in additional capital infrastructure and assets

to support health service delivery is critical. The Government will move immediately to address some emergent and urgent capital works issues:

- Rockhampton Hospital will receive \$19 million for a new emergency department to ease emergency bottlenecks and improve patient care

- \$32 million will be provided, as part of Queensland Health staff retention strategy, to implement a Regional Accommodation Program to purchase quality accommodation for use by staff

- \$7.53 million for the capital costs associated with the delivery of new cardiac, cancer and renal services

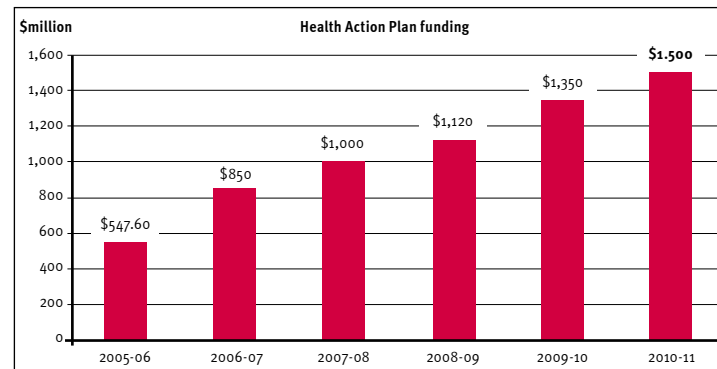
- Bundaberg Hospital will receive \$1.5 million and the Southport

campus of the Gold Coast Hospital \$800,000 for electricity upgrades

- Mackay will receive \$1.3 million for a community-based transition and rehabilitation service
- \$18.7 million will be provided in 2005–06 for urgent asset main-

tenance work

- \$6 million will be provided in capital subsidies, for the next five years, to meet the full capital costs of water fluoridation in local government areas with populations over 5000.



## New Health Commission to monitor performance

**Trust and** accountability in public health will be restored through transparent reporting and easier complaints processes with a new Health Commission to be established at an annual cost of \$7.7million, according to the Action Plan.

The new Health Commission, incorporating the Health Rights Commission, will monitor Queensland Health's performance and keep the public informed. It will be subject to review by an all-party Parliamentary Committee after its first full year of operation.

A medical excellence taskforce, chaired by an independent clinician, will be set up with membership to include the AMA, specialist colleges, other peak

medical bodies and the Australian Medical Council. It will develop a broader and integrated system to govern the recruitment, assessment, supervision, training and support of doctors.

The Queensland Government has already passed new legislation to ensure all doctors are appropriately qualified and registered.

The Government has provided \$4.2 million in 2005–06 for the Medical Board of Queensland and the Office of the Health Practitioner Registration Boards to:

- ensure registration processes include high quality, timely and efficient assessment
- conduct clinical assessments of non-specialist grade overseas

trained doctors and assessment of overseas trained doctors for practice at specialist level through the Australian Medical Council/Specialist College pathway.

Legislation will be introduced to enable the Medical Board of Queensland to develop a performance evaluation program that is non-punitive and provides a framework for ongoing demonstration of professional competence.

Other steps include plans to:

- develop a statewide approach to clinician individual performance assessment and development and management of concerns about an individual clinician's performance

- give Area Health Services responsibility for making sure

doctors have the right qualifications, training and experience for the job through their Clinical Governance Units

- Clinical Governance Units will also inform doctors what services they can provide, based on their qualifications, training and experience, and the capabilities of the hospitals they will be operating in. Support for these activities will be provided by Area Credentialing and Clinical Privileging Committees

- give responsibility to the district manager for decisions regarding the management of an individual clinician and responsibility to Area Clinical Governance Units for the monitoring of individual clinicians and remediation recommendations.

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## Target for extra 1200 clinicians

The **Action Plan** will ensure there will be appropriate numbers of doctors, nurses and allied health staff for hospitals and community health services.

The Plan calls for 1200 more clinical staff in priority health areas to be recruited over the next 18 months, consisting of 300 doctors, 500 nurses and 400 allied health professionals.

The Action Plan acknowledges that meeting the staff targets as set out in the Queensland Health Systems Review will not be easy because of the international shortage of health professionals.

Additional staffing requirements will be identified as part of the State-wide Health Services Plan and development of new models of care.

Further initiatives to support Queensland Health's workforce include offering jobs to all nursing graduates from Queensland's nursing schools, and expanding Queensland Health's transition to work programs so that new graduate nurses receive appropriate supervision and support by:

- delivering upskilling programs to 1500 nurses
- training 1000 nurses to become instructors
- providing a refresher program to 200 nurses in specialty areas and other incentives to attract former nurses back to the profession
- establishing 60 dedicated nurse educators in clinical areas.

The recruitment campaign to attract doctors, nurses and allied health staff from overseas will continue. The United Kingdom recruitment campaign has already attracted



*Extra clinicians will be employed under the Action Plan.*

expressions of interests from 169 doctors and 44 nurses.

The Queensland Government will address the Commonwealth's under-funding of doctor student places by funding 235 doctor training places at Griffith University, at a cost of more than \$60 million over eight years. The doctors will be bonded to work in Queensland public hospitals.

Other steps include:

- creating 43 additional medical internship positions and progressively increasing registrar training numbers by providing funding in 2006-07 for an additional 55 training positions
- expanding the trial of nurse practitioners by the end of 2006 and seeking access from the Commonwealth to Medicare billing for community-based nurse practitioners, in recognition that these roles are taking on functions traditionally performed by doctors

- increasing places in the Rural and Remote Isolated Practice Nurses Program
- funding 100 scholarships for allied health students
- revising work practices and improve utilisation of Queensland Health's skilled workforce.

An important part of the reform of Queensland Health is demonstrating support and respect for all staff.

The Action Plan calls for:

- rewarding staff sufficiently for their dedication and effort so that they will be attracted to working in the public health system
- promoting a culture of zero tolerance to bullying in the workplace through new leadership and a new Code of Conduct
- employing and nurturing leaders who demonstrate honesty, professional integrity, and collaborative approaches to management, and have a commitment to the health care of Queenslanders

## Ensuring public is better informed

**Queensland Health** will overhaul its performance and complaints systems to ensure all Queenslanders are better informed about the performance of the health system.

The Action Plan calls for:

- an annual report on the statewide performance of the Queensland public health system, including outpatient waiting times, elective surgery waiting lists, and clinical outcomes, including quality and safety
  - quarterly reports of waiting list figures on the internet
  - two-yearly reports by the Chief Health Officer on health status and burden of disease
  - changing the culture and processes to allow patients and staff to more easily lodge complaints
  - dealing with complaints quickly and use the information to improve systems
  - appointing District Complaints Coordinators and developing one statewide complaints database.

- implementing a program of support and assessment for all overseas trained doctors
- valuing the skills of employees and allowing them to fulfil their clinical, academic and managerial potential
- restoring the confidence of staff in merit selection processes by ensur-

A culture of patient safety will be enhanced by introducing a new clinical governance system which encourages clinicians to effectively and systematically review clinical practice outcomes.

- develop and implement statewide safety initiatives
- improve clinical service planning
  - have a role in funds distribution processes to support improving clinical practice
  - develop and implement standard treatment processes targeting high volume services with the support of the Patient Safety and Clinical Improvement Service
  - develop quality and safety benchmarking processes with the assistance of the Patient Safety and Clinical Improvement Service
  - involve local clinical teams in the discussion and interpretation of benchmarking data
  - undertake clinical audits in collaboration with clinicians and services
  - have paid clinical chairs with three-year renewable terms.

ing the recruitment of the right people to jobs, based on their competence and skills

- promoting flexible working arrangements and an understanding of individual staff needs while providing more support and training for nurses and allied health staff.

From the Chief Nursing Advisor,  
Jillian Jeffery



**Fair pay**, better conditions, increased training – and more nurses.

These are key principles adopted in the Action Plan, endorsing a raft of sweeping changes recommended in the Forster Review, tabled in Parliament on 30 September.

High workloads have been recognised as a major concern for nurses.

Nurses comprise the largest proportion of the health workforce – 16,943 full time equivalent staff or 21,750 staff on a headcount basis.

But many nurses leave the nursing profession altogether, with wastage rates reported to be as high as 40 per cent in the first two to three years after graduation.

So the first and obvious recommendation is for immediate action to redress a shortfall of 1000 nurses statewide, taking in a mix of skills focused on shortage areas including critical care, midwifery, theatre and mental health.

Considering NSW and Victorian refresher and re-entry schemes, the Action Plan suggests an array of funding and evaluation support mechanisms for professional re-entry training in Queensland.

Increased resourcing to the districts is recommended to support transition training programs to improve the “work readiness” of graduate nurses.

Once they were “work ready” some could be appointed to more remote districts.

Under the Action Plan, 500 nurses will be among the additional 1200 staff recruited to the Queensland public health system over the next 18 months.

Further initiatives to support our workforce include offering a job to all nursing graduates from Queensland’s nursing schools.

The Queensland Health transition to work programs will be

expanded so that new graduate nurses will receive appropriate supervision and support by delivering upskilling programs to 1500 nurses and training 1000 nurses to become preceptors.

A refresher program will be provided to 200 nurses in speciality areas, incentives offered to attract former nurses back to the profession, and 60 dedicated nurse educators positions will be established in clinical areas.

Nursing staff will be actively recruited from overseas. The recently launched United Kingdom recruiting campaign has already attracted expressions of interest from 44 nurses.

The trial of nurse practitioners will be expanded by the end of 2006, with access sought from the Commonwealth to Medicare billing for community-based nurse practitioners, in recognition that these roles are taking on functions traditionally performed by doctors.

The Action Plan will increase places in the Rural and Remote Isolated Practice Nurse Program by 2009, and funds 20 scholarships for nurse practitioners.

A Nurse Rural Relief Register already exists and will be resourced and strengthened.

The Forster Review recommended that: “Remuneration for Queensland Health nurses should be fair and comparable to other States, taking into consideration differences such as cost of living.”

The report indicates that nursing awards should create clinical career pathways –including nurse practitioners and consideration should be given to extending paid maternity leave, with a feasibility study to support child care services located on health campuses.

Negotiations with the Department of Employment and Training and the Commonwealth Government are suggested to increase funding for enrolled nurses to attract them to the bush.

## Building up expertise in Longreach



Susan Ellison



Linda Hearn

**Two Longreach** community health nurses, Susan Ellison and Linda Hearn, have enrolled in a Child and Adolescent Health Discipline Studies program at Central Queensland University.

They hope to help meet the current demand for speciality trained nurses in Central Western Queensland Health Service District.

“Regional areas are really lacking in specialist child and community health nurses and to see two nurses enrol in the course from Longreach is fantastic,” said Jenny Anastasi of the School of Nursing and Health Studies at the university.

Susan and Linda are registered nurses and midwives and, with six children between them, it was no easy task to decide to return to study. Susan recently rejoined the workforce after the birth of her first child and loves the flexibility that the university program provided.

“You can study externally and as its competency based, so what you’re learning really relates to your everyday work,” she said.

“There are no strict time restrictions, it is very flexible. You can do some of the work from home and some from work, sending in pieces of assessment bit by bit.

“The support provided by Longreach Community Health extremely supportive and has provided the encouragement needed to help you to commit to further studies”

Susan said she heard about the program from two nurses she worked with who had previously completed the course and they recommended the discipline studies program.

“I contacted Central Queensland University, who told me more about the program, and also about an RNCA Rural and Remote Nurse Scholarship which I was able to take advantage of,” she said.

“I love the diversity of working at the community health centre it is a real multi-tasking role and working with children is always fun.

“I’m already thinking of continuing on to work towards my graduate certificate in child and adolescent health.”

## Step forward for nurse practitioners

**Experienced** nurses looking to step up and become Queensland's first nurse practitioner graduates have applied for scholarships advertised around the state by Queensland Health.

Scholarship recipients will be required to be bonded to Queensland Health for 12 months full-time equivalent employment.

Health Minister Stephen Robertson told the Nurse Leaders' annual conference in Brisbane that the nurse practitioner role would deliver more advanced patient care in Queensland's hospitals and represented an exciting career move for registered nurses.

"Nurse practitioners are a smart way of tackling the effects of the worldwide shortage of health professionals, particularly in regional and rural Queensland," he said.

"That is why Peter Forster endorsed the concept in the Queensland Health Systems Review and why we have recently trialled 10 nurse practitioner roles in nine locations throughout the state.

"Nurse practitioners in our hospitals will be highly skilled and experienced health professionals whose practice will be

guided by clear clinical protocols. They will strengthen our medical workforce by providing an unprecedented level of support for our doctors."

Mr Robertson said the State Government announced earlier this year that the State Government would invest \$160,000 for 20 nurses to undertake a Master of Nurse Practitioner course next year.

"The scholarship nurses will be offered extensive post-graduate training and clinical experience through the Queensland University of Technology or the University of Queensland either on location or externally," he said.

"After a year full time or two years part time, they will come out as fully fledged nurse practitioners ready to take on tasks outside the scope of traditional nurses and allow doctors to focus on more complex duties."

Mr Robertson said nurse practitioners would be able to perform a variety of duties, such as carrying out health assessments and examinations; requesting various diagnostic investigations; prescribing some medication and preparing certain treatment plans; processing admissions and discharges; and referring patients to health care specialists.

## Teaching award to Dr Win



Dr Win

**Dr N. Eddie Win**, a Toowoomba Hospital neurologist, has won the Rural Clinical Teaching Award at the annual award presentation by the University of Queensland Medical Society.

The award was presented at the society's E.S Meyers Lecture, named in honour of the late Professor Errol Solomon Meyers, a founding father of the medical school.

The society's President, Liz Hodge said the awards recognise the considerable time and effort that Queensland clinicians put in to teaching medical students.

"This year we received more than 40 nominations from students for doctors from all around the state," she said.

The public lecture has been held by the society since 1957 and presents a forum for a speaker of significant national or international standing to address a public audi-

ence on a topic representative of personal endeavour and achievement.

Dr Win said he was delighted to receive the award and had enjoyed teaching throughout his career.

"I have been teaching at the University of Queensland for nearly three years and I ensure the undergraduates have a structured teaching program," he said.

"Most undergraduates feel that neurology is a very difficult subject and it is a joy to me to be able to simplify and demystify the topic."

Dr Win said that during his many years teaching in Malaysia he had inspired some students to take up neurology as a speciality after completing their training in general medicine.

## ORMIS pilot trial 'live'

**ORMIS**, the Operation Room Information System supplied by iSOFT, successfully went live in the pilot site Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital on 27 September.

"The operation room team, led by Nurse Practice Coordinator, Lorraine Munn had no trouble entering data into the Operation Record for the first patient to be entered on the new system," said Adrian Horth, ORMIS Project Director.

ORMIS is designed to capture activities surrounding a patient's time before, after and during their operation. It provides updates on the patient status, location and procedure details from the point of scheduling through to

discharge.

This enables clinical and administrative staff to predict resource requirements more effectively and thus achieve optimal health outcomes. It also provides an electronic record of the operation details.

"QEII Theatre staff's feedback has been very positive, with most taking to the application like ducks to water," Adrian said.

"General consensus is that ORMIS will offer considerable improvements over the HBCIS Theatre Management System, especially with regard to reporting and the depth of detail."

## RCH quality recognised

The Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, Queensland's major paediatric referral facility, has been recognised nationally for the outstanding quality of its services to the community.

The district has been awarded a four year accreditation by the Australian Council on Health Care Standards (ACHS), its highest level of endorsement

ACHS is an independent, national health standards organisation dedicated to improving the quality of health care in Australia through continual review of performance, assessment and accreditation.

The ACHS reported the hospital's clinical, community health and mental health services met or exceeded the stringent Australian standards for quality and safety.

Royal Children's Hospital and Health Acting District Manager, Dr Neil Wigg, said the outstanding commendation across the gamut of clinical services was well deserved by

district staff whose professionalism and dedication to quality improvement have now been formally endorsed.

"It has been a wonderful team effort that has secured this accreditation," he said.

"It also lifts the evaluation bar one notch higher as we continue our endeavours to ensure quality and safe clinical practice.

"The nature of the accreditation process requires that health facilities continue to make improvements in everything they do. In reality, preparation for accreditation in four year time has already commenced with a review of the recommendations made during this accreditation process.

"The 17 areas recommended for improvement will become the focus of an action plan to drive team efforts across the organisation to achieve even higher standards of quality and safety."

## QHPSS gains fourth gold award

Queensland Health Pathology and Scientific Services (QHPSS) has won its fourth Gold Award for Quality in three consecutive years from the Australian Organisation for Quality.

The services' Acting Executive Director, Chris Hall, said QHPSS' continued excellence in quality management was recognised when AOQ presented it with the 2005 Queensland Gold Award for Quality in the category, "Large Organisations – Public Sector".

He said QHPSS had won the Queensland Gold Award for Quality in 2003 and 2004 in the "Large Organisation – Not for Profit" category.

It received the AOQ's inaugural National Gold Award for Quality in the same category last year and is now in the running for this year's national award.

The award focused on the awareness of systems management and the continual business improvement process as underlying principles for achieving competitiveness and organisational success.

Organisations are judged on their customer focus, leadership, involvement of people, process approach, system approach to management, continual improvement, factual

approach to decision-making and mutually beneficial supplier relations.

An on-site inspection forms part of the award process.

"QHPSS is a strong, innovative and diverse organisation that recognises that quality systems are a critical component of any successful organisation, along with the ability to focus on, recognise and implement continuous improvement practices," Chris said.

"The Queensland Gold Award for Quality received by QHPSS is evidence of the high standard of quality management maintained within the fields of pathology services, public health and forensic laboratories, and biomedical technology services.

"The four awards are a credit to all QHPSS staff, who worked extremely hard to ensure that the appropriate certification and accreditation were gained and maintained."

QHPSS achieved corporation certification to ISO9001:2000 in July 2003.

The scientific laboratories have been accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) to ISO17025 in medical, chemical, biological and forensic testing.

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## Reforms to fast-track drug testing

**Measures** to speed up the testing of illegal drug laboratories and DNA samples are among reforms to forensic science services announced last month by Premier Peter Beattie and Health Minister Stephen Robertson.

Mr Beattie released a Ministerial Taskforce Report resulting from a comprehensive six-month review of government forensic and scientific services operated by Queensland Health Scientific Services.

“Peter Forster, who reviewed Queensland Health Systems, reviewed the Taskforce report at our request and has suggested further changes to enhance the structure and performance of these services,” Mr Beattie said.

“Together, Mr Forster’s suggestions and the Taskforce’s 65 recommendations signal a new era for forensic and scientific services in Queensland.

“The State Government is investing \$6.3 million in new money in 2005-06 to implement the reforms followed by \$2.4 million each year in on-going funding.

“The report proposes ways to streamline forensic and scientific processes and improve the delivery of DNA and crime scene sampling to the criminal justice system.

“It identifies measures to accelerate testing of clandestine drug laboratories as well as legislative reforms to speed up prosecution of persons engaging in illicit drug production.

“And there are organisational changes recommended to make government forensic and scientific services more productive and more efficient.”

Key reforms recommended by the Taskforce and Mr Forster include:

- recruit extra forensic scientists to form a special 24/7 response unit to perform clandestine drug laboratory testing; plus other scientists to accelerate the elimination of the lab testing backlog
- introduce reforms to the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 including making possession of precursors and other chemicals, for the production of an illicit drug, an indictable offence.

- appoint a new director to take charge of reforms and prepare for scientific services to be separated from pathology services as soon as practical
- maintain the current governance structure in Queensland Health

- transfer \$3 million funding from Queensland Police Service to Queensland Health Scientific Services to address the DNA profiling and crime scene sampling backlog

Mr Robertson said the delivery of DNA profiling and crime scene sampling to the criminal justice system was a key area of reform.

“The State Government has already provided \$11 million extra funding over three years to help eliminate the backlog of samples,” he said.

“We’re making progress but clearly further work and further resources are needed.

“A current Business Enhancement Program is examining the cost of current DNA profiling processes with the aim of identifying ways to make these processes more efficient.

“A review of fee-for-service arrangements will identify additional funding needed by QHSS to focus on its core business as well as eliminate the backlog of DNA and crime scene sampling.”

Cabinet will receive six monthly reports on progress to eliminate the backlogs.

Mr Robertson said the Taskforce proposed a range of initiatives to address the backlog of clandestine drug laboratory testing and better meet future demand.

“These include providing additional scientific staff to provide testing and analysis as well the formation of a special response team to be on call 24/7 to assist police with on-scene testing of clandestine drug labs,” he said.

“The Taskforce also proposes legislative amendments including the creation of an indictable offence for the possession of precursor and other chemicals used in illicit drug production.”

## Early reading plan boosts literacy

**Boosting** literacy and education by encouraging parents to share books with children at an early age is the aim of a program launched by Caboolture Hospital in partnership with Caboolture Shire Council.

The Born2Read program is designed to encourage parents to share books with children from a very early age by providing a book kit to each new mother and newborn at the Caboolture Hospital.

The kits will include an environmentally-friendly library bag, a board book, bookmark promoting babies and reading,

library fridge magnet and other information.

Caboolture Hospital Assistant Director of Nursing, Helen Timms, said the hospital was pleased to be partnering with the council to offer this valuable resource to patients.

“This is a significant investment in education for our local community, given that an average of 125 babies are born at Caboolture Hospital each month,” she said.

Phoenix Library Supplies and Walker Books will also partner in the project.

# Skills enhanced by virtual reality, simulation

The Skills Development Centre (SDC) is Queensland Health's statewide virtual reality and simulation training centre based at Herston. The centre, opened in September 2004, is one of the most technologically advanced and comprehensive skills development centres in the world.

**It covers** a complete suite of virtual reality and simulation training equipment, covers 3000sq m, with 26 session rooms, laboratories, and a fully-functional operating theatre and hospital ward.

The centre's creative capacity is highlighted in this feature.

## Centre for International Medical Graduates

Three courses for international medical graduates are currently under way comprising the MCQ Bridging Course, Clinical Bridging Course and Preparation for Employment Course.

In addition the SDC has secured funds through the Commonwealth to help the Association of International Medical Graduates of Australia and New Zealand consolidate themselves as a more professional organisation. This will allow for better communication with international medical graduates and create a network within this community.

## Crisis Resource Management Training

The SDC has expanded its repertoire of crisis management training to include the anaesthetics; emergency department; recovery room; paediatric emergency; gynaecology; and obstetrics.

A growing faculty of instructors has received training in CRM

techniques particularly in providing effective feedback through debriefing.

## Communications

The SDC has co-ventured with the Pam McLean Cancer Communication Centre in Sydney to develop a group of skilled trainers and actors to underpin our "One Tough Gig" The Effective Breaking of Bad News course.

The course has already been conducted with very positive feedback. For example two medical participants remarked that they have taken away lessons that will remain with them for the remainder of their career.

In recognition of the core role that communication plays in the effective delivery of treatment and care, the SDC has been conducting a series of Frontline Communication courses where staff are equipped with the skills to deal with challenging real-life situations involving patients or relatives.

Further communication courses on the drawing boards include a course designed for triage staff in emergency departments.

## Collaboration

Enshrined in the SDC mission is the need to develop partnerships with a range of organisations and stakeholders.

Partnerships have been forged

with University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, Queensland Ambulance Service, Medical Education Solutions.

## Community Awareness

The SDC exhibited on the Queensland Health stand at the AMAQ Health and Lifestyle Expo as part of the drive to make the public more aware of how proficiency can be achieved through use of a synthetic environment. A large number of children and adults enjoyed the hands on experience of virtual surgery and intubation.

More than 600 tours have been conducted since opening in September and these continue augmented by virtual tours that are available on the SDC website [www.sdc.qld.edu.au](http://www.sdc.qld.edu.au)

Every second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 2pm is tour-time for staff wishing to avail themselves of an opportunity to see the largest and most technologically advanced such centre in the world. For large tour parties (10 or more) the SDC prefers a phone call (3636 6500) in advance.

## Curriculum Development

The Centre is developing a range of courses with some 12



Pauline Lyon (front right), curriculum developer, with participants in the birthing program.

## Birthing program piloted

**The SDC now** has a Birth Suite complete with Maggie and her baby May (the centre's full-size maternal, neonatal and birthing simulator).

Along with "birthing" noises and the day to day challenges faced by clinical staff, everything came together to provide a very realistic working environment for the pilot in September of the centre's latest program Maternity Crisis Resource Management.

The Birth Suite "staffing" the program for the first of two pilot sessions were five midwives and three medical staff from the

Tablelands District and for the second session were five midwives and two obstetric registrars from Women's and Newborn Service of Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital.

The day long program had two themes. The morning's focus was on educational activities including communication, teams and the maternity emergencies of shoulder dystocia and primary post partum haemorrhage with the afternoon focussing on the application of this information in the SDC's Birth Suite.

part-time clinical staff on its curriculum faculty working on a range of curriculum in the specialties of anaesthetics, intensive care, general laparoscopic surgery, vascular and urology, emergency and paediatric emergency, maternity,

paediatric intensive care, disaster medicine and communication.

The SDC will be launching CSiCH (Clinical Simulation Clearing House), the world's first portal for sharing of clinical simulation and skills curriculum.

The development of curriculum remains one of the most cost intensive elements of running skills centres and there is tremendous opportunity for collaboration between centres to allow for curriculum to be shared and for sub specialisation to be agreed sensibly between jurisdictions.

## Coordination

Since July the SDC has taken on the coordination role of the Medical Education Officers as well as responsibility for the rural preparatory workshops which prepare junior medical staff for their rural rotation. It delivered one course from the SDC in July and is looking to conduct a further course before Christmas.

Pre Hospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) courses are now managed through the SDC and Kate Quigley has recently been

employed as the PHTLS Coordinator to liaise with the wide range of instructors and local coordinators spread across both the state and interstate who are critical to the delivery of this award-winning program.

## Critical review

The SDC has circulated to all district managers its first report to stakeholders outlining its performance across the first six months of operation. This report will be available as a PDF file on the SDC website in the near future.

It shows that there are very high levels of satisfaction with the courses and instructors and that training objectives are being met.

In the first six months the Centre was booked for about 4450 hours, 250 of which were out of hours.

## Conference Preparation

The Education Centre at RBWH, through the SDC, was host this month to Australia's first standalone clinical simulation conference. Under the auspices of the Simulation Industry Association of Australia, the conference will explore the central theme of 'meeting the workforce challenges head-on through simulation'.

## Connectivity

Connecting with others is a key function for the SDC which means not only with districts around the state but also other skill centres around the world.

To do this the SDC has switched-on its GrangeNet service which enables connection to the world-wide research and development network at an amazing speed of 1 Gigabit (equivalent to 1,000 times

the speed of home broadband).

This theoretically enables connections to those hospitals sharing campuses with universities eg. Townsville and will eventually connect with other hospitals when the bandwidth becomes more generally available – making the virtual classroom a reality.

In addition to this connectivity, the SDC is working through its Rural and Remote Arrangements Committee to assist in the development of a series of skills labs across the state where manikins and part trainers can be stationed to enable further skills training to occur closer to the participant's place of work.

Supplementing this will be a mobile service with a Sim Man simulator manikin in a four wheel drive vehicle that will visit more rural and remote locations enabling

districts on a rotation basis to get access to some of the technology that is on offer at the SDC.

## Class for Masters

A five day gynaecology master-class was conducted at the SDC in collaboration with Queensland Institute of Minimally Invasive Surgery in late August.

The gynaecologist participants used a wide range of domains within the SDC including virtual reality surgery, crisis resource management and the communication suite where they practiced the effective breaking of bad news.

To date this has been the most comprehensive use of the SDC by one craft group and is a model for how the centre's unique facilities can be used to provide training in a diverse range of skills in one complete training package.

advance your  
clinical career  
as a nurse  
practitioner



\*subject to course accreditation with the Queensland Nursing Council

Sharyn Plath (pictured) knows about achieving dreams. As a registered nurse with more than 15 years' experience in emergency medicine, Sharyn had gone as far as she could as a senior clinician. Which is why she plans to apply for a place in QUT's new **Master of Nursing Science (Nurse Practitioner)\*** course starting in 2006.

*"Becoming a nurse practitioner is not just my dream; it also provides a career path. The role of nurse practitioner means experienced nurses who want to remain in the clinical area can continue to advance their careers. I have tried management, but I really enjoy the clinical environment."*

Nurse practitioners will be able to diagnose, assess, prescribe medication and refer patients to other healthcare professionals in

areas such as emergency departments, women's health, and working with older people and people with chronic disease.

Sharyn said the chance to work with leaders in their field and the strong clinical and academic support teams assigned to candidates in their internships, combined with QUT's excellent reputation in nursing education in Queensland, provided the perfect environment to excel as a nurse practitioner.

QUT will offer the one-year full-time or two-year part-time course in both internal and external modes. Graduates will be eligible to apply for authorisation to practise as a Nurse Practitioner.\*

### More information

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## Books help kids grasp cardiac care

**Innovative** work by Princess Alexandra Hospital staff in producing a series of booklets to help children understand cardiac care has been recognised by the Australian Cardiac Rehabilitation Association.

The booklets help children and grandchildren of cardiac patients better understand what is happening to their loved one.

The three booklet series: *My Dad had a heart attack*, *My Mum had an angiogram*, and *My Dad had bypass surgery*, has been successfully piloted on patients at the hospital.

Staff in the Coronary Care Unit noted during the past three years that there was an increasing number of younger patients experiencing heart attacks – more than half of patients being under age 65, and many with children and grandchildren.

Children of these patients experience fear and anxiety when a loved one is very ill, adding stress to the person who is in hospital.

Social Worker, Margaret Warnick, and Cardiac Rehabilitation Coordinator, Rosemary Robinson, investigated the availability of child-friendly literature to help these patients.

They found there was a lot of information for adult patients and children who suffer cardiac conditions, but none for children of cardiac patients.

“To children, heart problems have a clear link to dying so this book is a valuable tool in helping them to better understand what is happening,” says Margaret, who wrote the booklets.

“Debra Cassidy, from medical illustration, was invaluable in providing realistic pictures to make the booklets interesting for children aged 9-14.

“Rosemary Robinson (CRC) provided clinical expertise and guidance, and presented our work at the ACRA Educational and Scientific Conference in August 2004 where we won ‘Best Clinical Presentation’ for innovation.

“ACRA now have plans to promote the booklets on their website.”

Rosemary, who worked tirelessly distributing the resources to target groups, presented the package at the Nepean Paediatric Conference in Sydney in August this year.

Queensland Urban Renewal Corporation Pty Ltd provided financial support toward printing, which will enable the booklets to be made available to other hospitals.

## Fresh start to the day



Enrolled Nurse, Julie Thompson, a member of the Emerald Reiki Club, conducting a reiki session.

**Sessions** of yoga, active relaxation and reiki are being used in an innovative program by Central Highlands Health Services staff to freshen them up and promote the ideals of a healthier staff.

The initiative came out of the Emerald Hospital's Mental Health Unit following discussions at a team meeting on whether or not they were fulfilling the strategic intent of “Healthier Staff”.

Mental Health staff member Jayne Dingle, said that with the advent of spring, the staff considered ways to have a fresh start and promote healthy living for district staff.

“We looked at what Mental Health was achieving as a team to meet Queensland Health's strategic intents,” Jayne said.

“One area we felt we needed to work on was Healthier Staff and that is how the idea for these sessions came about.”

The program, developed by Jayne, is being provided free of charge in the hospital staff training room by local groups specialising in the different forms of relaxation.

Instructors volunteered from the local Emerald Reiki Group to conduct three lots of 20 minute reiki sessions. Rob Farquhar, Mental Health Social Worker, performed the relaxation sessions.

(Reiki is a system of hands-on touching based on the belief that such touching by an experienced practitioner produces beneficial effects by strengthening and normalising certain vital energy fields held to exist within the

body.)

Rob said Emerald Hospital staff members were very enthusiastic about the program.

“It is important for staff to take time to manage their stress levels, especially in a busy working environment such as an acute care health service,” he said.

“This helps our staff to maintain the high standards of work required in this fast paced setting.

“They have been encouraged to continue to trial different forms of relaxation and to continue to explore relaxation strategies that they find helpful outside of the work.

“The feedback we have had is that they will continue to practice relaxation exercises.”

Central Highlands Health Service District Acting Manager Pat Castles said the hospital had introduced a relaxation and stress management program for staff to help them keep on top of the pressures of a busy public hospital.

“This is a first for Emerald and one of the first of its kind in the state,” he said.

“By introducing our staff to a variety of relaxation strategies that will assist in them managing stress levels, we are emphasising the importance of looking after our mental and physical health.

“I was impressed by the Mental Health team's initiative to promote healthier lifestyles. I am hopeful these sessions will continue indefinitely.”

## Courses develop mental health skills

**Applications** are sought from health professionals to enrol in the Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificates in Mental Health designed to develop expertise in working in Queensland Health mental health services.

The courses, developed by Queensland Health in partnership with the Queensland University of Technology, provide learning opportunities for more experienced mental health staff.

The courses are open to health professionals:

- with an undergraduate qualification (eg, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, speech therapists, registered nurses)
- with a post-graduate qualification
- registered nurses who do not possess a formal qualification, but have a minimum five years nursing experience can apply for consideration on an individual bases (QUT admission conditions apply)
- wanting to develop advanced mental health skills.

Other professionals with an undergraduate degree may apply (QUT admission requirements may apply).

The program will be delivered by distance education and accessed electronically through QHEPS. No lecture or residential school attendance is required, but QUT will provide student support in the form of tutorial and help desk access.

The costs for the program are \$1383 per subject plus \$24.20 student enrolment fee per semester. Queensland Health employees can apply for a subsidy or scholarship to undertake the qualification.

Queensland Health staff can apply for a subsidy from the Learning Services Unit (QH). Successful applicants will have one third paid toward each subject. Staff may also apply for a further one-third subsidy from their health service district.

Full scholarships to undertake these qualifications are available from the Learning Services Unit for eligible applicants from rural/remote areas, and people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds

**Contact** QUT on (07) 3864 4520, Neil Morrison in Learning Services Unit on 3235 9046.

## Wireless link-up doing the rounds



**Clinical pharmacists** have been taking their Notebooks with them on ward rounds to record patient medication details in a six-month pilot of wireless technology at the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

Trudy McGovern, Assistant Director of Pharmacy, said they were able to access their key information systems instead of having to constantly return to a ward workstation or going back to the pharmacy department to enter patient medication details.

She said clinical pharmacists were able to access iPharmacy, PALMS Plus, the AUSLAB pathology system and the Clinicians Knowledge Network from the bedside.

The Mobilisation of Clinical Pharmacist/Patient Interaction at Princess Alexandra Hospital Pilot was confined to three medical wards, and one surgical ward of the hospital.

Wireless access points were installed high on the walls and each pharmacist was provided with a Tablet or Note-

book with an internal wireless card.

“Throughout the trial period medical staff showed an active, positive interest in the technology, and I’m sure that contributed to its success,” Trudy said.

“We have a solution that is reliable and extendable when the wireless infrastructure is implemented in other areas of the hospital, thanks to the combined efforts of members of the Mobility Project and our local Information Directorate staff.”

Jennie McKay, Senior Pharmacist, said clinical pharmacists could collect most of the data and enter it into PALMS Plus and iPharmacy during the initial patient interaction at the time of admission.

“This is a much more efficient way to deliver medication services to the patient throughout their admission and discharge, as well as in their future interaction with their GP and or community pharmacy,” she said.

“The pilot provided a solution to enable ‘follow me’ printing which allowed the pharmacists to print to the local printer without having to go through a complicated setup process.”

*Trudy McGovern uses the new mobile technology on her ward rounds.*

## Aged care teams meet deadline

**Queensland's 20** Aged Care Assessment Teams were connected to the Aged Care Evaluation (ACE) system on 30 September, just in time to start reporting on the Minimum Data Set by the end September deadline.

The timing was critical. The Queensland Aged Care Assessment Program (ACAP), which was established to assess the needs of frail older people and facilitate access to appropriate care services, is funded each year for \$7.8 million from Federal funds.

Those funds were at risk of not being retained as the old Fox-Pro data collection application did not comply with the National ACAP Minimal Data Set version 2.0 (MDS2) and could not report on the required minimum data on which the funding was based,

Queensland Health needed to find a system which could provide MDS2 data before the end of September if it was to retain the \$7.8 million funds for this year.

It was the ACE version 3.09 system, developed by New South Wales Health and also used by some other states for MDS reporting, which was chosen as the best solution, particularly given the limited timeframe for implementation.

Nurit Bet-Or, the Project Manager charged with the

responsibility to evaluate and test the software, train the ACAT staff, and manage the statewide ACE implementation, is breathing a sigh of relief.

"ACE has saved the day for ACAT funding," Nurit said. "Right up to the week before go live we were training staff and doing last minute testing of the system because so much depended on a trouble-free implementation.

"ACAT staff can now log in to the system from any standard computer in Queensland Health to access their own client base," she said.

The ACE project was the first in the Clinical Informatics Program to take advantage of the technical coordination services offered by the newly established InfoOperations Delivery Service. Ele Ventura, the InfoOps Delivery Leader assigned to the project, was responsible for the technical coordination.

"Ele's technical project management skills really helped us make the project a success," said Nurit.

InfoOperations application support staff will centrally administer the system and NSW Health will develop future upgrades to the software in collaboration with other ACE user states.

## Child obesity targeted

**A State** Government action plan, Eat Well, Be Active - Healthy Kids for Life, aims to combat obesity in Queensland children.

Health Minister, Stephen Robertson, said in launching the plan that nearly one in four Australian children were obese or overweight.

"That's a dramatic increase on 20 years ago and the whole community needs to work together to solve this growing problem," he said.

"Childhood obesity is an epidemic and a challenge no Queenslanders can afford to ignore.

"Unless we act now, we run the risk today's generation of children will be the first to die at a younger age than their parents."

Mr Robertson said obesity in children was a serious concern because of the link with chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

"We must tackle the root causes before these health problems develop and inevitably place further strains on our health system and economy," he said.

"The State Government is doing its bit through this Smart State action plan of over 100 initiatives we will implement

over the next three years.

"The plan builds upon the State Government's Safe and Healthy School Policy which includes \$6.9 million over four years to address nutrition and physical activity in schools."

Key initiatives include:

- developing Healthy Weight Information Packs to be mailed to every Queensland home to increase awareness about food and nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight in children
- a statewide fruit and vegetable promotion campaign "Go for 2 fruit and 5 veg"
- a Fit and Fuelled in Schools program that includes healthy food and drink supply for tuckshops and grants to promote physical activity
- expanding the successful "10,000 Steps" physical activity program from Rockhampton to other Queensland communities
- targeting communities for priority assistance to adopt a healthier lifestyle
- a TravelSmart initiative providing workplace, school and community-wide support to increase the use of walking, cycling and public transport.

# Traditional hunting game revamped

**Tennis balls** replaced spears when a traditional Indigenous hunting game swung into action at Inala.

The game, known as gorri, features in a games kit provided to local Indigenous organisations under an innovative partnership between the Brisbane South Public Health Unit and the Brisbane City Council.

Brisbane South Public Health Unit health promotion officer Suzanne Plater said the project that resulted in the Traditional Indigenous Games kits was developed in consultation with Indigenous organisations, and the kits were designed to foster better health and well-being.

"Gorri traditionally involved a bark disc and spears, but the modern version involves tennis balls and a large ball," Suzanne said.

"It's a hunting game that develops speed and accuracy, and it's bound to be a lot of fun."

Training sessions were held to show staff from a range of organisations how to use the kits to deliver culturally appropriate physical activity programs to their members; particularly children and young people.

Suzanne said members of the non-profit Blackbase Youth Development Organisation delivered the training to staff at the Inala PCYC and the Acacia Ridge Leisure Centre. The Blackbase trainers are all qualified physical education teachers.

The games will be incorporated into weekend and after-school sports activities, vacation care programs and school camp curricula.

"The games project aims to increase physical activity and also to support and develop pride, self-esteem, skills, creativity and leadership through an acknowledgment of history, a celebration of culture and an increase in knowledge," Suzanne said.

"Most importantly, it's fun, and that can be seen in the delight on the faces of participants of all ages."

The *Strategic Policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People's Health 2005-2010 Discussion Paper* noted the level of inequality and weight of disadvantage in the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It identified a need to address the intergenerational effects of poor health and well-being through evidence-based, targeted interventions.

Participants in the training came from Inala Wangarra, The Murri School, Winnam ATSI Corporation, Keriba Warrungun ATSI Corporation, Kubingui Youth Development, Black Diamonds, First Contact, and schools including Durack State Primary School, Cavendish Road Secondary School and Inala State Primary School.

## what's on

### Abstracts call for suicide conference

**Submission** of abstracts close on Friday, 25 November, for the Queensland Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Conference 2006: Sharing learnings from practice and research.

The Queensland Government is hosting the inaugural conference at The Mercure Brisbane, on 30-31 March. This conference will provide delegates with current information and knowledge to effectively work towards the prevention of suicide and self-harm

**Contact:** Diana Petrovich, Senior Project Officer (Suicide Prevention), Mental Health Unit, phone 3131 6912, fax 3131 6845 web [http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/suicide\\_prevention/conference\\_details.html](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/suicide_prevention/conference_details.html)

### Shifting sands in cultural change

**Shifting Sands** in Health: Managing cultural change and diversity is the theme of the 2006 state conference of the Australian College of Health Service Executives (Queensland).

The conference, being held at the Courtyard Marriott Surfers Paradise Resort on 19-20 May, is being held in conjunction with the Health Informatics Society of Australia

(Queensland). Submission of abstracts for the conference close on Friday, 9 December.

**Contact:** Mike Knowles, Executive Officer, ACHSE (Qld), phone 3840 1090, fax 3840 2485, e-mail: [mike.achseqld@uqconnect.net](mailto:mike.achseqld@uqconnect.net)

### Executive blew whistle on tobacco

**Jeff Wigand**, a former tobacco executive who blew the whistle on American tobacco companies, is a keynote speaker at the third Australian Tobacco Control Conference in Sydney on 23-25 November.

Jeff, made famous in the hit movie, *The Insider*, will address leading experts meeting from around the world to discuss major issues in tobacco control.

The Visions of the Future conference will help direct policy makers, clinicians, and health officials into the latest and most successful programs to deal with the challenging issues surrounding tobacco control.

Topics include leadership and advocacy, new frontiers in understanding tobacco addiction and cessation, and ethics of the tobacco industry.

**Contact:** [www.tobaccocontrol2005.com](http://www.tobaccocontrol2005.com)

# infomatters

## Smoke-free message scores points



*President of the Warwick 'Cowboys' is presented with ESP funding by Lynne Martin Project Officer, while Liz Browne, Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Service Warwick Coordinator, and Murri Network event organiser, Ranald McIntosh, look on.*

**'Smoking:** It can cost us the game' was one anti-smoking message promoted by the Warwick "Cowboys" Football Club which hosted the Indigenous Network Rugby League and Cultural Fun day in Warwick in September.

The event was sponsored by the Event Support Program (ESP), an initiative of Queensland Health, which aims to promote smoke-free messages as a component of Indigenous sporting and cultural events.

The Warwick Rugby League Cultural Fun involved four junior teams playing during the afternoon.

The main game of the event, the Women's "State of Origin" rugby league game, attracted a large crowd with more than 300 people heartily cheering on their own team.

The fun day also included a welcome to country by a local elder, traditional Indigenous food cooking and traditional Indigenous dancers and singers.

Event organiser, Ranald McIntosh, said the day was a great way to showcase Warwick Indigenous culture and sport, while engaging the whole community.

## China link strengthened

**The Vice-Mayor** of Shanghai, Yang Xiaodu, visited Queensland Health in August as part of the lead-up to the Shanghai International Forum on Healthy Cities to be held in Shanghai, China, from 20-22 November.

Queensland Health was chosen as the main supporter of the forum because of the city-state relationship between Shanghai and Queensland.

The longstanding collaboration between the Shanghai Health Education Institute, Queensland Health and Griffith University is a key driver of the forum's program.

The leading Queensland examples of settings-based health promotion and municipal public health plans in many of Queensland's cities is of real interest to Shanghai.

Shanghai has placed great importance on Queensland Health's involvement in the forum, which provides a lead-in to the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010 and the Asia-Pacific City Summit in 2007.

The delegation program was organised in collaboration with Protocol Queensland of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The program included presentations on public health issues, visits to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and Coorparoo Community Health Centre and a meeting with the Minister for Health.

Information on the Shanghai International Forum on Health Cities can be found on <http://www.fcdae.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=784>

## in retrospect

### A review of some articles from previous Health Matters

<b>May</b>	Walkers-cyclists strive for healthier lifestyle Ipswich doctor says dry with helped in Iraq E-learning a new tool for carers	<b>August</b>	Queensland Health launches new web site Scholarships boost cancer research Healthy food focus on fussy eaters
<b>June</b>	Sam's new liver was a life saver Partnership seeking answers to challenge Block 7 dream nearing fruition	<b>September</b>	Forster Review hands down interim report Prof John Pearn awarded Ireland Medal Dalby a showcase for rural health
<b>July</b>	Record \$5.3 billion Health Budget Bali burns specialist awarded OAM Moranbah – Small district with big vision	<b>October</b>	Implementation of the Forster Report First triple organ transplant on female patient Agencies endorse mental health recovery plan

**NOVEMBER**

**To Oct** Woolworths Fresh Future Appeal

**2006** *Royal Children's Hospital Foundation*  
Phone: 3852 1199

**1-30** National Healthcare Month  
*Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia*  
Phone: (02) 6260 4022

**6-13** National Psychology Week  
*Australian Psychological Society*  
Phone: 1800 333 497

**7** Thank You Day  
*Research Australia*  
Phone: (02) 9227 0875

**7-13** National Food Safety Week  
*Food Safety Information*  
Phone: (02) 6254 4896

**8-11** Nurse of the Year (State Finals)  
*Queensland Cancer Fund*  
Phone: 1300 656 585

**13-19** National Skin Cancer Awareness Week  
*Cancer Council Australia*  
Phone: 13 11 20

**14** World Diabetes Day  
*Diabetes Australia – Queensland*  
Phone: 1300 136 588

**14-20** Spinal Injury Awareness Week  
*Spinal Injuries Association*  
Phone: 3391 2044

**18** RFDS Spirit of Queensland Awards Gala  
Presentation  
*Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland)*  
Phone: 3860 1100

**21-30** HIV Awareness Week  
*Queensland AIDS Council*  
Phone: 4729 2263

**21-2** Radio B105 Christmas Appeal  
**Dec** *Royal Children's Hospital Foundation*  
Phone: 3852 1199

**25** Dress Down Day  
*Queensland Cancer Fund*  
Phone: 1300 656 585