

Board Chair report

Mr Mike Horan AM
Board Chair



It is with great pleasure that I present the fourth annual report of the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS) as we continue to deliver contemporary health services across a diverse region. Once again the Board is proud of the high quality of clinical care provided by DDHHS staff to communities from all 26 of our facilities. Whilst there is an increasing demand on our services, I have complete faith with staff to rise, meet and exceed these challenges.

Once again 2015-2016 has seen an increase in activity across the health service. It is with pride that I note DDHHS is the only health service in Queensland that has zero patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for specialist outpatient appointments, and all patients waiting for elective surgery were also treated on time, despite a seven per cent increase in demand. None of these achievements could be managed without the DDHHS's frontline and support staff working diligently to support the health needs of our region.

For the fourth year in a row DDHHS has made a surplus, although smaller than previous years. This surplus will go back into providing improvements to clinical services, new equipment and infrastructure across the health service.

This year the Board announced the following new major infrastructure projects funded from the accumulated surplus:

- \$8.1m seventh operating theatre for Toowoomba Hospital
- \$2.6m new staff accommodation and private practice clinic at Miles Hospital

These projects further complement the large number of projects already funded, underway or completed from the surplus.

The Board farewelled two board members in May 2016, Dr Jeff Prebble and Mr Terry Fleischfresser. Jeff, a well respected and popular paediatrician, retired from the Board and from medical practice.

Jeff's genuine interest in the healthcare of women and children over the past 37 years was an invaluable addition to the Board from the outset in 2012. On behalf of the Board I thank him for his wisdom and friendship. Mr Terry Fleischfresser also completed his tenure with the Board in May 2016. Terry is a passionate advocate for the South Burnett area and I wish him well in his new endeavours.

The Board welcomed two new members, Ms Corinne Butler and Dr Ruth Terwijn in May 2016. Corinne has a background in human resources and business and Ruth is an experienced nurse manager and nursing academic. I am sure they will make an important contribution to the Board during their terms.

I thank all of the Board members for their unfailing commitment to engaging with communities and stakeholders across the health service and advocating for their healthcare needs. Only through continued collaboration with communities will we be able to continue to meet the expectations of our customers. I look forward to another three years as the Board Chair, a position I am proud and humble to hold. Healthcare is a cornerstone of the community that I have been privileged to represent over a long public career.

In January 2016 we farewelled our Health Service Chief Executive Dr Peter Bristow, after three-and-a-half years at the helm of the DDHHS. Dr Bristow gave 15 years of dedicated service to Toowoomba Hospital and the DDHHS and led a culture of respect, openness and learning throughout the health service. I thank him for his diligence and outstanding leadership as the inaugural DDHHS Health Service Chief Executive.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I would like to congratulate and acknowledge the commitment and hard work of our new Health Service Chief Executive, Dr Peter Gillies, and his executive team who are focussed, as always, on delivering excellent healthcare across the whole of the DDHHS. I have absolute confidence in their ability to meet the challenges in delivering quality rural and regional healthcare in partnership with our communities.

Chief Executive report

Dr Peter Gillies
MBChB, MBA,
FRACMA, GAICD
Chief Executive



Reflecting on the 2015-2016 Annual Report I am first and foremost proud of the hard work and dedication of DDHHS staff across the region. It is only through our people that the DDHHS is able to deliver quality healthcare to the communities that our health service covers.

In my first six months as Chief Executive it has been a pleasure to observe the improvements in access to services throughout the region – especially the increases in dental occasions of service, elective surgery and specialist outpatient appointments across all treatment categories. DDHHS also continues to increase the number of telehealth occasions of service, allowing patients to remain in their local community, but still access and receive specialist medical attention.

The DDHHS has now maintained no long waits for elective surgery for two and half years, and no long waits for specialist outpatient appointments for one year. Reaching these targets initially was a significant achievement but sustaining this performance over such a long period of time is a true testament to the commitment of our staff.

Over the past year community engagement has continued to grow, and it was with great pleasure that in October we welcomed a new community member representative onto the Toowoomba Hospital Patient Safety and Quality Committee. We also saw the establishment of the DDHHS Consumer Council in February 2016. The Consumer Council is engaging with communities, advisory groups and patients to promote respect, open communication and improve our service and the health outcomes of patients across our region. We will continue to work hard at promoting community and consumer engagement in the planning and operation of our health service.

This past year DDHHS has continued to collaborate with the new federally funded Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network. These networks were established with the key objective of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of medical services, especially for those at risk of poor health outcomes. As a key stakeholder in this Network I am pleased at their hard work in setting up across two geographically diverse areas of health and health population needs.

We have continued to invest in the refurbishment and expansion of our facilities across the region. Many of the rural facilities have had flooring replaced; helipads improved and received a painting face-lift. DDHHS is approximately half-way through the backlog maintenance of facilities funded through the Department of Health's Backlog Maintenance Remediation Program.

DDHHS remains committed to delivering excellence in rural and regional healthcare. The health service has implemented a free 'shuttle bus' service from the South Burnett to Toowoomba to enable patients to access the specialist healthcare that they need. We also celebrated 10 years of the Rural Generalist Program, which is recognised nationally as a very effective model for enhancing rural medical workforce capacity and capability.

Once again staff from DDHHS participated in the Working for Queensland annual survey. Across DDHHS there was a 43 per cent participation rate in the survey, close to the 44 per cent response rate across all of Queensland Health. The results of these surveys help senior management to improve conditions for our staff as well as receive feedback on how "things are running" since the previous year's survey.

The Executive have worked diligently through the year to achieve these results across the health service, and I thank them for their contributions. Additionally I would like to extend my gratitude to the Board, and especially to the Board Chair, Mr Mike Horan, for their support to the patients, staff and executive members of the health service.