

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **New advisory group aims to build community relationships**

Members of a new advisory group, aimed at building upon the Goondiwindi Hospital's ties with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, have met with the Darling Downs Hospital and Health (DDHH) Board during their visit to the region yesterday.

Every second month, the Board visits a rural hospital to conduct its regular monthly meeting.

Goondiwindi Hospital's Director of Nursing and Facility Manager Lorraine McMurtrie said Indigenous Advisory Working Party (IDWP) members shared an informal lunch with the DDHH Board directors.

"Last year, it was decided that the hospital would form a working party to explore different ways the hospital could become more culturally appropriate and inclusive," Ms McMurtrie said.

"The group is made up of Indigenous Health Workers and community members, and it is aimed at creating a hospital that is welcoming to all cultures. We don't want anything that we do to be a barrier to anyone seeking help."

DDHH Board Deputy Chair Dr Dennis Campbell praised the hospital for the new initiative.

"As most people know, the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are well below the national average," he said.

"And in rural and regional areas, these differences are quite profound. The steps the Goondiwindi Hospital are undertaking to address these shortfalls is a great example of how the DDHHS is aiming to 'close the gap'."

The IDWP meets monthly and is responsible for the co-ordination of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander events such as NAIDOC Week and for the building of relationships with communities accessing services at the Goondiwindi Hospital.

The ties with the local community have also been strengthened by the recent appointment of Karen Johnson, as the hospital's full-time Indigenous Advanced Health Worker for child health.

"Karen is a local resident and a welcomed addition to our service," Ms McMurtrie said.

### **Background**

The DDHH Board met at the Goondiwindi Hospital for its regular monthly meeting which is held in a rural location every second month. Yesterday Board members also visited the Millmerran Multipurpose Health Service to officially open its new \$10,549 telehealth suite.

The Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS), which includes Goondiwindi Hospital, covers approximately 90,000 square kilometres, around one-and-a-half times the size of Tasmania.

The DDHHS delivers care from 20 hospitals and six residential care facilities, and manages an annual budget of more than \$640 million.

**Ends**

**MEDIA:** Contact Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service Media Team 4699 8547, 0438 702 328 or [DDHHS\\_media@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:DDHHS_media@health.qld.gov.au)