Message from the Chief Executive

Last month the State budget delivered a record investment of $16.5 billion into the health of Queenslanders. Although Torres and Cape HHS received a more modest increase in our budget of $202.9 million, we did receive extra funding for renal and allied health services in the Cape, five more nurse navigators and funding to reduce endoscopy wait lists. We were also given $7 million for the redevelopment of the Mer clinic and staff accommodation, bringing total capital works underway to more than $60 million.

I am pleased to see in this edition the many accomplishments of our staff in providing excellence in health to our communities. This month we have included a story about community screenings in Hope Vale and Kowanyama to combat the spread of sexually transmitted infections as well as the efforts taken to make sure the Laura Dance Festival and Rodeo was safe and successful. It was terrific to have birthing services finally recommence in Cooktown, see what’s been updated in the emergency management guidelines and read about literacy strategies on Thursday Island.

As always, I would like to welcome our new staff, many of whom I get to meet during their orientation program. This month we profile our new Cultural Practice Program Coordinator in the South, Lynnette Donovan; and Lesley Reid who has had a homecoming to Hope Vale as the Director of Nursing. I also welcome the new Executive General Manager for the Southern Sector, Ms Beverly Hamerton.

I will be out in the region over the next few weeks to meet with Councils to talk about our health services and partnerships arrangement and look forward to meeting as many staff as possible during my travels.

Regards

Michel Lok

Partnering for health at Laura Dance Festival

Four of our nurses and one operations officer/community liaison person worked at the Laura Dance Festival and Rodeo over ten days in June. The team worked well together on rotation to keep fatigue levels down and deliver health services.

Laura site manager and Clinical Nurse Consultant Mark Daniels worked closely with Kelly Lynch (Clinical Nurse) and Dennis Fuller (Operations Officer) in the lead up to the event with lots of planning and community engagement work. They were assisted by Josh Stafford Director of Nursing (Southern) and Amanda Maher (Clinical Nurse) at the event. Approximately 7000 people attended the dance festival and police reported no violence. Both Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) and Torres and Cape HHS had clinics on site and at the Laura town.

“The QAS provided first aid and their Mobile Command Centre provided a great base to work from,” said Josh Stafford. “The nurses from Laura Clinic held two clinics a day (two hours in the morning and afternoon) treating chronic disease patients and expanding and complementing the services provided by QAS,” said Josh.

The nurses wore high-viz vests which Mark said proved to be a good thing. “Not only did it clearly identify us in the crowd, it helped us to be identified when treating patients. I believe we should build on this and provide nurses with a uniform promoting Torres and Cape HHS and the clinics/facilities,” Mark said.

“We worked very well together building strong working relationships with our interagency partners,” said Mark “and successfully delivered a safe and professional service for all festival and rodeo visitors.”
The board met in Weipa on 22 June 2017 and the following matters were among those discussed:

- The TCHHS Strategic Plan 2015-2019 (2017 update) was approved for publication.
- The Board endorsed the 2017-18 budget, and received the May Finance Report which showed the reported operating position to be in surplus.
- The planned 2017-18 Retained Earnings projects were endorsed in principle.
- The Board commended the amount of work undertaken by the Infrastructure Team to have the Backlog Maintenance Remediation Program completed on time.
- Regionisation remains as a standing agenda item and the Board noted J&G Consultants had been contracted to prepare the business case and implementation strategy.
- The Board noted the Transition to Community Control project in Aurukun had been delayed due to an unexpected refurbishment issue at the primary health care centre.
- Consumer and Community Engagement and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Training remain strong focuses of the Board, with an update provided by Principal Advisor for ATSI Health, Sean Taylor.

Board Chair Bob McCarthy and Member Tracey Jia travelled to Napranum where they spoke with staff at the Primary Health Care Centre. Staff were assured there would be no moves to push for community control in Napranum at this stage and working relationships with Apunipima staff in Napranum will be amplified. The next Board meeting will be held in Cairns on 27 July 2017.

News from the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Board

Cooktown Multipurpose Health Service has been experiencing a baby boom since birthing restarted at the facility in late March.

Following the first birth in April, a further three babies have already been born at Cooktown. Cooktown Midwifery Unit Manager Katrina Seng said the latest birth was Hunny J McIvor, a baby girl, born on 28 May to proud parents Jaccan Hart and Elroy McIvor from Hope Vale.

Ms Hart is a Guggu Yimithirr woman and Mr McIvor is a Guggu Yimithirr man.

Ms Seng said baby Hunny, who is Ms Hart’s and Mr McIvor’s first child, was doing very well.

“Both parents were over the moon with the birth and their new baby,” she said.

She said with the return of birthing following the completion of important upgrades to the hospital’s operating theatre, a new women’s maternity services consumer group also was forming.

Cooktown resident Jessie Price-Decle was the first woman to give birth at Cooktown after the return of birthing this year and is a keen inaugural member of the new consumer group. She gave birth to daughter Claire, her first child, on 24 April.

“After having such a fantastic birthing experience here in Cooktown in April, I’m excited to see other women use our local maternity unit,” Mrs Price-Decle said.

“I hope this new group helps spread the word that you can birth in Cooktown and receive professional and intimate care, while also ensuring the maternity unit gets the feedback it needs to keep improving.”
Thursday Island Pastor Viki has experienced first hand how beneficial the nurse navigator roles can be. Nurse Navigator Andrea Brockbank works with patients like Viki to help reduce fragmentation, mitigate barriers, educate and empower them and coordinate patient care.

Viki has been living with Type One Diabetes since she was 10 years old and as a result has experienced many health complications. In September 2016, the trajectory of Viki’s life changed significantly when she went for a walk without socks on. Injuries she sustained included blisters that resulted in 10 hospital admissions, amputation of her fifth toe and long periods on both oral and IV antibiotics; not to mention many an afternoon spent waiting to have her dressings attended as an outpatient.

“We hear a lot in health these days about the importance of not working in silos, and the improvements in Viki’s health would not have been achieved without the many health professionals who have provided individually tailored best practice care ensuring these positive outcomes.” said Andrea.

Torres and Cape HHS currently have a cohesive, enthusiastic and highly motivated team of six nurse navigators with three more positions currently advertised for Cooktown, Weipa and Thursday Island.

Viki shares how Nurse Navigator Andrea Brockbank has helped her...

There is a hymn line that says “be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock”. Without Nurse Navigator, Andrea, I would have drifted away long time ago. I didn’t know what to expect when I was referred by the Link Nurse at Innisfail hospital and told to go straight to her from the ferry when I returned from sorry business. I was relieved to find a vibrant, positive and encouraging person who settled my nerves quickly.

The Nurse Navigator has been so important in my health journey over the last four months in the following ways:

1. Came with me to the ED and visited me in hospital to check on how I was going.
2. Empathised with my opposition to hospital admission for IV antibiotics when I was otherwise well.
3. Encouraged me to face the reality that my work is busy and demanding and I needed to take the time to heal before I resumed work.
4. Reminded me about my faith in God.
5. Came with me to appointments. This is so important due to the anxiety of going to the CWC causes and the fact that anxiety gets in the way of remembering what was said.
6. Networked between service providers so that I could attend a specialist clinic and have my dressings changed in the same afternoon. When I tried to arrange this the clinic staff had gone home by the time my dressings were changed.
7. Liaised with other service providers including podiatrist, nurses, doctors, diabetes educator. As a result, has been able to give me information about referrals to different clinics, eg. eye clinic, and followed up with a doctor to write the referral.
8. Reminds me that even though it is slow going, I am healing.

The Nurse Navigator provides personalised care that builds a bridge between me and the medical team. Andrea is a blessing during a period of strong emotion due to complex health issues concurrent with three bereavements.
Hope Vale and Kowanyama screens reach over 70%

Above: The Men’s and Women’s Health Program team including Joanne Leamy (Clinical Coordinator), Jansen Bowen (peer recruiter), Cherrie Glasson (HPO), Tabetha Cox (PHN), Leonard Creed (AIHW), Jess Stecko (CNC).

Men’s and women’s health staff have had great success in Hope Vale and Kowanyama with recent community screens for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and blood-borne viruses.

Joanne Leamy, Men’s and Women’s Sexual Health Coordinator, said that the screens were successful because health promotion officers worked with local peer recruiters who encouraged young people to attend and be screened.

“In Hope Vale the team achieved 70% screening of 15 to 29 year olds and in Kowanyama we achieved 75% screening,” said Joanne.

The Hope Vale screen was done in collaboration with Hope Vale Clinic, Tropical Public Health and Council, the Men’s, Women’s and Sexual Health Program and screened 130 young people.

The Kowanyama screen was done with Tropical Public Health, Apunipima, the Council and the Men’s, Women’s & Sexual Health Program. It was held at the Recreation Centre and screened 145 young people.

Joanne said a huge thank you to the local clinics and staff, Councils and Apunipima who supported the screening.

“There was three months of preparatory work, and during screening week the teams worked very long hours. Thank you to everyone involved,” she said.

Welcome Lynnette

Welcome to Lynnette Donovan who is the new Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Practice Program Coordinator - Southern Sector, based in Weipa.

Lynnette is a Gumbaynggirr woman from the small town of Macksville in NSW.

“The Gumbaynggirr nation is pretty large and runs basically along the coast - therefore I grew up around rivers and the sea,” said Lynnette.

Lynnette has a passion for social services and was most recently a Health Educator in Domestic Violence Prevention Education for New South Wales Health and before that she was a Senior Child Protection Case-worker with Family and Community Service NSW.

“I believe in using prevention, early intervention and community development approaches that holistically focus on Indigenous family, culture, healing and well-being.” said Lynnette. “I have always felt that I wanted to make a difference and hopefully be instrumental in creating some positive changes and developing better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“The Cultural Practice Program Coordinator position kept coming up on my computer at work so I googled Torres and Cape Health and liked what I saw and decided to apply for this position,” said Lynnette.

“I feel very humble and blessed that I have been given this opportunity. I know this position will be challenging at times but if it is done right it can also be very rewarding in that we will be assisting to develop better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and hopefully positively changing the statistical outcomes for our people,” said Lynnette.

Welcome to the team Lynnette!
Thursday Island accommodation blessing

Father Tom Stephen and Elder Saila Savage officially blessed and opened the Thursday Island accommodation recently.
The 14 single-occupancy dwellings will help make working in the north more attractive for single people as they will no longer need to share accommodation.
“It will also help us expand our services in the region,” said Kim Veiwasevanavanua, Executive General Manager North.

Promoting child literacy in the Torres

The Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service’s speech pathology service on Thursday Island has been helping spread the literacy message across the region.
Thursday Island-based senior speech pathologist Lauren Reardon recently joined speech pathologist colleagues from Education Queensland and the State Library of Queensland to promote the importance of encouraging language and literacy in a child’s first five years of life.
A professional development workshop was held on Thursday Island for organisations which worked with families and children aged five and under.
Lauren said the workshop was undertaken as part of the State Library of Queensland’s First 5 Forever initiative.
First 5 Forever is a Queensland family literacy initiative delivered by public libraries with the primary aim of providing strong literacy foundations for all children aged 0-5 years.
Lauren said the workshop considered language and emergent literacy strategies for five year olds and under, as well as community action planning on how to get the family literacy message out to local communities.
Workshop participants included staff from Ngulaig Meta (the Torres Shire Council Library), Torres Strait Island Regional Council and the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council.
Participants made their own movie of the workshop – available on YouTube – to share learnings from the workshop with their communities.
Watch the workshop video on You Tube https://youtu.be/njZEV2sJnZQ
Treaty awareness visit to Saibai & Boigu

Dr Tony Brown, Director of Medical Services (North), joined Torres Strait and PNG representatives in a community consultation visit to Boigu and Saibai Islands in June.

The group included councillors from PNG villages Sigabadura, Mabaduan and Buzi/Ber. Each visit entailed a discussion with the councillors from the islands behind closed doors and then an open community forum.

Health topics discussed included the risk associated with Torres Strait Islanders staying overnight in PNG and vice versa; issues associated with the transport of PNG nationals with health issues to Daru; the pressing need created by the poverty and poor health care systems in PNG; and the need for the people of the Torres Strait and PNG to respect the Treaty free movements.

Dr Brown discussed the great work of our Indigenous Health Workers and Remote Area Nurse on Saibai Island and Boigu Island. He made special mention of Mrs Vera Auda on Boigu Island.

“Mrs Auda does great work done at considerable personal cost for years in managing the cross border flow of PNG nationals and their health issues,” said Dr Brown.

The group included Cr Getano Lui (Jnr) AM; TSIRC Councillor Yam Island, Mr Jerry Stephen; TSRA Board Member, Mr Willie Wigness - Australian Federal Police Special Member; Fiona Pemberton - Manager, Australian Border Force; and, Lyndon Peddell - Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

Victoria meets with midwives in Canada

Victoria Cluff, Clinical Midwifery Educator, attended the International confederation of midwives conference in Toronto, Canada recently. The conference highlighted current research in women’s, maternal and neonatal care. Victoria said that she made some valuable professional contacts, particularly with some Australian universities in relation to supporting midwifery students and supporting graduate midwives who may enter our health service.

“The conference was incredibly inspiring and provided me with greater perspective, particularly the speech by Kate Gilmore, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, about the impact of midwifery and how midwives can make a difference to the rights of women worldwide,” said Victoria.

Library support

In May the Library and Knowledge Centre created a quiz that highlighted some of the many achievements Torres and Cape HHS staff have enjoyed over the past year. We also invited staff to share with us the reasons why they celebrate at work, and received submissions that exemplified our staff’s commitment to PD, research and patient care. Thanks to everyone who joined in!
The Regional eHealth Project (ReHP) has continued to visit healthcare facilities across the Torres and Cape region, with recent trips to Thursday Island, Saibai Island, Yam Island, Cooktown, Hope Vale and Bamaga in June.

The new electronic health record system means access to a single clinical record for each of your patients. This means you will be able to see previous progress notes about the patient, even if they were treated in another facility within Torres and Cape HHS or Cairns and Hinterland HHS. You will also be able to see what medications they might already be taking.

Tabetha Cox, the Clinical Subject Matter Expert for the ReHP, said the new system will make reviewing information about a patient much easier.

“I have worked as a Remote Area Nurse in the Northern Territory and I know how useful an electronic system can be for accessing patient information,” she said.

“An important part of this is having electronic medications management. This will help to reduce the number of medication errors, the number of clinical incidents and the number of adverse events. We also expect an improvement in the management of patient recalls.”

The information gathered by the team so far has been very useful for planning the next stage of the project, but it has also helped to identify additional benefits for patients having an electronic health record shared across our region.

For more information on the ReHP, visit their QHEPS site or email regionalehealthproject@health.qld.gov.au

Updated Emergency Guidelines

The updated Rural and Remote Emergency Service Standardised Guidelines have been approved by the Director General, Michael Walsh, and are now available at http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/rrcsu/html/emer-stand-guide.htm

The guidelines provide best practice, standardised information in relation to emergency equipment, resuscitation trolleys and procedural kits. The Rural and Remote Clinical Support Unit is also working with the expert reference group to develop a new guideline on first responder kits or retrieval packs.

These guidelines were initially developed in 2011 to standardise a range of emergency equipment as an initiative to achieve a safer journey through rural and remote emergency services. The guidelines have specifically been developed for facilities with Emergency Services at Level 1 and 2 under the current Clinical Services Capability Framework throughout Queensland.

The guidelines were developed in collaboration with a leading expert Reference Group with broad experience in rural and remote environments, retrieval medicine, emergency medicine and supporting rural networks. The Rural and Remote Clinical Support Unit would like thank networks and representatives for their tireless in-kind support over the last 16 months.

To assist rural and remote clinicians the Rural and Remote Clinical Support Unit have also produced documents to support governance of the emergency equipment; checklists and equipment ordering forms.

Please visit Rural and Remote Clinical Support Unit QHEPS site to view the Guidelines documentation or to answer any questions in our Q&A section.
There are some fresh faces in the Northern Peninsula Area Mental Health, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs (MHATODS) team. Welcome to Simone Aniba - the new Child and Youth Community Support Worker; Angus Stead-Acting Child and Youth Mental Health Clinician; and Nicole Murphy-Adult Mental Health Clinician.

The team also has Yuriko Ah Boo as the administration officer, Barbara Mudu as the Advanced Indigenous Health Worker, and Tolowa Nona as the ATODS Community Support Worker.

The team have been busy in the community engaging with services, clients, organisations and schools to promote and support Mental Health, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug related issues.

The team have recently hosted a free BBQ at the Touch Football grand finale, promoted smoking prevention at NPA college, assisted with health check-ups in community and have some other exciting events planned for the rest of the year.

The team can be contacted on 4090 4270.

Above: The current ‘Mental Health, Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs’ Team in the NPA with their visiting Child Psychiatrist. From left: Simone Aniba, Angus Stead, Nicole Murphy, Tolowa Nona, Yuriko Ah Boo, Barbara Mudu, Judy Skalicky and Dr Maree Ploetz.

A return to Hope Vale

Above: Lesley Reid, the new Director of Nursing at Hope Vale, lived in the community as a child.

As a child, Lesley Reid remembers being taken to the Hope Vale Primary Health Care Centre for health checks by the local nurse. Nearly 40 years on, Ms Reid is back at Hope Vale PHCC.

But this time, she is the new Director of Nursing. Ms Reid grew up at Hope Vale when it was still a Lutheran mission and her father was the stock manager. For her, it’s been a homecoming as she still has many friends in the community and her mother is retired and living there.

And some of her former classmates at school are now also health workers at the primary health care centre.

Lesley remembers a particular old mango tree that still remains in the community.

“It was once one of a group of five mango trees that were there when I was five years old back in 1974,” Ms Reid remembers.

“I used to walk past those mango trees on my way to school every morning, thinking what am I going to be when I grow up?

“I used to look at the old hospital and think, I know, I’m going to be a nurse!”

And a nurse is what she became.

“When I was young in Hope Vale, every morning at school we used to get a piece of cheese, a multivitamin tablet and a glass of powdered milk drink,” she said.

“Health care has come a long way since then and I’m very keen to ensure Hope Vale residents have access to the best possible health care and most modern health practices.

“Caring for people is my passion and now I’m here caring for my old community. It’s been quite a journey.”

Left: Nicole Murphy and Angus Stead at the Touch Footy Comp.
Allied health at under 8’s day

Fiona Crouch (Social Worker), Kiah Peterie (Dietician), Corina Billingham (Podiatrist) and Catherine Clarke (Occupational Therapist) represented the Torres and Cape HHS Northern Allied Health team at the recent under 8’s day on Thursday Island.

The theme was Country to Coast, which involved an obstacle course which the kids participated in. All starting with ‘Shearing the sheep’ the kids then weaved their way over ‘country’ stopping at different stations for an activity before moving on to the next station.

Each activity integrated knowledge or a skill which is required for kids to grow into happy and healthy adults - from gross and fine motor, language comprehension, health kai kai and disability awareness. This was an opportunity to showcase the skills and the promotion of Allied Health to community and parents.

New speech pathologist for Eastern Cape

Welcome to Mia Hosking, one of three speech pathologists in the Torres and Cape HHS.

Mia will be based in Cooktown and will provide services to Wujal Wujal, Hope Vale, Coen, Laura and Lockhart River. The other two speech pathologists are based at Thursday Island and Weipa.

Speech pathologists can offer services in both communication and swallowing.

“We diagnose and treat communication difficulties in the areas of speech, language, fluency/stuttering and voice. People can have communication trouble at any age, from young children with delays in learning to talk and use language, to older people having trouble communicating after a stroke, with dementia or other conditions,” said Mia.

Speech pathologists also diagnose and manage swallowing difficulties in all ages. From bubs having trouble suckling and children who are fussy eaters, up to older people who might have trouble eating and drinking as a result of a stroke or other condition. It is important to manage swallowing problems as food and drink can go down the wrong way and potentially cause aspiration pneumonia.

If you are interested in referring a client, please email Mia at TCHHSEastSpeechPathology@health.qld.gov.au

Submissions

Please email submissions to: TCHHS-comms-media@health.qld.gov.au
Photos of people need to be accompanied by a signed photo consent form
Phone: Heather Robertson: 4226 5974