



Northern Queensland Primary Health Network

Annual Report

2019-20



» Read about the Break It Down project on page 10



Australian Government
Department of Health

phn
NORTHERN QUEENSLAND

An Australian Government Initiative



Northern Queensland Primary Health Network acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Nation Peoples and the Traditional Custodians of this land.

We respect their continued cultural and spiritual connection to country, waters, kin, and community.

We also pay our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging as the custodians of knowledge and lore.

We are committed to making a valued contribution to the wellbeing of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of northern Queensland.

This annual report is interactive!

Throughout NQPHN's 2019-20 Annual Report, you will see various QR codes.

These codes link sections of our Annual Report to additional information and other projects we have worked on throughout the year.



Download a free QR code scanner app, scan the codes, and you will be taken to the relevant video/webpage.

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network Annual Report 2019-20

Published by Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN), November 2020.

NQPHN acknowledges the financial and other support of the Australian Government Department of Health.

NQPHN encourages feedback on the Annual Report. We would love to hear from you at:

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Message from the Chairperson

It is my pleasure to present Northern Queensland Primary Health Network's (NQPHN's) fifth Annual Report.

This report highlights outcomes and achievements of NQPHN, guided by the seven health priority areas determined by the PHN Program Performance and Quality Framework, and illustrates NQPHN's continued efforts to ensure North Queenslanders receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

I invite you to delve into *Our Region, Our People* human interest stories in this report, which reflect NQPHN's focus on improving the holistic wellbeing of our residents within their communities. The stories also speak to our connection with individuals and their communities.

As we celebrated our fifth year of operation, NQPHN secured international standard ISO: 9001 accreditation for quality, underpinning a core value of NQPHN to continually improve our practices and assure quality in all that we do.

In the 2019-20 financial year, NQPHN developed and adopted a suite of strategic documents which outline its commitment to using an integrated, place-based, life-course, and outcomes-focused approach to commissioning. Those strategies and the supporting implementation plans will guide and support our investments to better meet the needs of individuals and communities in North Queensland and ensure evidence-based, transparent decision-making. The Strategic Investment Framework, Health Outcomes Framework, and Stakeholder Engagement Framework will be embedded in NQPHN's daily operations and will be subject of regular review to ensure and maintain alignment with the needs of the organisation and the communities it serves.

On Wednesday 11 September 2019, the Queensland Primary Health Networks (PHNs) joined with the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) to sign an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Canberra at the National PHN Conference. It is the first of this type of agreement in Australia between a peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisation and multiple PHNs and is based on shared principles, mutual recognition, supporting future collaboration between the two parties to collectively work to improve the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples in Queensland.

This year, North Queensland, just like the rest of the world, was required to quickly and professionally address the very real challenges posed by the global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. NQPHN quickly established a COVID-19 Response Team, which collaborated with our stakeholders to establish GP respiratory clinics throughout the region, distribute personal protective equipment, and act as a key conduit and source of information for healthcare providers and our communities. The way NQPHN staff and North Queensland communities worked together, supported each other, and adapted to the constantly evolving circumstances during the pandemic is a source of pride and provides excellent learning opportunities to inform preparedness for future unforeseen crises. You can read more about NQPHN's COVID-19 response on pages 14-15 of this report.

2019-2020 has presented more than its fair share of challenges and in each instance, NQPHN has committed a professional, considered, and timely response to demonstrate its role in community and more broadly, in northern Queensland. On reflection, we have been agile, dynamic, and flexible – all traits of a successful, future-ready organisation.

I extend sincere and heartfelt thanks to our Board, all of our staff, and stakeholders for their demonstrated commitment to improve access to high-quality primary health care for North Queenslanders. Our ability to improve the wellbeing of our residents is informed and reinforced by their remarkable efforts and sustained commitment.

It is with confidence and enthusiasm that I look forward to the next year of focused innovation, effort, and collaboration to achieve our vision of helping northern Queenslanders live happier, healthier, longer lives.



Nick Loukas
Chairperson
NQPHN

Scan the QR code to
read the General Purpose
Financial Statements.



NQPHN highlights 2019–20

258 contracts executed across the region

With total expenditure and commitments of **\$74,368,182**



Mental Health

6,000+ referrals processed by Connect to Wellbeing across the region

1,200+ referrals to place-based and other funded mental health services

78 education and training events delivered to **1,216** participants

288 eBlasts/ eNewsletters distributed

86 Media releases and responses

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

24,980 Care Coordination services delivered
This number does not include the Supplementary or Clinical Services accessed.

12,557 Integrated Team Care (ITC) clients
Clients may be recorded more than once.

55 Indigenous outreach workers, Indigenous Health Project Officers, and Care Coordinators employed in the ITC programs

Facebook

225 Posts

Total post reach **287,611**

Average reach per post **1,278**

4,293 Followers

***NQPHN has the most Facebook followers out of all PHNs**

\$3,282 spent on advertising

NQPHN is also on:

LinkedIn Instagram Twitter YouTube

1,835 completed and live HealthPathways across the region

↑ 22% increase

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)

20 commissioned AOD services across the region

3,630 clients were provided an AOD service

Scan the QR code to view NQPHN's Strategic Plan.





Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) highlights

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network's (NQPHN's) commitment to reconciliation was realised with the release of the Reflect RAP in 2019. This has guided the organisation during the first year of its reconciliation journey by outlining clear steps to scope reconciliation and prepare reconciliation initiatives for successive RAPs.

During the 2019-20 financial year, NQPHN submitted its Innovate RAP (2020-22) to Reconciliation Australia – the next step in NQPHN's reconciliation journey, which involves exploring NQPHN's vision for reconciliation, our sphere of influence, and committing to specific actions and initiatives that enable NQPHN to aspire and innovate.



Scoping reconciliation – process of reflection

- » 100% staff participation in cultural safety training.
- » 97% staff participation in NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week activities.
- » 97% of staff acknowledged the importance of a culturally competent workplace.
- » 79% increase in awareness of reconciliation due to the Reflect RAP.
- » 50% of staff envisioned opportunities which drive reconciliation in the workplace.
- » Staff yarns and survey determined NQPHN's reconciliation reflection process.

Call to action

The inclusion of culturally responsive criteria was specified by staff in the commissioning process.



Action in progress

The inclusion of a Cultural Safety Clause in contracts is a work in progress involving extensive consultation and collaboration between NQPHN's First Nations staff and First Nations stakeholders and providers.



RAP hub

A central internal site was created for all NQPHN staff to access extensive and relevant First Nations resources, news, and updates. Staff can utilise the site to advance their knowledge and to cultivate a culturally proficient workforce better prepared to develop and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.



Innovate RAP – implementing reconciliation (2020-22)

The next step in the reconciliation process, Innovate RAP is being finalised and will be launched in September 2020.



Scan the QR code to read NQPHN's Innovate RAP.

ANNUAL NQPHN YOUNG INDIGENOUS ART AWARDS 2020



About the awards

The NQPHN Board of Directors launched its third annual NQPHN Indigenous Youth Art Competition in 2020.

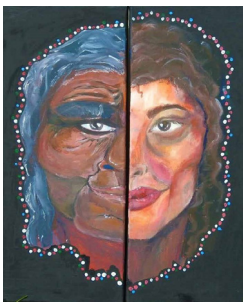
The competition is an opportunity for NQPHN to recognise young, talented Indigenous artists across North Queensland as part of the organisation's commitment to support Indigenous youth, and a meaningful pathway towards inclusion of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In 2020, the competition—based on the theme of 'regeneration'—saw some inspirational artwork submitted by young local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artists between the ages of 13-21 years across the NQPHN region.



Scan the QR code to view previous winning artworks.

2020 WINNERS



First place: Varni Nona

Artwork title: Generations

Materials: Acrylic on canvas.

Meaning: Generations is a diptych painting depicting two different faces to make a whole. The contrast in faces shows the struggles they've experienced and their resilience to keep smiling and be happy for themselves and their people.



Second place: Alkira Geia

Artwork title: Stream to the future

Materials: Oil on canvas.

Meaning: Stream to the future represents the artist's connection to family and ancestors and how they are all connected by the circle of life. The turtles portray her ancestors guiding her on the right path.



Third place: Stacey Edwards

Artwork title: In the shadow of COVID

Materials: Spray paint, oil and soft pastel, newspaper, and charcoal on canvas.

Meaning: In the Shadow of COVID focuses on a nurse's role during coronavirus and conveys the nurse's heroic status and the fear of the unknown.



Our health priority areas in 2019–20

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) aims to improve health outcomes for all by working with GPs, pharmacists, dentists, nurses, allied health professionals, secondary care providers, hospitals, and the wider community. NQPHN responds to the health needs of its region while being guided by the National PHN Performance and Quality Framework's seven priority areas (pictured right) for targeted work.

The main outcomes within each of these priority areas is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of primary health services, and to improve coordination of care to ensure people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

NQPHN responds to the health needs of its region while being guided by the priority areas for targeted work and national priorities, as decided by the Australian Government.



Scan the QR code to read the full framework document.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Key outcomes

- ✓ Improved health literacy through the Mossman Healthy Lifeskills Program, a collaboration with Mossman Multipurpose Hospital and Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service. The program provides straightforward, culturally appropriate, and gender specific education and activities to empower local Indigenous residents to make healthy lifestyle choices and prevent chronic disease. The program promotes health screening and links participants with general practice and broader health services, supporting integration with referral pathways and access to telehealth appointments.
- ✓ Increased collaboration, inclusiveness, and support between healthcare providers to implement improved primary health care for First Nations residents in the Mackay region through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network Integration and Capacity Building project, including the establishment of:
 - » the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Providers Working Group with Traditional Custodian representation
 - » the Health Worker Network to build linkages and collaboration with Aboriginal Medical Services, resulting in increased referrals for client care.
- ✓ Collaborated with CheckUP to develop improved access and pathways to a range of eye health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in North Queensland. This initiative involved the purchase of new equipment and training to upskill Indigenous health workers, nursing staff, and general practitioners in eye health to provide a more integrated network of eye health services.
- ✓ Increased capability and capacity of Palm Island Primary Health Care Centre, in collaboration with Townsville Hospital and Health Service and Palm Island Community Company, to provide Palm Island residents with improved primary health care through:
 - » development of core operational business systems and resources to progress primary health service integration on Palm Island
 - » consultation and collaboration with key agencies and departments to support the Palm Island Health Action Plan and transition to a community-controlled organisation
 - » delivery of a series of workshops for administration staff to define functions and develop effective medical administration systems and processes
 - » delivery of a series of workshops with health worker staff to define scope of practice and role clarity in the context of the model of care
 - » identifying training needs of the centre's workforce through Clinical Competency Assessments and facilitating subsequent upskilling opportunities.



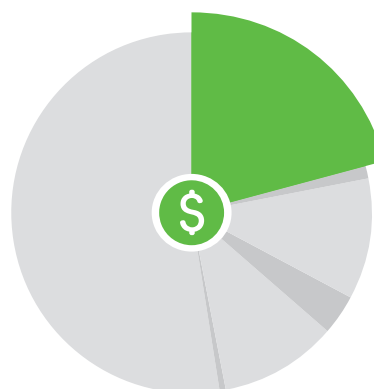
NQPHN staff take part in NAIDOC week celebrations in Cairns



Integrated Team Care (ITC) and allied health workshop for the Torres Strait and Cape York regions

Expenditure

\$12,448,224



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health priority area.



Meet Ciolla

OUR REGION,
our people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth 'Break It Down' for personal empowerment and mental wellbeing

Disengaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in North Queensland have been given the opportunity to showcase their talents and break down the stigma around mental health through the 'Break It Down' project.

Delivered by Desert Pea Media (DPM) and funded by Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN), the project delivered mental health literacy to five North Queensland communities - Kuranda, Palm Island, Bowen, Thursday Island, and Lockhart River.

The project facilitated inter-generational conversations to break down stigma around mental health, grief and trauma, substance addiction, and encouraged positive social change in a safe, culturally appropriate, and positive environment.

Delivered over five days in each location, the program used song writing and video production workshops as a pathway to encourage participants to use their voice, connect with their cultural identity, and to raise awareness of the importance of improving and achieving positive health outcomes.

The first location visited during the project was Kuranda. Families within the community were experiencing conflict which was negatively affecting the mental health of young people in the community.

Ciolla Riley, a participant in Kuranda, was identified by DPM for her potential to engage and support others and was invited to assist in the facilitation of the program as a mentor in two other communities.

On Palm Island and Thursday Island, Ciolla applied her first-hand understanding and experience to build connections with other participants, provide support, and empower them to yarn, share, and grow.

"I went to Palm Island and Thursday Island as a mentor and it felt really deadly to be a part of and to



Ciolla (right) with other project participants during filming in Kuranda

know that videos and positivity was something that I helped to create," said Ciolla.

"I got to be a part of building up the participants' confidence during the filming and encouraged them to use their voice. I hope I achieved that in some sort of way.

"I put myself out of my comfort zone and I felt like I was leading something really special.

"I could see the other kids were feeling really proud of what they were creating - a really different kind of proud feeling, you know?"

Since participating in the Break It Down project, Ciolla has returned to her community where she continues to be a strong role model and is proud of her responsibility to her friends, family, and community.

By bringing together young people through the Break It Down project, the Kuranda community has been able to start their healing process and journey towards living happier, healthier, longer lives. Community members have had additional open discussions around mental health issues, with disclosures of mental illnesses being referred to appropriate services and supports so the individual could receive the right care, at the right place, at the right time.

Three of the five music and film productions produced by Desert Pea Media as part of this project were announced as National Indigenous Music Awards 2020 finalists in the category of Community Clip of the Year, with the video from Kuranda, 'Djbuganydji Bama' taking first prize.



Scan the QR code to watch the Break It Down project films.

Aged Care

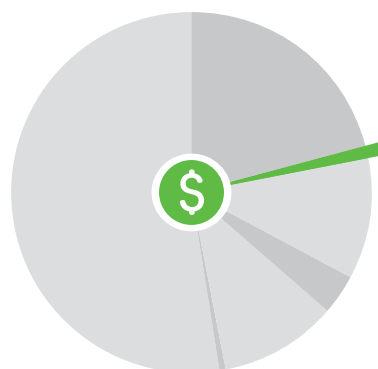
Key outcomes

- ✓ Reduced avoidable emergency department presentations of Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) residents in the Mackay region by collaborating with Mackay Hospital and Health Service (HHS) to develop the Emergency and Community Connect (ECC) telehealth project.
- ✓ Developed the Older Persons Enablement and Rehabilitation for Complex Health Conditions (OPEN ARCH) model of care in collaboration with Cairns and Hinterland HHS and Torres and Cape HHS to improve quality of life for older residents in the Cairns region.
- ✓ Increased health worker's understanding of the impacts of dementia through interactive virtual reality workshops to assist the development of support plans, enabling people living with dementia, and their carers, to live more confidently.
- ✓ Improved care pathways, understanding, and death literacy and increased capacity to deliver palliative care support to consumers through collaboration with Connecting End of Life Care (CELC) in Townsville.

- ✓ Increased access to prevention and early identification services and psychological therapies for RACF residents who experienced moderate mental health conditions.
- ✓ Worked collaboratively with Townsville HHS through the Integrated Care Innovation Fund to develop service models for primary care in RACFs.

Expenditure

\$785,886



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Aged Care priority area.



Digital Health

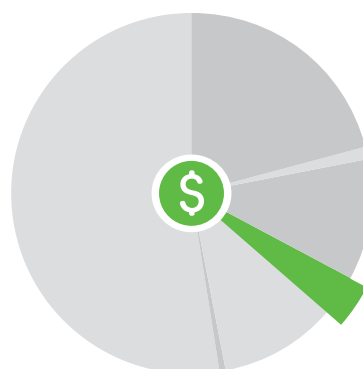
Key outcomes

- ✓ Increased use of HealthPathways amongst primary health care providers throughout the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) region, to better connect residents to the right care, in the right place, at the right time.
- ✓ Collaborated with *healthdirect* to connect general practices with free telehealth platform Video Call during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- ✓ Developed a PowerBI data dashboard concept to improve reporting efficiencies for general practices regarding Practice Incentive Program Quality Improvement (PIP QI) measures and key quality improvement benchmarks.
- ✓ Improved patient health literacy through the implementation of customisable content distribution platform GoShare. Over 7,000 content items were sent to individuals in the region from primary health care providers, with an engagement rate of 27 per cent.

- ✓ Increased the number of uploads by primary health care providers to My Health Record.

Expenditure

\$2,101,743



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Digital Health priority area.



Meet Emma

Student-led community rehabilitation and lifestyle service in Cape York

James Cook University (JCU) fourth-year Occupational Therapy student Emma Sarovich is passionate about making a difference to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in North Queensland, and it is through a student-led community rehabilitation and lifestyle service in Cape York where Emma is leaving a positive mark.

The service, facilitated by JCU in collaboration with Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN), engages allied health students on clinical placements to deliver sustainable individual and group rehabilitation in remote communities.

In late 2019, Emma travelled to Weipa and Napranum to participate in the service on a seven-week placement as part of her degree, staying an additional week to collect data for her associated honours research project based on how First Nations residents benefit from participating in culturally appropriate, safe, and relevant services.

“These services can go a long way in terms of closing the gap and promoting the most positive health and wellbeing outcomes for participants,” Emma said.

“I really believe that other communities would certainly benefit from a similar service.”

The service provides an opportunity for allied health clinicians, Indigenous rehabilitation assistants, and students to extend much needed physical, emotional, and social support to individuals, particularly older people to support healthy ageing in community.

It also provides upskilling opportunities to existing staff, while students gain valuable experience learning directly from clients about disability and disease, community, communication, and culture.

“The functional gains are one thing, but the psycho-emotional wellbeing component of the program was where I saw the most impact, which was reflected in the interviews that I conducted with the participants for my research,” said Emma.

Emma recalls one client in particular, a Tjungndji woman called Zoe, who experienced a stroke 15 years ago which left her unable to use one arm.

OUR REGION,
our people



Emma and Zoe bonded over crocheting

Consequently, she missed out on activities she enjoyed. Emma worked one-on-one with Zoe and found that Zoe loved crocheting and beading.

“I made a little piece of assisted technology that allowed Zoe to crochet one-handed, then taught her how to use it for basic crocheting,” Emma said.

“Zoe got this real sense of achievement and connection to an activity that was meaningful to her and that gave her independence.

“It formed a mutual trust and respect between us. I was primarily leading the group activities, and because she had that positive relationship with me, she was then engaging in the group activities more, whereas she wasn’t prior to that.”

In her interviews with participants after her placement in Weipa, Emma was pleased to find that participants enjoyed being a part of the service.

“It was basically all positive feedback that I received. There is a really positive environment where people get along well, they chat to each other, and they sit down and have a yarn. It was an overall positive experience for the participants,” Emma said.

The success of the program will see the student-led service model expanded further north to provide allied health support services to Mapoon residents, helping them to live happier, healthier, longer lives.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the student-led rehabilitation and lifestyle service.

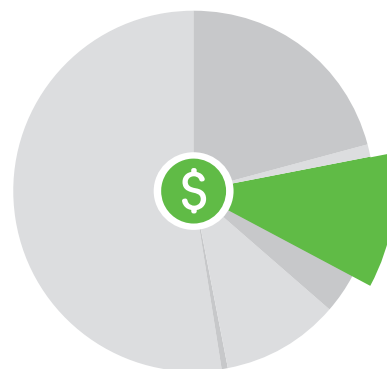


Alcohol and Other Drugs

Key outcomes

- ✔ Increased alcohol and other drug (AOD) support for young people in remote communities across the Cape York and Torres Strait regions through the Remote Alcohol and Drug Interventions and Outcomes (RADIO) program, run by Youth Empowered Towards Independence (YETI). The program offers evidence-based AOD treatments and interventions that focus on holistic support for young people and building connections with family and community.
- ✔ Increased access to evidence-based alcohol and other drug withdrawal support through additional funding for the Salvation Army AOD Treatment Services in Townsville. The program consists of withdrawal management, group therapy, and residential AOD treatment, and works collaboratively with Townsville University Hospital. The funding was used to secure additional resources and staff to expand detoxification services and increase the number of beds available to individuals in need.
- ✔ Collaborated with Community Services Tablelands, Lives Lived Well, and Northern Australia Primary Health Limited (NAPHL) to provide culturally appropriate, responsive, and integrated AOD treatment services to disengaged young people, including outreach services to youth detention centres.
- ✔ Collaborated with Queensland Injectors Health Network, Ngoonbi Community Services Indigenous Corporation, and Community Services Tablelands to provide evidence-based AOD treatment services for residents in Cairns, Kuranda, and the Tablelands region.
- ✔ Increased the AOD workforce capacity and coordination of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector and Aboriginal Medical Services through collaboration with Gindaja Treatment and Healing Indigenous Corporation, Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service to improve service delivery in Yarrabah, Palm Island, and Mackay regions.
- ✔ Increased access to localised, holistic, high-quality, and coordinated mental health and addiction services for residents in Cooktown, Hopevale, Wujal Wujal, and Laura through the appointment of a rural generalist. A Cooktown-based Queensland Opiate Treatment Program (QOTP) was also established, reducing the need for Cooktown residents to travel to Cairns for treatment.
- ✔ Collaborated with the St Vincent de Paul Society to increase support for individuals, families, and carers waiting to access continuing support following residential AOD treatment.
- ✔ Consulted with communities and providers on the needs and challenges of AOD service delivery in the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) region to inform a joint regional plan for alcohol and other drugs, mental health, and suicide prevention and enable the design of responsive and appropriate models of care.

Expenditure \$6,477,854



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Alcohol and Other Drugs priority area.



Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) response

The Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) COVID-19 Response Team was officially established in mid-March 2020 as the organisation's coordinated response to the evolving global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The team consisted of a Medical Policy Advisor, Project Manager, Communications Advisor, Aged and Community Care Specialist, a Program Officer, and a Logistics and Administration Officer, working in collaboration with other NQPHN staff and the healthcare sector in North Queensland.

Embedded within the broader strategic pandemic management principles of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, the team focused on four key pillars in its response efforts:

- » communication
- » coordination
- » community
- » workforce.

Key outcomes

- ✔ Played a key role in helping to establish six GP-led respiratory clinics across the region, in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Charters Towers, and the Whitsundays. Funded by the Australian Government, these clinics assessed, tested (if needed), and treated North Queensland residents and tourists who experienced mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms – at no cost to the patient.
- ✔ The Australian Department of Health provided NQPHN with a supply of surgical face masks to distribute to general practices, Aboriginal

Medical Services, and pharmacies across the region. As of 30 June 2020, NQPHN had supplied 51,000 surgical face masks, fulfilling 1,020 separate requests from primary healthcare providers.

- ✔ Coordinated the distribution of flu vaccinations to 440 aged care staff across the region following advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all residential aged care staff and visiting workers should be vaccinated by 1 May 2020.
- ✔ Launched the 'Our Mob to Your Mob' COVID-19 health campaign for First Nations people in our region. Led by NQPHN's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and tying in with National Reconciliation Week 2020, the campaign delivered key messages to Indigenous residents reinforcing the importance of good personal hygiene, cough etiquette, physical distancing, and protecting themselves and their mob.
- ✔ Collaborated with Townsville City Council and Sun Metals to provide a free donation of medical grade hand sanitiser to more than 50 general practices in the Townsville region.
- ✔ Acted as a key conduit and source of information for healthcare providers and the community throughout the response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, collaborating with federal, state, and local government, as well as non-government organisations, on delivering key messages relating to the virus through a variety of communication channels.

Highlights



35,000+ page views on NQPHN COVID-19 web pages



95,960 people reached through 29 COVID-19 related posts



1,902 people presented at GP Respiratory Clinics



36 practices registered for Telehealth platform



81 COVID-19 updates sent to GPs, pharmacists, and aged and community care



51,000 units of surgical face masks and 1,020 PPE requests despatched by NQPHN to healthcare providers

Meet Dr Chris Gill

OUR REGION,
our people

Affinity Family Medical, Whitsundays

North Queenslanders are used to surviving emergencies, whether it be fires, floods, or cyclones. For Whitsunday-based GP Dr Chris Gill, the opportunity to help the community fight a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic was too good to pass up.

In February 2020, Dr Gill was putting the finishing touches to the official opening of his first general practice - Affinity Family Medical - when Prime Minister Scott Morrison confirmed the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak would become a pandemic.

This led to an immediate opportunity for Dr Gill and his team to work with NQPHN on the establishment of the Whitsunday Respiratory Clinic, located close to his newly-opened practice in Cannonvale.

The respiratory clinic is funded by the Australian Government to assess, test (if needed), and treat North Queensland residents who experience mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms.

Dr Gill, who has lived in North Queensland with his family for almost 20 years, is passionate about protecting the health of the wider community.

"Like everyone else, we saw COVID-19 unfolding on our TV screens, in Europe, China, and North America, and I knew it was going to hit us," said Dr Gill.

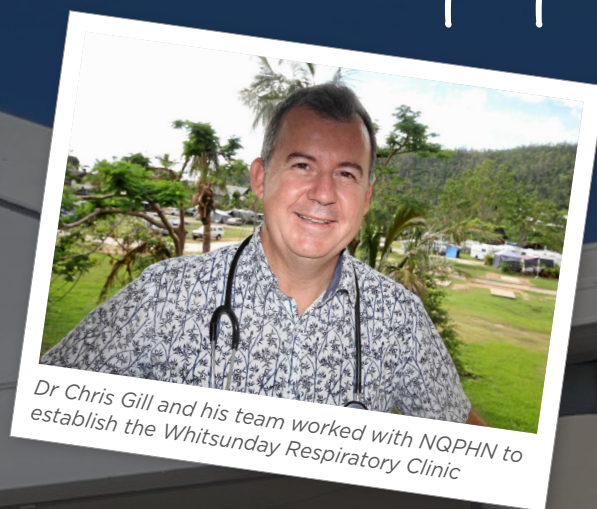
"The virus has its own agenda, it will move with people as the borders open and we need to be ready.

"To run the Whitsunday Respiratory Clinic was the perfect opportunity as our clinic is GP-led, utilising experienced GPs and nurses, and we're locals - we get the rural context which makes a difference."

Dr Gill, a former remote area nurse, has had a varied medical career, working in Cape York, Arnhem Land, and the Kimberley, and gaining his clinical qualifications through the rural generalist pathway.

He was proud that the Whitsunday Respiratory Clinic was one of more than 100 respiratory clinics set up around Australia to fight COVID-19.

"The whole idea of GP-led respiratory clinics isn't just about getting a swab, but assessing respiratory function in anyone with mild to moderate symptoms - they could have pneumonia, asthma, or heart failure - it's our job to look after them," Dr Gill said.



Dr Chris Gill and his team worked with NQPHN to establish the Whitsunday Respiratory Clinic

"As well as testing for COVID-19, every week at the respiratory clinic we're seeing children and adults with pneumonia and asthma or even heart failure, and starting treatment to take the pressure off the hospital system and other GPs.

"At the respiratory clinic, we're able to see people with mild and moderate symptoms, and in some cases we've transferred people to hospital because they're very sick, but we're doing it in a safe way and protecting our patients, staff, and GP colleagues who are sending them to us.

"If we can detect COVID-19 early on, then that's what it's all about. We can start that early surveillance, and help with contact tracing, and therefore minimise the impact of the virus.

"It's been completely uncharted territory for us, but I think we're meeting the brief set out to us by the Australian Government. We're glad to be a part of the response efforts."

Dr Gill said Whitsunday Respiratory Clinic's main aim is to provide people with access to face-to-face primary health care, so that their respiratory symptoms can be assessed and treated, and if needed, be tested for COVID-19.

"This is our town, and whether they're locals or tourists, we want to provide a service that's safe for the Whitsundays - that's what we're about."

Scan the QR code to find more COVID-19 resources.



Meet Damon

OUR REGION, our people

'Better Off With You' suicide prevention initiative

Damon has achieved many successes in his life, but has also faced his share of challenges. Through the 'Better Off With You' suicide prevention campaign pilot, developed by SANE Australia in partnership with Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN), Damon was able to share his story with hope to inspire others to seek the support they need.

An elite wheelchair basketballer for Mackay, Damon was born with spina bifida and has endured over 90 operations in his life. He is also a two-time cancer survivor. It all caught up with Damon after years of bottling up his emotions, and he began to feel isolated, a burden to his loved ones, and felt like he couldn't speak up and ask for help.

Damon explained that he felt uncontrollable in his own mind and woke up one day and didn't want to be here anymore. It wasn't until he found strength and courage to seek help that he was able to get the support he needed to achieve wellness.



"You are put on this earth for a reason. The world is better off with you here." - Damon.



Damon shared his story in hope of inspiring others to seek the support they need.

"I was simply scared and did some things that very nearly ended my life," Damon said.

"I opened up that day. And for me, the day I opened up was the day I actually started living my life again.

"I'm no longer a burden to myself, and I no longer feel like I'm a burden to those around me. I have so much to live for now."

Damon now serves as a model for hope, helping others at risk to seek support and find their strength from within. He shared his story through the 'Better Off With You' suicide prevention campaign pilot targeting the Mackay, Whitsunday, and Isaac regions.

The six-week campaign, launched in January 2020 utilising online platforms and social media, used real stories of individuals with lived experience of a suicide attempt, suicidal thoughts and feelings, or a suicide loss. This innovative approach to the campaign was designed to reach out to people who may be feeling the same way, let them know that they are not alone, inspire hope, and encourage them to seek support.

Through the campaign, Damon has been able to share his advice and experience with others so they too can overcome their feelings of being a burden.

"Find ways to tell yourself that you are better off here. It's very hard when you are in a negative mindset, but a few little positive things can be a reason to live," said Damon.

"I can honestly say this is my biggest and proudest achievement to date. Thank you for allowing me to tell my story."

The campaign complements the work being undertaken in the Mackay region to deliver the Suicide Prevention Community Action Plan (SPCAP) and community-based suicide prevention and awareness programs, helping northern Queenslanders live happier, healthier, longer lives.



Scan the QR code to find out more about Damon's story.

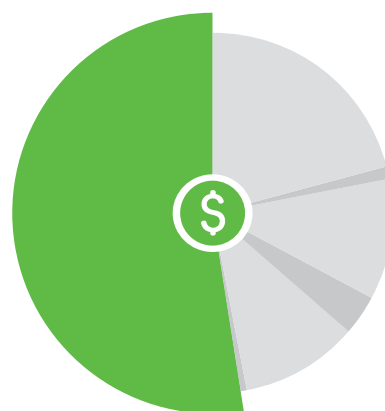
Mental Health

Key outcomes

- ✔ Improved access to appropriate, timely, and targeted mental health support for Townsville residents through the successful transition of 12 individual Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program (MHNIP) providers to one Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC) provider. The MHICC provider, North and West Remote Health (NWRH), operates as a hub across the region using the stepped care model.
- ✔ Facilitated the delivery of youth-relevant psychoeducation sessions to high school students in the Townsville region through YourTown's Kids Helpline @ High School program. The program supports the social and emotional learning curriculum, educating students on healthy relationships and positive messages about self-care, mental health, and wellbeing. COVID-19 related mental health support was also delivered via online learning platforms, focused on maintaining social connection during physical isolation and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- ✔ Established a service-level partnership with Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Service (TAIHS), Townsville University Hospital (TUH), and the Mental Health Service Group (MHSG) to develop a co-location model of care. The model enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between the ages of 18-65 years to receive mental health and psychiatric care that encompasses their cultural, social, emotional, physical, and mental health needs, through a culturally safe, respectful, and holistic primary health care approach.
- ✔ Collaborated with Wakai Waian Healing to provide residents of the Torres Strait with increased access to quality and culturally appropriate primary mental health services, both in-person and through technology-facilitated outreach. Wakai Waian Healing provides psychological therapies under Northern Queensland Primary Health Network's (NQPHN's) Mental Health Stepped Care framework and recognises cultural and social protocols as part of their clinical governance and practice. The project also aims to build capability and capacity of the local workforce and develop pathways and connections across consumers, services, and communities.
- ✔ Collaborated with SANE Australia to deliver the 'Better off With You' suicide prevention pilot campaign in the Mackay region, one of two trial sites. The campaign featured real stories of local people with lived experience of suicide and encouraged individuals to reach out and seek help.
- ✔ Developed a proactive social and emotional wellbeing model of care through early intervention via the Youth Psychological Services at NRL Cowboys House. The culturally appropriate program teaches young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants about resilience, caring for family and friends, mindfulness, physical health, and gratitude. The program assisted 326 young people and their families to improve their psychological wellbeing in the 2019-20 financial year.

Expenditure

\$31,281,943



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Mental Health priority area.



Operation Compass Suicide Prevention Project

Operation Compass

The Operation Compass Suicide Prevention Project is the only one of 12 federally funded National Suicide Prevention Trials focused on ex-Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families.

The project is facilitated by Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) in partnership with the Townsville Suicide Prevention Network and aims to reduce the rates of suicide and increase wellbeing within the ex-ADF community. The project's successful initiatives are being sustained through integration into long-term local veteran supports.

Key outcomes

- ✓ Educated 330 North Queensland community members on how to intervene if they encounter a person they believe may be suicidal through the Community Response to Eliminating Suicide (CORES) program. Six new program facilitators were also trained, and a culturally safe CORES program was developed.
- ✓ Reached over 1.5 million people through the #CheckYourMates community awareness campaign. The campaign challenges veterans and the wider community to check in on their mates, creating connection and encouraging those in need to seek mental health support. A total of 10 local events were held in Townsville, attended by over 1,000 residents, providing support and community connection.

- ✓ Developed Veterans' HealthPathways to assist primary health care providers to provide appropriate information, assessment, management, and referral to services for their veteran patients.
- ✓ Provided mental health support to veterans with complex care needs through the Open Arms community and peer program. The program involves lived experience peers working collaboratively with veterans, family supports, community agencies, and mental health clinicians. The peers draw on their own experiences to provide insights and walk side-by-side with the veteran through their wellness journey. The successful pilot program has been rolled out nationally through Open Arms.
- ✓ Facilitated meaningful engagement and increased connectedness amongst the veteran and wider Townsville community through the Community Grants initiative. The initiative assists to reduce isolation for individuals and increase awareness of resilience and wellness support available for veterans and their families.
- ✓ Provided wellbeing support to veterans in the Townsville region through the Healthcycle program. The program utilises group cycle classes followed by coffee catch-ups to provide psychosocial support to veterans. During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the classes were transformed to a digital format, with 50 virtual classes available for veterans at home.

Highlights



3 million+ people reached through the #CheckYourMates campaign



220,000+ reach on Facebook



375 people connected to the project



9,871 page views on the Operation Compass website



70+ partnerships with engaged organisations



45+ events held including MindFrame training and community events



Scan the QR code to learn more about the #CheckYourMates campaign.



20 community grants awarded worth \$500,000

Population Health

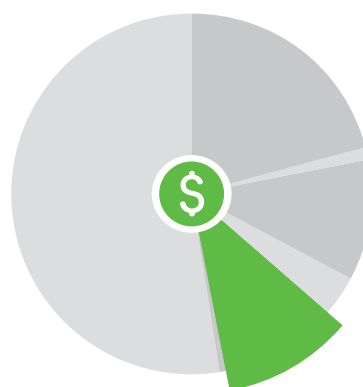
Key outcomes

- ✓ Educated school aged children in rural and remote communities about healthy eating, growing fruit and vegetables, and preparing healthy meals through the Northern Gulf Remote Kitchen Garden program.
- ✓ Collaborated with Diabetes Queensland to assist North Queenslanders in taking control of their own health through the following programs:
 - » *My health for life* designed to help Queenslanders stay well and lessen their risk of developing preventable chronic conditions
 - » BEAT IT Group exercise and education sessions to assist people living with diabetes to achieve a healthier and more active lifestyle.
- ✓ Increased physical activity rates through a collaboration with North Queensland Sports Foundation to provide residents with access to free group exercise programs.
- ✓ Collaborated with Apunipima Cape York Health Council to deliver the Baby One Program, providing culturally appropriate optimal family and infant nutrition messages to residents.

- ✓ Increased resident's knowledge of healthy eating through collaboration with the Good Foundation and Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food. The program was conducted virtually to teach participants how to prepare healthy meals on a budget during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Expenditure

\$6,231,954



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Population Health priority area.



Workforce

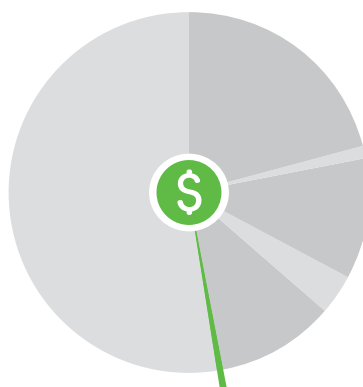
Key outcomes

- ✓ Identified opportunities for ongoing training for residential aged care facility (RACF) staff, to increase capacity to deliver comprehensive aged care and to reduce the need for after-hours services in the Cairns region.
- ✓ Provided education opportunities to improve primary health care workforce capability in:
 - » Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Practice Incentive Program Quality Improvement (PIP QI)
 - » RACGP *Standards for general practice* (5th edition)
 - » population health and digital literacy
 - » integrated care and patient team partnerships
 - » electronic prescribing.
- ✓ Collaborated with Health Workforce Queensland on the Allied Health Rural Workforce Enhancement Program in the Mackay region which resulted in an increase in the number, capacity, and scope of permanent allied health professionals in the region.

- ✓ Collaborated with Health Workforce Queensland on the Vocational Education and Training Workforce Optimisation Initiative, which resulted in improved primary health care workforce sustainability throughout North Queensland.

Expenditure

\$412,120



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Workforce priority area.



Townsville and North West Queensland flood recovery

In 2019, Townsville and the North West of our region was tested with a severe flooding event which had devastating impacts on the lives and livelihoods of many of our residents.

Over the months that followed, Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) worked collaboratively with providers to increase capacity and expand mental health and primary health care services for those experiencing the longer term impacts of the event.

Key outcomes

- ✔ Provided additional one-off funding to the existing Townsville Suicide Prevention Community Action Plan contract to increase capacity for flood recovery and suicide prevention activities. This resulted in increased support and improved coordination of services for flood affected residents.
- ✔ Improved mental wellbeing and resilience among children and their supporting adults through collaboration with the Cowboys Community Foundation on school-based program *The Resilience Project*.
- ✔ Collaborated with Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) and On the Line to expand online and phone mental health support service NQ Connect to flood affected regions. There was a total of 1,018 flood recovery related visits to the NQ Connect website.
- ✔ Collaborated with Connect to Wellbeing to increase access to psychological therapies for flood affected residents experiencing mild to moderate mental health conditions.
- ✔ Increased psychoeducation support for flood affected residents in Townsville through collaboration with Life Giving Psychology and Coaching. Three evidence-based psychoeducation group programs were run over six weeks, teaching participants skills to manage distress, how to take care of their mental wellbeing, and cope with post-disaster stress and adversity.
- ✔ Assisted five flood-affected Local Government Areas (LGAs) to manage their own recovery needs through Community Grants, including:
 - » Townsville City Council
 - » Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council
 - » Charters Towers Regional Council
 - » Flinders Shire Council
 - » Richmond Shire Council.
- ✔ Collaborated with Connect to Wellbeing to increase Intake, Assessment, Triage, and Referral (IATR) resources to manage the increased need for mental health services in the affected region.
- ✔ Collaborated with North and West Remote Health (NWRH) to increase place-based psychological therapies and promote help-seeking behaviours amongst residents in the Richmond and Flinders Shires.
- ✔ Collaborated with WQPHN to fund low intensity service McKay Patrol Support Workers. The service provided community support, primary mental health assessments, and mental health first aid to residents in the McKinlay, Winton, Richmond, and Flinders shires.



Scan the QR code to see the available supports from Connect to Wellbeing

Governance and Board

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) has a commitment to strong, effective governance. We are an independent not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. A membership-based organisation, NQPHN is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission.

The NQPHN Board is a skills-based Board, which has four key committees:

Nomination and Remuneration

This committee makes recommendations to the Members for director appointments and re-elections, and assists the Board to fulfill its corporate governance responsibilities regarding performance, induction programs, and continuing professional development for directors and remuneration of directors.

People and Performance

This committee provides oversight of organisational culture and other aspects of Human Resources. The committee makes recommendations to the Board regarding Senior Executive succession planning, remuneration and performance evaluation, reviewing compliance with the Corporate Code of Ethical Conduct, and overseeing any investigation of improper conduct initiated under NQPHN's Protective Disclosure (Whistle-blower) Program.

Finance, Audit, and Risk Management (FARM)

This committee assists the Board in fulfilling its responsibility to exercise due care, diligence, and skill in relation to budget planning process and monitoring of performance. It also focuses on financial investment strategy, contracting arrangements, the integrity of NQPHN's financial reports and statements, adequacy, and performance of NQPHN's internal control framework, external and internal audit processes, and the framework established by management to identify, assess, and manage risk.

Clinical Governance

This committee provides the Board with contemporary advice and recommendations on matters of clinical governance, commissioning (specifically, planning and design of services), stakeholder engagement, and continuing development and refinement of the Health Needs Assessment (HNA) and related strategic planning documents.

All committees have levels of delegated authority for core decision making.



Scan the QR code to read more about Governance structures, the NQPHN Board, and Board meeting attendance.



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Australian Government
Department of Health

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NORTHERN QUEENSLAND

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