

# Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016–2021

## Progress report 2016–2019

### The government's investment in optimal sexual and reproductive health

Since December 2016, the Queensland Government has invested funding of more than \$5.27 million over four years (2016–17 to 2019–20) to progress priority actions in the *Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016–2021* (Strategy).

The Strategy provides the overarching framework for action and is supported by the:

*Queensland Hepatitis B Action Plan 2016–2021*

*Queensland Hepatitis C Action Plan 2016–2021*

*Queensland HIV Action Plan 2016–2021*<sup>1</sup>

*North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexually Transmissible Infections Action Plan 2016–2021*<sup>2</sup>

During the reporting period, work commenced to review the hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV action plans for the period 2019–2022, and new action plans are being developed as follows:

*Queensland STI Action Plan 2019–2022*

*Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander BBV and STI Action Plan 2019–2022*

The Strategy is a whole-of-government policy statement that aims to support healthy and safe sexual experiences and optimal sexual and reproductive health and provide a service system that is responsive to the needs of all Queenslanders.

<sup>1</sup> These action plans are currently being updated to ensure alignment with the new National Blood Borne Virus (BBV) and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) Strategies

<sup>2</sup> Implementation of this action plan is co-ordinated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Branch, Department of Health

## MINISTER'S MESSAGE



The Palaszczuk Government is proud to have developed Australia's first comprehensive sexual and reproductive health strategy in 2016.

Three years in, our strategy is delivering better sexual health outcomes for Queenslanders through education programs and targeted initiatives.

We're also supporting NGOs with a \$66.3 million investment over the life of the strategy.

We still have more to do, with the establishment of the Youth Advisory Group enabling us to focus on the people who need the most education and support.

Our \$1.065 million investment in the Sexual Health Research Fund will also let us deliver better health outcomes for priority populations into the future.

I would like to thank the Committee for their hard work to date. Without their efforts we would not have been able to make the progress that we have.

### Steven Miles MP

Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services

# Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

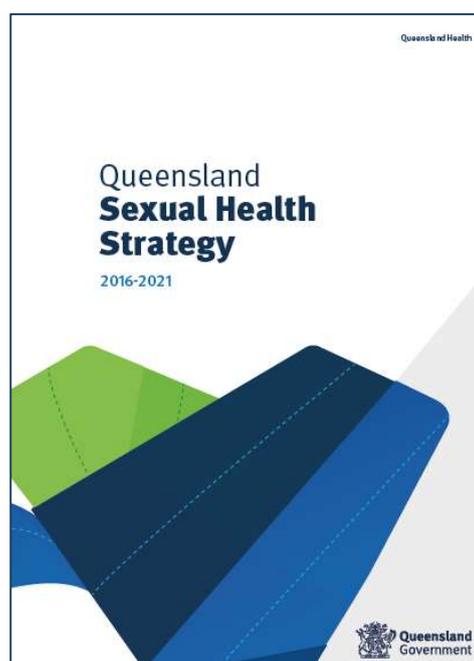
The Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee is comprised of eleven members representing diverse areas of expertise, reflecting the broad scope of the Strategy:

- 1. Emeritus Professor Cindy Shannon (Chair)**  
Expertise in hepatitis and issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 2. Dr Anthony Allworth**  
Expertise in infectious diseases.
- 3. Mr Phillip Carswell, OAM**  
Expertise in issues facing people who identify as LGBTIQ+.
- 4. Professor Rebecca Kimble**  
Expertise in reproductive and maternal health.
- 5. Dr Stephen Stathis**  
Expertise in gender dysphoria amongst children and young people.
- 6. Dr Graham Neilsen**  
Expertise in sexual health medicine.
- 7. Associate Professor Ignacio Correa –Velez**  
Expertise in multicultural health.
- 8. Ms Candi Forrest**  
Expertise in issues facing people who engage in sex work.
- 9. Ms Sue Andrews**  
Expertise in issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 10. Ms Hayley Stevenson**  
Expertise in the provision of services to young people in the education sector.
- 11. Ms Barbara Shaw**  
Expertise in the provision of child safety, women and youth government services.

The Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee (Committee) was established in June 2017 to guide the implementation of the *Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016–2021* and provide expert and timely advice on sexual and reproductive health matters to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services.

The Committee also provides advice on priorities and future challenges on sexual and reproductive health-related matters, including investment priorities under the Strategy and research activities; opportunities for clinicians, service providers and advocates to communicate and share information of strategic importance to the delivery of effective sexual and reproductive health services in Queensland; and provides input into state-wide, evidence-based sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmissible infections and blood-borne virus policies and other clinical guidelines where appropriate.

The Committee hosts an annual stakeholder engagement forum to provide a platform for intensive sector consultation on key issues.





## Strategic Direction 1

# Improving community awareness, information and prevention across the lifespan

### Key highlights include:

Clinical guideline developed by Clinical Excellence Queensland for the diagnosis and management of syphilis in pregnancy to reduce infectious syphilis and prevent congenital syphilis in Queensland. The Guideline was released in December 2018.

- \$15.7 million for the first three years of the *North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexually Transmissible Infections Action Plan 2016–2021* to implement prevention activities and information and awareness raising.
- Commencement of an *Older Persons Healthy Ageing Strategy* – supporting the recognition of sexual health needs for older people in policy.
- The Stop the Rise of STIs campaign, launched in September 2018, focused on improving young Queenslanders' knowledge and awareness around sexual health. The four-month long campaign promoted safe sex practices and regular sexual health checks and testing as part of a normal health routine.

**STOP THE  
RISE OF STIS**

### SUCCESS STORY

#### The Sexual Health Research Fund

The Department of Health committed \$1.06 million over three financial years to the Sexual Health Research Fund (SHRF), which was created to fund research that will improve the delivery of sexual health services and support implementation of the Strategy.

A research subcommittee, comprising a subset of Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee members, was established to set research priorities each year and assess and recommend applications for funding.

Funding applications for round one opened in December 2018.

Successful applications included:

- Management of Syphilis in Pregnant Women and Their Newborn Infants in Queensland 2014–2018: Assessment and Recommendations to Optimise Management and Outcomes.
- Increasing Capacity and Capability of GPs to Provide Hepatitis B Testing and Follow Up Management for Chinese and Vietnamese Community Members.



## Strategic Direction 2

# Improving education and support for children and young people

### SUCCESS STORY

#### Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Forum 10 October 2018, Brisbane

The Committee hosted the Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Forum to identify possible barriers to service access and opportunities for improvement and expansion for young people, with a specific focus on the years of transition from childhood to adulthood (ages 12–18).

The Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Forum Report chronicles activities undertaken and the four identified priority issues for action:

1. Early provision of sexual and reproductive health education.
2. Overcoming stigma and discrimination.
3. Ongoing professional development, education and training for all service providers.
4. Youth empowerment.

A Youth Advisory Group is being convened to advise the Committee on youth-related matters, and activities are underway to address the identified priorities.



### Key highlights include:

- Children’s Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service developed and implemented initiatives for School-Based Youth Health Nurses to enhance their sexual and reproductive health knowledge and support state secondary schools to provide a ‘whole of school approach’ to sexual health.
- Children’s Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service has enhanced gender dysphoria services and endocrine (hormone) treatment to reduce waiting lists.
- 13 HEALTH webtest implemented across Queensland – helping to increase access to chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing in young people.
- Strong Proud Healthy Safe curriculum-embedded sexual health and relationships education program successfully piloted in several north Queensland Indigenous-majority schools.
- Reform opportunities resulting from the accepted recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse continue to be progressed.
- Mandatory training for staff in state schools provides all Department of Education employees with an overview of their responsibilities if they suspect harm to a student, including harm caused by sexual abuse.
- The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women commenced the development of a Sexual Violence Prevention Framework for Queensland.
- The Respectful Relationships education program is rolling out across Queensland State schools.



## Strategic Direction 3

# Responding to the needs of specific population groups

### Key highlights include:

- In addition to the \$5.27 million allocated to the Strategy, a further \$66.3 million over five years has been allocated to non-government organisations for the continued implementation of the hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV action plans – improving targeted preventative approaches to reduce transmission of STIs, HIV and viral hepatitis in specific population groups and to support workforce development activities.
- More than \$4.2 million allocated over four years provided through *Connecting Care to Recovery 2016–2021* to Children’s Health Queensland to enhance multidisciplinary services for people experiencing gender dysphoria.
- QPrEPd trial improved the availability and accessibility of pre-exposure prophylaxis for the prevention of HIV to those at high risk, before it became widely available under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.
- Queensland Positive People (QPP) providing STI point of care testing, using GeneXpert technology, for at-risk groups in urban settings.
- Queensland AIDS Council (QuAC) providing a confidential online condom ordering system targeting people at risk of HIV/STIs and organisations working with target groups including young people living in regional, rural and remote Queensland.
- Queensland Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Roundtable established by Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors.
- All Queensland prison health services have arrangements in place with local specialist services to provide prisoners with access to hepatitis C treatment. By the end of 2018, 1384 inmates had been treated through such arrangements.

### SUCCESS STORY

#### North Queensland HIV Roundtable 17 and 18 October 2017, Cairns

The Committee hosted the North Queensland HIV Roundtable to gather information to assist in the development of a framework for integrated management of HIV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

The North Queensland HIV Roundtable Report provides a succinct summary of the event and resulting recommendations, which informed key activities including:

The development of the North Queensland HIV Framework, which will be supported at an operational level by a North Queensland HIV Action Plan.

The establishment of a HIV Response Team based in the Cairns Sexual Health Service, to support the provision of focussed case management in response to the cluster of HIV cases.



## Strategic Direction 4



# Improving the service system

## SUCCESS STORY

### 13 HEALTH webtest

13 HEALTH webtest offers additional chlamydia and gonorrhoea urine test request options for young people when they are unlikely or unable to attend a health service. The webtest request must be made online and all follow up is provided by 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

From August 2017 to June 2019 there were 5866 online STI risk assessments completed, 3514 webtest requests processed and 2124 webtest results received. There were 138 positive chlamydia and 14 positive gonorrhoea results which might not have been detected where reluctance to access a health service to discuss sexual health and STI testing might exist.

The webtest project is reaching young people and the risk assessment outcomes effectively identify those at increased risk of STIs. The research phase of the webtest project is due to be completed in 2020.



## Key highlights include:

- The Queensland Needle and Syringe Program continues to facilitate important harm reduction work through a network of 150 public needle and syringe programs and over 700 community pharmacies.
- Strategy funding has enabled:
  - Gold Coast, Townsville and Wide Bay Hospital and Health Services to increase capacity in sexual health service delivery, enhancing the ability to test and treat STIs, HIV, viral hepatitis, and to provide psychological support to patients.
  - Townsville, Cairns and Hinterland, North West and Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Services to increase access to STI point of care testing in Far North Queensland for syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia and trichomonas, reducing time to treatment for rural and remote communities.
  - Metro North Hospital and Health Service to enhance the syphilis surveillance program and to provide support to primary healthcare providers in responding to syphilis cases and informing policy and programs.
  - Cairns and Hinterland, Townsville and North West Hospital and Health Services to boost regional contact tracing for STIs and HIV in Cairns, Townsville and Mt Isa.
  - Clinical Excellence Queensland to establish a Queensland Sexual Health Network – a community of health professionals operating with a common purpose to negotiate system change, support clinical guideline and policy development and drive quality and service improvements.