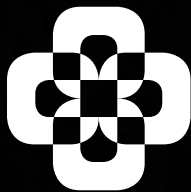


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IMPACT

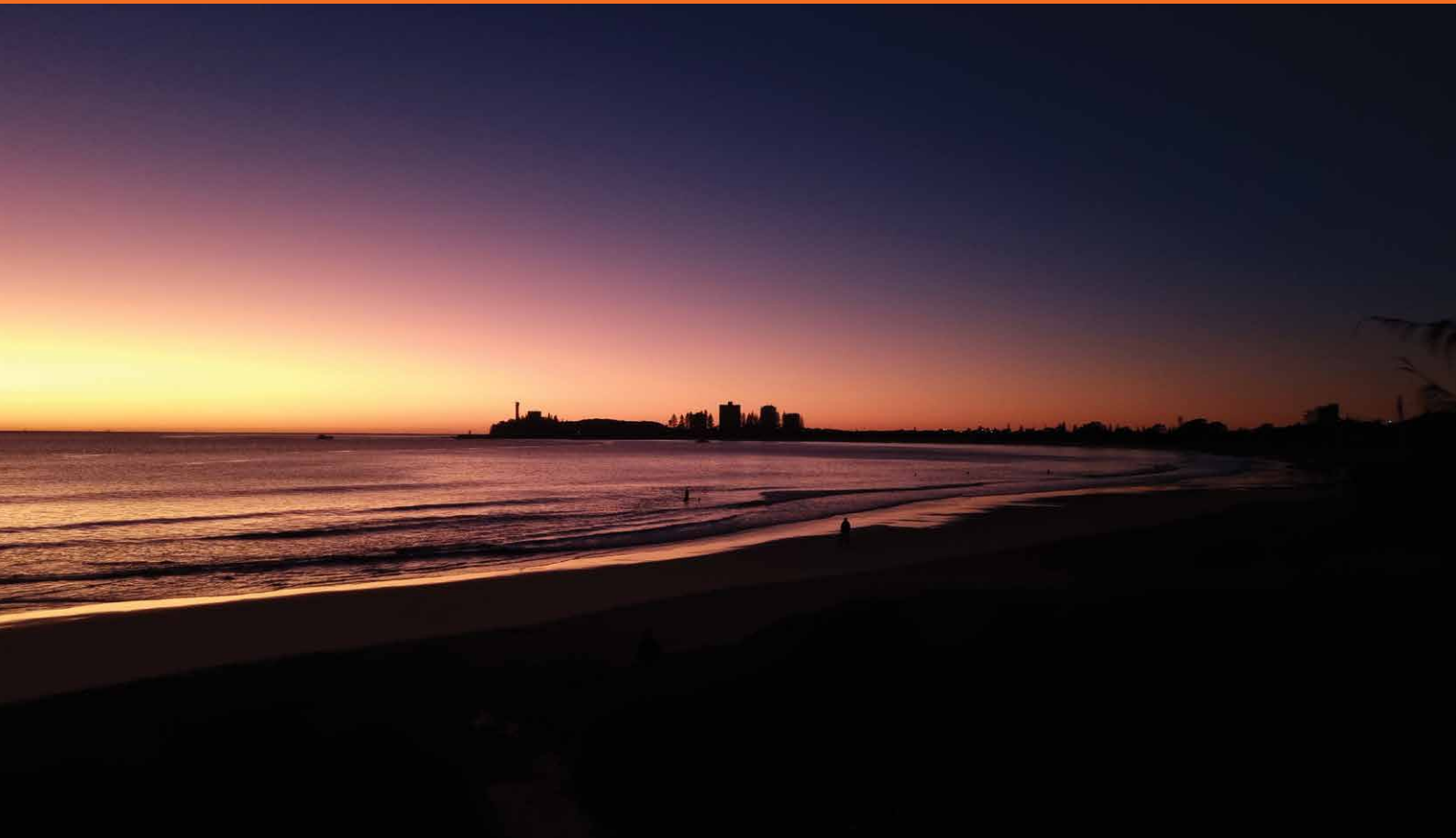
MAGAZINE



CHECKUP

Acknowledgement of Country

CheckUP staff and board respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to the land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and future leaders.



PUBLICATION DETAILS
CheckUP is a public company that is limited by guarantee.
CheckUP is registered with the Australian Charities Not-for-profits Commission.
IMPACT was prepared by CheckUP's Engagement team and contributed to by various staff members.
Please note that this document may contain images of deceased persons.

IMAGE DETAILS
The image on the front cover is a stock image sourced from Unsplash by Tim Davies.
The image on this page titled "Mooloolah River, Parrearra" was taken by Paul Penumala, the "Natural Environment" category winner of CheckUP's Annual Photo Competition.
The image on the back cover was taken by Louise Pratt, the "Human Interest" category winner of CheckUP's Annual Photo Competition.
There are more winning photo competition images throughout the magazine.

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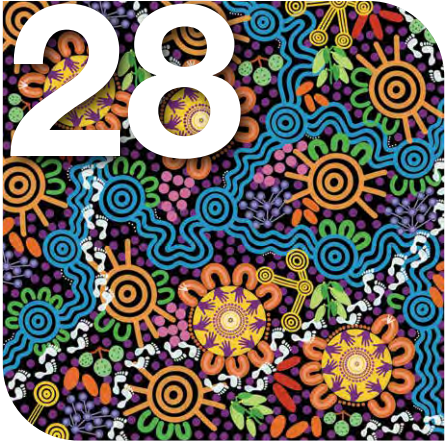
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Welcome to the ninth edition of IMPACT. The stories featured throughout this magazine highlight how the work of CheckUP, along with our partners, providers and members, is making a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of communities across Queensland and the Northern Territory. They also offer an insight into the dedicated people and organisations who are ensuring communities, particularly our most vulnerable, continue to receive much-needed access to quality healthcare.

Despite the diversity of services and initiatives that this publication covers, one of the most consistent features across all stories is the strength of collaboration.

As a connector of people and organisations with an extensive footprint – 180 towns and communities were provided with Outreach health services in 2021-22 alone - CheckUP is collaboratively engaged with a broad range of multidisciplinary providers and networks. This strong, collaborative approach is at the heart of all that CheckUP does. We work together with like-minded and committed partners and stakeholders to strive to make a genuine difference to the communities we serve. The stories outlined in the following pages highlight some of the outcomes of these partnerships, including increased access to health services, new structured referral pathways, the acquisition of hearing equipment to enable screening to occur and enhanced disability awareness among health providers.

There is no doubt that the resilience and commitment of our CheckUP community of providers has been significantly tested in the past twelve months. The ongoing challenges of COVID-19 together with catastrophic weather events have posed significant challenges and imposed real barriers to the

delivery of services, particularly to some of our most vulnerable and remote communities. We are indebted to the dedicated and committed service providers who ensured these communities continued to receive access to much-needed services, whether in-person or via telehealth.

A big thank you also to the fantastic CheckUP team. Their enthusiasm, commitment and passion for making a difference is critical to our success. Despite the challenges of the past 12 months, they have worked incredibly hard and supported one another to achieve some very ambitious priorities. I am very proud to work alongside such a fantastic Board and staff team.

I hope you enjoy this edition of IMPACT.

Ann Maree Liddy
Chief Executive Officer



Staying agile amid COVID-19 outbreaks and flood events

In 2021-22, many Outreach providers faced considerable challenges in maintaining the delivery of services to rural and remote communities due to the combined impact of COVID-19 and flooding events. Time and time again our providers have shown their resilience and dedication and for that CheckUP is extremely grateful.

What are some of the challenges?

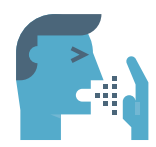
Travel restrictions and reduced availability of flights



Increased consultation times required to fulfil COVID-safe practices



Concern from patients and clinicians about spreading the virus



In response to changing situations, CheckUP staff were able to work with providers to facilitate Outreach service variations, including modifications to funding and delivery models in order to maintain access to essential health services. These challenges saw a significant shift towards telehealth services over the past 12 months.

Our Vision, Purpose & Values

Vision

Better health for people and communities that need it most.

Purpose

To create healthier communities and reduce health inequities.

Values



Collaboration

We are proactive in building long term, mutual and respectful partnerships with external organisations.



Excellence

We are solutions focussed and results driven to meet the needs of our customers.



Innovation

We are forward thinking: we embrace change and seize opportunity.



Integrity

We are transparent and honest in our actions and invest in socially responsible solutions.



Compassion

We act with care and consideration in all our interactions; everyone matters.

1,300
Outreach service variations issued



\$325,000
of Outreach funding allocated to telehealth



Approximately
3,676 hours
of telehealth Outreach services



As these access barriers ease and the need for visiting services continues to grow, we anticipate there will be a surge in Outreach service delivery over the coming 12 months.

Additional services secured for Georgetown and Mt Surprise

Residents in the towns of Mount Surprise and Georgetown in Far North Queensland now have access to additional services thanks to the successful completion of a six-month trial, made possible through Outreach program funding.

In January 2022 the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section) identified a need to extend the Outreach service in Georgetown by an extra day, supported by a medical officer and registered nurse. This additional day also allowed an additional half day of service in Mt Surprise each month. The trial was successfully completed in June 2022 with positive results.

Geoff Clark, State Manager – Primary Health Care for the RFDS (Queensland Section), said the most significant changes arose through the increased access to enhanced chronic care coordination, the introduction of preventative health checks among adult males and an

additional 205 patients being seen over the preceding period in 2021.

"We also ran preventative men's health checks in Georgetown, which were championed by the Mayor of the Etheridge Shire who even wrote a poem which was published in the local newsletter," he said.

"Mt Surprise residents also benefited through increased service hours at their clinic allowing for improved chronic care coordination to the largely elderly community."

After the trial, a survey was distributed to patients to gauge their interest in the additional service extending and the results were extremely positive.

The combination of improved patient care and positive patient feedback has led to CheckUP increasing funding to the RFDS to permanently increase the Outreach service.

"RFDS is so grateful to CheckUP for providing the opportunity to test this increased service delivery and financially supporting our decision to permanently extend services in Georgetown and Mt Surprise."

- Geoff Clark

Working in partnership to improve access to paediatric healthcare

CheckUP, in partnership with Outreach service providers and Mamu Health Service Limited, are working together to ensure better access to paediatric healthcare in the North Queensland town of Innisfail and surrounding areas.

Good childhood health and appropriate paediatric care are critically important, as health status in childhood builds a lasting foundation for future wellbeing that impacts both individuals and communities. A child's health influences how they feel and go about their everyday lives, affecting their participation in family life, schooling, social and sporting activities. Paediatric allied health services are fundamental in the management of common childhood conditions such as asthma, otitis media and problems with psychological development. Health service providers contracted by CheckUP through the Outreach programs play an important role in the treatment and management of these conditions in communities that are connected to Mamu Health Service.

Dr Arno Ebner, who is a paediatric specialist, and a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, has been providing Outreach services to North Queensland communities for the last three years. He visits the Innisfail area every two months, for two days at a time, where he is available to provide paediatric assessments to patients in the local area.

CheckUP is committed to working with our partners to enable continuous improvements. By working with the local community and Mamu

Health Service CheckUP's Regional Coordinator for North Queensland Melanie Sheridan identified an opportunity to improve the current referral process for children living in the region to access paediatric appointments.

"By looking at Dr Arno's attendances in Innisfail I was able to identify a gap in services. When I spoke with him, he advised me that there were no structured referral processes in place between Mamu Health Service and himself," Melanie explained when discussing how the process began.

Working together, Melanie and Mamu Health Service clinic coordinator Ken Laza were able to compose a structured referral pathway between not only Mamu Health Service and Dr Arno Ebner, but also other Outreach services coordinated by CheckUP, such as paediatric psychology, occupational therapy, and speech pathology.

The new initiative will see CheckUP supporting the upskilling of local general practitioners and other care providers who work in the area, while Mamu Health Service will provide enhanced patient support, including patient transport and a recall reminder system. While the new process is still in the early stages the team involved is enthusiastic about seeing improvements to health outcomes over the next six to twelve months.

On working in partnership, Mamu Health Service's Acting CEO Colleen Purcell said, "We are truly grateful for the CheckUP services, and I appreciate everything that you are doing to ensure the community does not miss out on essential services."



Mamu Health Service Limited is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation that provides culturally appropriate and comprehensive primary health care programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Innisfail and the surrounding areas. In 1990 the Innisfail Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community decided to elect their own health committee, and the committee adopted the tribal name of MAMU for their clinic. Since then, they have gone on to establish healthcare outreach clinics that service communities including Ravenshoe, Mount Garnet, Babinda, Tully, Cardwell, Atherton Tablelands, and Chillagoe.

Are you looking for a new adventure?

Do you have a passion for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people living in rural and remote locations? Express your interest in becoming an Outreach provider!

CheckUP is the jurisdictional fundholder for the Australian Government Department of Health's Outreach programs in Queensland. With the support of up to 150 contracted health providers, we lead a strong, effective consortium that is committed to improving access to a wide range of healthcare services for people living in urban, rural, and remote locations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Outreach programs help improve health outcomes through increasing access to medical specialist, GP, and allied health professional services.

If you are a qualified, registered, and practising health professional within Australia and would like to find out more about how you can be involved in delivering Outreach health services in rural and remote communities across Queensland, simply complete and return the expression of interest form on CheckUP's website.

Funding may be available to assist with travel, accommodations, meals, and other administrative costs associated with the delivery of services.

You can learn more by visiting <https://www.checkup.org.au/outreach> or by emailing the team at outreachservices@checkup.org.au.



Image by Jenna Mottin of Kate Larkin taken when the TalkHQ Speech Pathology team was travelling from Dysart to Mackay as part of an Outreach visit. This photo was the winner of the "People's Choice" category in CheckUP's Annual Photo Competition.

Team of occupational therapists who consider the whole child

The Whole Child brings together a team of experienced paediatric occupational therapists who are committed to building strong connections with the children they work with and their families. The team has a unique, clinical approach that considers a holistic view towards the health of children, incorporating development, learning, play and relationships.

Founder Crystel Poggioli has over 20 years experience, bringing a wealth of knowledge from her time working with the Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane; the inclusive education system in Vancouver, Canada; and more recently within schools and health services from Cardwell to Cooktown.

Crystel and her team deliver Outreach services throughout the Atherton Tablelands, including in Mareeba, Malanda, Ravenshoe, and Mount Garnet. Read what she has to say about their work as an Outreach provider below.

Why did you choose occupational therapy as a profession?

Each of us were motivated to work with people in the community and help them with their challenges. We love the opportunity to walk alongside kids and families and find the pathways to living their best lives, being their best selves and being with them as they navigate that journey.

What attracted you to working with our Outreach programs?

I enjoyed getting to know our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and enjoyed the opportunity to develop long term relationships with others providing services in the community. I started providing Outreach services around 10 years ago. Sarah started in 2019 and Anfriel joined our team from the Philippines last year.

Can you share a message with other health professionals who may be considering becoming an Outreach provider?

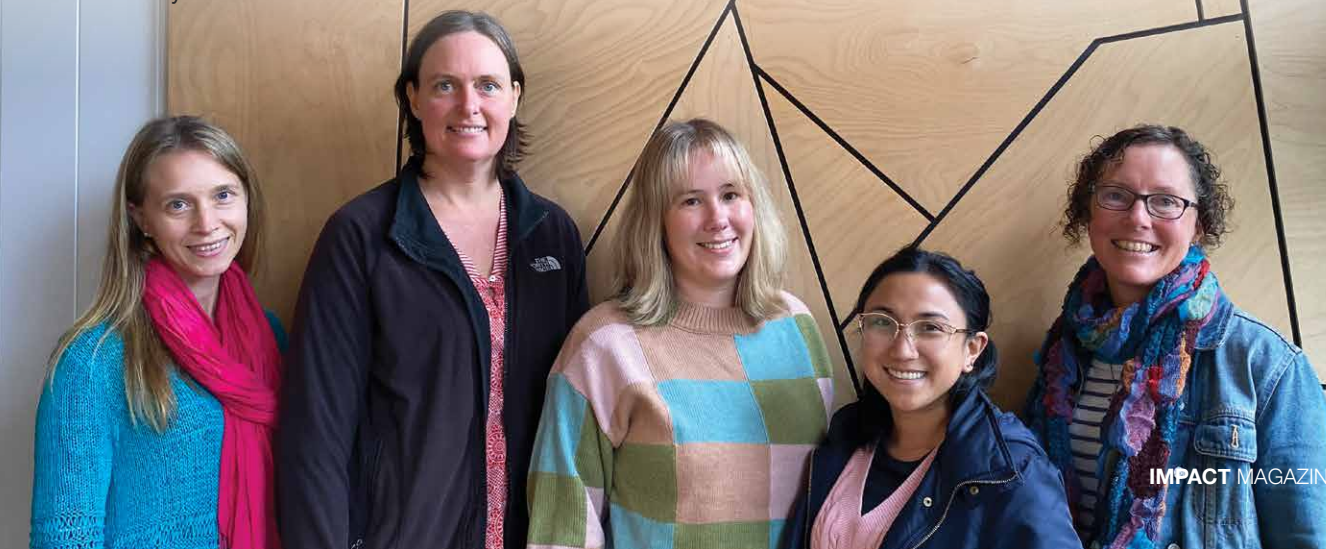
We've enjoyed having a longer-term focus with the families we provide services for. We might provide a few sessions each year, but the families get to know us and know they can come and see us if any challenges arise, or they need support for a patch.

Is there anything else you would like to mention?

Our local health services, Mamu, Midin and Mulungu, have worked really closely with us to ensure we are able to successfully engage with children and families. All of these organisations have a long history of good relationships and strong support for their local communities. We are extremely grateful for the foundations they have laid.

"I often feel as though I stand on the bridge between the medical, educational, and natural health worlds. For parents and teachers, it can feel like a maze when you are trying to help a child. We are lucky enough to be in a unique position where we can help shine a light inside that maze." — Crystel

The Whole Child Team,
L – R: Naomi, Karen, Sarah,
Anfriel and Crystel



OUTREACH HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

2021-22

EESS

Eyes and Ears Surgical Support

66 EAR SURGERIES



135 EYE SURGERIES



32 FEHHS* EAR SURGERIES



*FEHHS: Follow Up Ear Hearing Health Services

OUTREACH

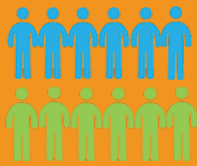
All Outreach health services

SERVICE DELIVERY 2021-22

CheckUP is the jurisdictional fundholder for the Australian Government Department of Health's Outreach programs in Queensland. With the support of up to 150 contracted health providers, we lead a strong, effective consortium that is committed to improving access to a wide range of healthcare services in urban, rural, and remote locations and high-need populations throughout Queensland, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

158,242 OCCASIONS OF SERVICE

occasions of service, or appointments were delivered through all Outreach health services in 2021-22



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PATIENTS



97,307

of all Outreach health services were accessed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

18,220

VISITS

visits were undertaken by our team of Outreach health providers



LOCATIONS

180



towns and communities were provided with Outreach health services over the 12 month period

MOICDP

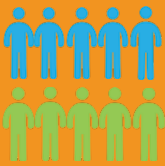
Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program

SERVICE DELIVERY 2021-22

The aim of the Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program (MOICDP) is to increase access to a range of health services, including expanded primary health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of chronic disease.

68,611 OCCASIONS OF SERVICE

occasions of service, or appointments were delivered through all MOICDP services in 2021-22



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PATIENTS



53,459

of all MOICDP services were accessed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

9,467

VISITS

visits were undertaken by our team of Outreach health providers



LOCATIONS

107



towns and communities were provided with MOICDP services over the 12 month period

RHOF

Rural Health Outreach Fund

SERVICE DELIVERY 2021-22

The aim of the Rural Health Outreach Fund (RHOF) is to ensure all Australians have the same opportunity to access medical services, regardless of the location in which they live. The RHOF supports Outreach health activities to address health issues identified in regional, rural, and remote locations.

55,521 OCCASIONS OF SERVICE

occasions of service, or appointments were delivered through all RHOF services in 2021-22



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PATIENTS



19,771

of all RHOF services were accessed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

5,206

VISITS

visits were undertaken by our team of Outreach health providers



LOCATIONS

135



towns and communities were provided with RHOF services over the 12 month period

HEALTHY EARS

Healthy Ears: Better Hearing, Better Listening

SERVICE DELIVERY 2021-22

The aim of the Healthy Ears: Better Hearing Better Listening (Healthy Ears) program is to increase access to a range of ear and hearing health services, including expanded primary health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth (0-21 years) for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of ear and hearing health conditions.

16,264 OCCASIONS OF SERVICE

occasions of service, or appointments were delivered through all Healthy Ears services in 2021-22



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PATIENTS



13,934

of all Healthy Ears services were accessed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

2,531

VISITS

visits were undertaken by our team of Outreach health providers



LOCATIONS

51



towns and communities were provided with Healthy Ears services over the 12 month period

VOS

Visiting Optometrists Scheme

SERVICE DELIVERY 2021-22

The aim of the Visiting Optometrist Scheme (VOS) is to increase optometry services for people living in regional, rural, and remote locations (MM2 – MM7 locations are eligible).

17,846 OCCASIONS OF SERVICE

occasions of service, or appointments were delivered through all VOS services in 2021-22



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PATIENTS



10,143

of all VOS services were accessed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

1,016

VISITS

visits were undertaken by our team of Outreach health providers



LOCATIONS

109



towns and communities were provided with VOS services over the 12 month period

Advising on a critical industry

While jobs in the health industry are expected to grow across all regions in Queensland and occupations, there is an increasing demand for health service delivery in an increasingly complex service environment, with continuing workforce shortages across the state.

CheckUP has been engaged by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) as the Industry Skills Advisor for Health (ISA). As the ISA for Health, CheckUP engages with employers, small business, and industry stakeholders to provide high-quality, evidence-based industry advice and intelligence about current and emerging industry directions, regional skill needs, training solutions and employment opportunities.

In 2022, the ISA for Health continued the Health ISA Data Project (now in phase two), engaging Ronan Analytics to assist in further refining data available to better profile and inform the ISA's advice to DESBT regarding skill needs, job growth,

and areas of high need and demand. The ISA is also using this data as a tool to engage with industry and to highlight the size of health businesses throughout Queensland and health employers outside of the hospital and health system.

Seed funding to establish a traineeship program

Since 2020, the ISA for Health has engaged with the Mareeba Health Workforce Alliance. The focus of the group is to build, recruit and retain a professional primary healthcare workforce. The ISA for Health, through the Health Education to Employment Pathways Program funded by Queensland Health, identified Mareeba as a potential pilot site to receive an allocation of Grow Your Own (GYO) Seed Funding made available by the Department. The ISA for Health worked with Mareeba Health Alliance, Mulungu Health Service, Mareeba and Communities Family Healthcare (MCFHC), and DESBT FNQ to explore options for a

Seed Funding proposal and to connect the relevant stakeholders in the community to support the proposal and the implementation of the project if the funding application was successful.

The GYO Seed funding grant submitted by Mulungu in partnership MCFHC was approved by the panel with \$30,000 allocated. An additional \$30,000 was committed by the Northern Queensland Health Workforce Alliance to support the project. The project commenced on 1 July 2022 and will include the establishment of the Mareeba Education to Employment Traineeship Program. The ISA for Health will continue to engage with the Mareeba Health Workforce Alliance, Mulungu and MCFHC throughout the implementation of this project and provide advice as required.



The Health and Social Assistance industry remains the largest employer of Queenslanders, employing **438,400** people as of February 2022, which represents approximately 16 percent of Queensland's total workforce



Health and Social Assistance is the largest employing industry for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in Queensland with **12,387** persons employed



In June 2020, there were **29,194** businesses recorded in Health Care and Social Assistance industry in Queensland

BELOW: Mulungu Health Service CEO Aunty Gail Wason and CheckUP CEO Ann Maree Liddy signed a contract in Mareeba in July 2022 that will provide funding to employ school-based trainees in healthcare. This was made possible through funding from the Queensland Government.



Staff Profile



CheckUP appoints Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Lead

Proud Warrgamay woman Lynette Anderson was appointed as CheckUP's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Lead in May 2022.

The creation and funding of this position mark an important milestone for the organisation. Its primary purpose is to drive CheckUP's continued commitment to being a culturally responsive organisation and respectfully engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to ensure we are contributing to positive health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Based in Townsville, Lynette originally commenced with CheckUP as a Regional Coordinator for North Queensland in September 2021. At the time of acceptance, she said she was excited to take on the new role and apply her skills and experiences to it.

"My passion is Aboriginal Health and healthcare delivery in our rural and remote areas, so I am really looking forward to working with these communities to come up with innovative ways to improve service delivery and access," Lynette said.

"I am also looking forward to working with the CheckUP leadership team and contributing my ideas so that as an organisation we are able to meet our goals and targets.

Prior to working at CheckUP, Lynette worked for 18 years within the community-controlled health sector, dividing her time between Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) and Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service (TAIHS). She has experience working in both clinical and management roles and has a real passion for Indigenous health and workforce development in rural areas.

On what advice she would give to someone starting out their career in the health sector, Lynette recommends people surround themselves with people who will support them at each stage of their career and keep moving forward.

"You don't have to have it all figured out from the get-go, where you enter the health sector doesn't have to be where you stay," she said.

"I think you should also embrace the reality that things don't usually work out how you planned them in your head. You may wander from your track but that's okay because sometimes that's how we make life-changing discoveries and those beaten tracks can also open up great opportunities you never thought about. There are so many different paths and opportunities to choose from – you're not just limited to being a doctor or nurse."

A Gateway to skilled health workers

There is an ongoing need to build a sustainable skilled workforce to address shortages within the health industry at all levels, from entry level to senior positions for both clinical to non-clinical support roles, such as business administration, health services operations, personal care and support, allied health assistance, pathology, and assistant in nursing roles.

The Queensland Government has recognised this ongoing need with the provision of funding to CheckUP until 2025 to continue to implement the Gateway to Industry Schools Project - Health (Health Gateway Project).

The Health Gateway Project works with high school students to raise awareness and understanding of the range of career opportunities within the health sector. The Health Gateway Project also supports teachers and vocational education and training (VET) coordinators to connect schools with the health industry to ensure students have access to real-world experiential opportunities, such as industry talks, workplace tours, work-trials, work-experience, and work-placements.

Since the inception of the Health Gateway Project in 2020, engagement with both high schools and local health industry across Queensland has expanded significantly. Forty-four high schools have now formally joined the program through a Memorandum

of Understanding with an additional 19 high schools expressing their interest. Over the last year, school staff involved in the Health Gateway Project have received substantial support and resources from CheckUP to assist in raising awareness of health careers, facilitating experiential activities, and supporting health career pathways for their students. This includes CheckUP participating in 28 career events where CheckUP staff provided information on health jobs and career pathways through a variety of means, including panel discussions, small group presentations and one-to-one conversations with students interested in pursuing a health career.

In addition to this, the new highly interactive *Healthcare is Everywhere* tool and supporting resources were launched and promoted broadly across the Health Gateway Project network. The *Healthcare is Everywhere* tool provides an interactive learning experience for school students and parents to gain

an understanding of the healthcare system and the variety of jobs available within the health industry.

The Health Gateway Project also offers professional development opportunities for school VET coordinators and other teaching staff. The inaugural Health Gateway Schools Forum was held in October 2021 with 119 delegates attending (97 in-person and 22 virtual). The Forum, which is now an annual event, is designed to bring together high school staff, health service providers and registered training organisations to obtain an update on the health industry, learn about successful models, develop partnerships between high schools and industry, and enable attendees to network and make new connections.

Over the coming years, addressing workforce and skills shortages for disadvantaged groups, including youth from regional and remote Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and

RIGHT: CheckUP's General Manager of Health Services - Planning and Reporting Aidan Hobbs presenting at St Patrick's College.

"I recently attended a session that CheckUP held at our school where Aidan spoke about his experience working as a podiatrist in Mount Isa. I was inspired by his experience and now wish to pursue a career in health. In particular, I want to work in a rural setting while I am young and gain lots of experience."

— Student at a school involved in the Health Gateway Project



ABOVE: Bentley Park Principal, Bruce Houghton, signing the Gateway MOU with David Millichap.

those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be a key focus for the Health Gateway Project. By introducing students to education, training and employment opportunities in the health sector, initiatives like the Health Gateway Project, Health Education to Employment Project (HEEP) and the newly funded Youth Industry Partnerships for Education and Employment (YIPEE) program will not only strengthen the health workforce but will also improve health outcomes for those who are already experiencing disadvantage.

Student at Health Gateway School wins award

Knowing that healthcare occupations will be in strong demand for quite some time, St Patrick's College made a commitment to provide students with experiences, insights and knowledge that will prepare them for pathways into health. In 2022 the College, located in Shorncliffe, introduced health into its senior curriculum with students able to complete Certificate II and III level courses as part of their standard timetable. Throughout the year, four students were successful in undertaking school-based traineeships in healthcare settings.

Year 12 student, Cooper Mitchell, was the winner of the School-based Trainee of the Year award for the metropolitan region at the Queensland Training Awards. He completed a Certificate III in Health Support Services at Redcliffe Hospital. Cooper was encouraged by his training provider and supervisors to nominate for this award because of his keen enthusiasm toward both working and learning. Cooper faced many challenges, including time spent working in a palliative care ward.

Cooper has been offered early entry to a Bachelor of Nursing at the Australian Catholic University. He is confident to pursue this pathway due to the knowledge gained and experiences undertaken throughout his traineeship. CheckUP and St Patrick's College commend Cooper. The College looks forward to having him return to campus to contribute to career planning and subject selection events in 2023.



Students gain knowledge at a career expo attended by the Health Gateway Project team; Sabrina Kerr and Kat Murray at a career expo.



Strengthening the eye health workforce

Jeriah Coutts and Nicole Byrne are at the forefront of The Fred Hollows Foundation and CheckUP's efforts to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote parts of Queensland can access high-quality eye care.

They are the faces of The Foundation's drive to ensure people can access the services they need with culturally-appropriate support.

Back in the 1970s, Professor Fred Hollows saw for himself the appalling disparities in eye health between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the rest of the Australian population. Fred channelled his outrage into action and led the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program. Much of the program's success was thanks to the direct involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in delivering the services.

Today, by working with organisations like CheckUP and funding Jeriah and Nicole's work, The Foundation is following in Fred's footsteps to close the gap in eye health services.

One of the key objectives of The Foundation's strategy is to strengthen regional eye health services to help meet the needs of people in remote locations.

To provide those services, The Foundation is committed to training and strengthening the eye health workforce and addressing the shortage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in eye health roles.

Jeriah is an Eye Health Coordinator on Palm Island, about 65km north of Townsville. She serves the community of 2,300 people by working with the optometrist and the ophthalmology department at Townsville University Hospital. Jeriah coordinates eye clinics, does retinal photography and patient categorising. She coordinates travel for people needing eye care and often escorts people who don't have a support person to travel with them.

Nicole works at Gidgee Healing in Mount Isa, servicing communities from Mt Isa and the lower gulf – Normanton, Mornington Island, Doomadgee and Burketown.

She travels to communities to undertake eye and hearing tests, book patient travel, and ensure patients know about their appointments.

"I like the benefits of what we do, like helping people's vision improve is just amazing and the connections you make," Nicole said.

"Before I started in the role, there was just a massive gap in between services. So, a lot of patients were falling through the cracks of the health system, especially in our communities like Mornington Island and Doomadgee, just because there's obviously travel involved getting those patients to Mt Isa for treatment."

CheckUP's former Indigenous Eye Health Manager Tanya Morris said The Foundation's support for Jeriah and Nicole's work had made a huge difference to their communities.

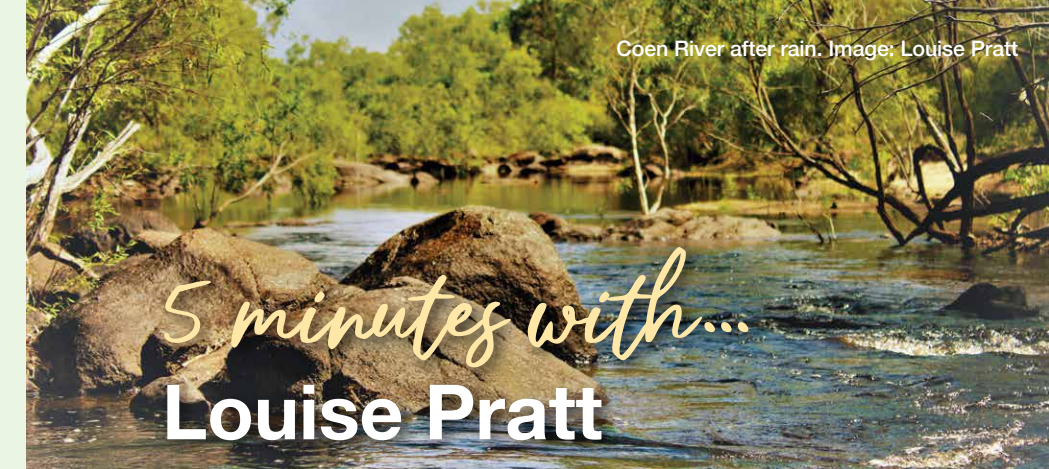
"They are brand new positions and Fred Hollows has given them the opportunity to mould it to how it fits the community. You cannot describe the value of what they do in the community," Tanya said.

Local health worker's connection to community helps bridge gap

Apunipima Cape York Health Council is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation that provides comprehensive Primary Health Care to 11 Cape York communities.

CheckUP has a long-standing positive working relationship with Apunipima Cape York Health Council and together the two organisations work with local communities to increase access to health services. In the 2021-22 financial year there was a total of 957 visits from CheckUP's contracted Outreach providers, with a total 15,079 Outreach service appointments delivered via Apunipima Primary Health Centres. This included healthcare services, such as audiology, diabetes education, maternal and child health, occupational therapy, psychology and more.

As part of our workforce programs, we enjoy hearing about and sharing with the community the many job opportunities and pathways that are available within the health sector. Louise Pratt is the Primary Health Care Manager at Apunipima Cape York Health Council's Coen Health Care Centre. Here she shares what drew her to working in health and what she loves most about working with her community.



Coen River after rain. Image: Louise Pratt

Where are you from?

Coen is my home. My family moved to Coen around 1986 and I have mostly lived here since. I left Coen for a couple of years to attend high school and stayed away for a few years after that, but I eventually returned home. I missed the bush and my parents and felt I would have more to offer by coming back. Cape York is absolutely beautiful and a stunning place to live and work. The people that make up this beautiful part of Australia are what make it memorable.

Why did you choose to work in health?

I began working in the field of health around 2001, first with Queensland Health and then with Apunipima Cape York Health Council. My parents inspired me to work in the sector as they both worked in healthcare and enjoyed it.

My mum was the first health worker in Coen. Seeing what she did and how it impacted our community made me want to work in the same field. Dad also worked in health after working for many years in land management. Mum had clinical training and many people in the community would ask her to attend medical appointments with them. The community trusted her so much that even male Indigenous clients would sit and discuss their health with her (something that is usually not culturally appropriate).

They were both a strong voice for our mob in the Cape and helped clients and the community understand the need to be checked over even when they felt fine. They thought nothing of taking phone

calls late at night, sitting under trees or up the river just talking to help out the community. The way they talked with people eased the way for our mob to access health services. I like to think I have a bit of both of them in me and in the way I do my job. They have left big shoes to fill.

What do you like most about your job?

Seeing the joy on a client's face when their blood pressure has gone down or their blood glucose levels are within the normal range is fantastic. It's great when clients drop in to get a health check without being sent a reminder or invite, and when they visit purely to say hello. It's the simple things that bring the most pleasure, like being able to help bridge the gap between client and service provider. Knowing you're making a difference is rewarding.

"It's the simple things that bring the most pleasure, like being able to help bridge the gap between client and service provider. Knowing you're making a difference is rewarding."

How does your role positively impact the community?

The biggest impact I have is that I am a local community person with a strong community connection. I have an open-door policy for both staff and the community, and everyone knows I will always make time for them. Our little PHC in Coen welcomes all walks of life, we hope our mob doesn't see health centres only as places you visit when sick. Health centres are there for everybody at any time.

New Hearing Health Coordinator on Mornington Island

By working with Mornington Island Health Council, CheckUP has been able to continue to support the Mornington Island Hearing Health project, which has seen the recent recruitment of a locally-based Hearing Health Coordinator.

Having a dedicated Hearing Health Coordinator has ensured local children have access to prompt community-based screening, care, and surveillance. Key focuses of the new role include supporting the Deadly Ears clinic, surgery appointments, and ensuring increased understanding and implementation of post-clinic and post-op care guidelines for families.

Since the Hearing Health Coordinator's commencement, the community has seen improvements, such as streamlined referral pathways; improved community knowledge; increased access and uptake of services; and an increase in preventative screening activities. The project has also seen improvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ear and hearing health outcomes.

Improving ear health in Hughenden

Together with Sonic Health, CheckUP has supported the acquisition of new hearing equipment for the Hughenden Health Centre. Since the new equipment has arrived Community Health Nurse Alison Reid and Aboriginal Health Practitioner Gregory Foley have been working with local school children in Hughenden and Richmond to conduct hearing screenings.

Childhood ear health is crucially important, as chronic conditions such as otitis media can have ongoing impacts affecting language and speech development if they are left untreated. Routine hearing screenings play an important role in the diagnosis and early treatment of these ear health conditions.

Earlier this year, CheckUP's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Lead Lynette Anderson worked with Sonic Equipment to successfully gain approval to bring a new screening audiometer and tympanometry screener to the team at Hughenden. Since receiving the equipment, the team is now set to visit six local schools and will also be offering a community screening clinic.



This allows local community members to avoid travelling to larger regional centres to access these services.

Further to the basic hearing screening, the community health team in conjunction with CheckUP, have worked together to develop referral pathways to audiologists and ear, nose and throat specialists who are contracted by CheckUP as Outreach service providers.

Q & A with... James Taggart



Now I visit all around North Queensland providing optometry services; everything from prescription testing, follow-up after cataract surgery, and eye checks for diabetic patients.

What does a workday look like?

Usually when I'm out visiting, I will have everything set up by 9:30am and I might see 15-18 patients in a day. I don't have strict booking times. I tell my patients if they miss their appointment, and they know I'm there on a Wednesday just come in on Wednesday and I will see them. Things operate differently to how it does in the city sometimes; I like to have that flexibility with my patients.

What is one of the best things about your work?

Doing the work I do now has been the most enjoyable part of my career; it's very rewarding. I enjoy the job and the people; everyone is very friendly, and they are very appreciative.

Can you share a message with other health professionals that might be considering joining as an Outreach provider?

I have been providing Outreach services with CheckUP for about four years now. For other professionals that are considering it, I would say if you are in a position to do so, definitely get out there – it's very rewarding work.

Working in Outreach services gets you out to some of the most beautiful places. Cape York's landscape looks like it is almost from another world. The Atherton Tablelands region is also beautiful. I'm very fortunate to visit these areas and meet people from these communities.

James Taggart is a practising optometrist and the owner of Outside Optical, North Queensland's only dedicated mobile eye care service. As one of CheckUP's Outreach providers James is kept incredibly busy delivering eye care services across 19 locations in North Queensland and Far North Queensland. With mobile equipment, James is able to make the delivery of services to rural communities as simple as possible. Here he shares some stories from his career and what he enjoys most about being an Outreach provider.

How long have you been an optometrist? What made you choose optometry?

I studied optometry in England in the 1980s and have been able to enjoy a career where I have worked across the globe. Initially, I had planned to follow in my brother's footsteps and become a dentist, but he dissuaded me. I had a cousin who was an optometrist and I thought that might be a better option – I liked eyes better than teeth anyway!

Can you tell us a bit about your experience and some of the different areas you have worked?

Over my career I have been fortunate to work in many different places. When I was in England I owned several optometry practices. I also spent a lot of time being a mobile clinician where I visited aged care homes. I have worked as an optometrist in Trinidad, India, south of Spain in Gibraltar, and in New Zealand. I spent five years running a practice in Townsville prior to starting Outside Optical.

Survey provides snapshot of healthcare issues

CheckUP has released the results from the 2021 Health in Focus survey, with the subsequent report providing an important snapshot of healthcare issues and trends in Queensland.

The health survey began as a census of GPs in Queensland and expanded to include other healthcare providers and the public, recently becoming solely focussed on the public. 2021 marked the 11th time the survey has been conducted. Topics covered included public health, preventative health, digital health, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's health and wellbeing, health information sources, and public engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided challenges for the people

of Queensland and the healthcare system, and this has been reflected in the survey results, with 40% of respondents reporting a decline in either their mental or physical health.

We know COVID-19 has had a major impact on the utilisation of telehealth. Of note, the percentage of respondents who had used telehealth within a 12 month period rose from 7% in 2018 to 54% in 2021.

Moving forward, CheckUP will be utilising the survey results to identify areas of need, inform discussions with stakeholders, and increase the profile of primary healthcare in Queensland. It is expected that the report will also prove a valuable resource for health planners and policymakers.

The 2021 Health in Focus survey was proudly supported by CheckUP, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service Mackay, AGPAL and QIP. CheckUP would also like to thank Griffith University for assisting us with the survey design, former Masters student on placement Sanket Vakil for implementing the survey, and CheckUP staff member Conor Blackley for analysing the data and preparing the report.

The 2021 Health in Focus report can be downloaded from the CheckUP website: www.checkup.org.au.



Our report provides an overview of healthcare issues experienced by everyday Queenslanders and the survey results are of particular interest given the impact that COVID-19 has had on accessing healthcare and new methods of delivering healthcare.

The stats say it all

44% of respondents indicated there was at least one time in the last 12 months that they wanted to see a GP but didn't. Of these people, **50%** reported this was due to lack of available services.

41% said it took 3-5 days to get a GP appointment, while **20%** said they could only get an appointment the following week.

25% of respondents reported experiencing barriers to accessing healthcare. Of these people, the most common reason given was long waiting times, with **55%** of respondents facing this barrier.

26% of respondents indicated there were some healthcare services they did not have access to in their local area.

Other stats

- **87%** reported having a regular GP and **91%** were satisfied or highly satisfied with the time spent and quality of care provided by their GP
- **68%** asked their GP when they needed access to healthcare services
- **72%** accessed preventative checks/screening appointments and **28%** only visit healthcare providers when unwell
- **44%** did 30 minutes to an hour of physical activity each day and walking was the most common activity at **73%**
- **43%** participated in mindfulness activities and of those, **52%** did breathing exercises
- **45%** did not drink alcohol during the week while 8% reporting drinking at very high levels (more than 10 standard drinks per week)
- **54%** used telehealth services in the 12 months prior to taking the survey



Access for All

continues to improve disability awareness for health providers

Healthcare access for people with disability can be difficult due to the barriers they experience. Lack of disability awareness by health providers can contribute to these barriers.

Healthcare access for people with disability can be difficult due to the barriers they experience¹. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability highlighted health providers' lack of disability awareness, the need for health professionals to recognise the effects of their assumptions and bias about people with disability, and a need to undertake continuing professional development to increase their disability awareness².

Since CheckUP launched Access for All: Disability Awareness for Mainstream Health Providers in June 2021, over 870 healthcare professionals and administrators have prioritised increasing accessibility of their service for people with disability by registering for the online course. Feedback from learners has been decisively positive with many recommending the training become mandatory across the healthcare industry.

The Access for All free online training assists health providers to understand their legal obligation to provide accessible care, appreciate the barriers people with disability experience when accessing healthcare, and provides practical resources to assist health providers remove access barriers.

In January 2022, the free Access for All App was added to the online course. The App, available through the Apple and Android mobile stores is a collaborative effort between CheckUP, Queenslanders with Disability Network and Enabler Interactive. Based on lived disability experience, the App allows the 'player' to choose their course of action when faced with inaccessible healthcare situations, using 3D simulated scenarios.

References:

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. People with disability in Australia. [Internet]. Canberra (Australia): Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; 2020 [Cited 2022 July 29]. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/health/access-to-health-services>

² Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of people with disability - Public Hearing 10: Education and training of health professionals in relation to people with cognitive disability [Internet]. Australian Government; 2022 [Cited 2022 Aug 15]. Available from: <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/report-public-hearing-10-education-and-training-health-professionals-relation-people-cognitive-disability>

What health professionals are saying about Access for All training

"This is such a wonderful resource and I would highly recommend it to all of my colleagues. This course should be mandatory for all staff."

– Nurse Practitioner, Queensland Health

"Opened my mind and I will definitely be able to improve my service to patients with disabilities after this course."

– Optometrist, Remote Queensland

Learning leads to practice change



Audiologist Lachlan Smith gives an insight into his experience with the *Access for All: Disability Awareness for Mainstream Health Providers* online course.

"Another box ticking exercise," was audiologist Lachlan Smith's first thought when asked to complete CheckUP's Access for All: Disability Awareness for Mainstream Health Providers online course.

On finishing the free course, Lachlan found he gained several take-home messages, including the need for health professionals, like himself, to focus on individual care and not to assume what consumers needs were.

"The course really made me think about the need to acknowledge the diversity within a disability and not to assume one person with disability is the same as another person with the same or similar disability," Lachlan said.

"I hadn't always considered people with hidden disability, and the training helped me realise the need to ask my patients what their access needs are and not assume

because they didn't say anything that everything was satisfactory with their clinic visit."

Access for All's Cultural Considerations module provided an important reminder of the need to ensure a patient's cultural background is always considered so that access to healthcare is not compromised. Acknowledging cultural norms and cultural views of disability is important to ensure consumers can access care in a safe and culturally appropriate way. For health providers this means always asking the consumer how best to deliver their healthcare service to provide optimum, individualised care.

Since completing Access for All, Lachlan and his team have initiated some changes in how they offer their Outreach appointments, including asking patients if longer appointments may be required

and ensuring they have the necessary transport to attend their clinic appointment. Lachlan is also now blocking off time in his Outreach visit schedule to offer home visits to patients who find attending the appointment far more accessible if Lachlan comes to them in their home. The home visiting service reduces the stress for those patients who may need to organise a carer or support worker to drive them to their appointment and can therefore reduce the anxiety some patients experience attending a clinic environment for their examination.

Lachlan Smith with a young patient.



Lachlan Smith Audiologist

"The course really made me think about the need to acknowledge the diversity within a disability and not to assume one person with disability is the same as another person with the same or similar disability".

Begin improving your disability awareness today

To register for 'Access for All - Disability Awareness for Mainstream Health Providers', scan the QR Code or visit: <https://accessforall-checkup.talentlms.com>

To download the Access for All App, search 'CheckUP Access for All' in your mobile App store.



Integration of early intervention and health promotion improves learning outcomes

As children spend most of their time in the classroom, programs delivered in school settings such as the Department of Education’s Be Well Learn Well (BWLW) program, have the opportunity to positively influence the quality of life of young people, playing a crucial role in enhancing health outcomes.

Since 2017, CheckUP has worked in partnership with Gidgee Healing and Apunipima Cape York Health Council to deliver culturally-appropriate allied health services in eight remote Queensland school settings for the program. BWLW aims to identify and address behavioural and learning issues to support developmental needs and improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, from pre-prep to year 12, through the delivery of targeted speech pathology, occupational therapy, audiology, psychology, and clinical psychology services. All schools receiving allied health services are in remote geographic locations with limited specialist services, have a high number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, experience high rates of non-attendance, disciplinary absences, and frequent behavioural disengagement in the classroom.

Students are referred to BWLW from a variety of sources, such as classroom screening by an allied health team, referrals from school staff, and parents. Since 2017, over 740 students have been referred to the program with 845 students screened during 2021 alone. To manage the demand for services, students are prioritised according to complexity and level of clinical need. Once a student has been screened, they are provided with one of two types of allied health therapy interventions – individual therapy intervention or group-based therapy intervention. Telehealth sessions, or remote support, are also provided by allied health teams between visits. BWLW has provided over 4965 allied therapy sessions since it began. In 2021, 48.6% of the 502 allied health therapy sessions provided were by speech therapists, 30.1% by occupational therapists, 19.1% by psychologists, and 2.2% by clinical

psychologists. If these services were not accessible in community through BWLW, participating students and their families would have been required to travel to receive this much-needed therapy and support, which presents several logistical barriers, such as time away from school, travel costs, and time off work for family members. Travelling mid-pandemic would have also placed an unnecessary risk to a high-risk population cohort and the broader community on their return. Another key objective of BWLW is capacity-building, which includes ‘Teacher capacity-building training sessions’ and ‘Support party discussions’ with the aim of helping teachers, educational support staff, parents and guardians to respond to student learning and development needs. In 2021, there were 43 teacher capacity-building training sessions provided and 966 support party discussions.




Teaching staff have reported that the BWLW allied health team has offered them a source of trusted advice for working with students facing difficulties, as well as to develop and trial their own approaches to working with students requiring support. The substantial effort from the allied health team to upskill the teachers who are working with students with varying and complex needs, particularly amongst those with less experience working with this cohort of students, has led to increased confidence among the educators in their teaching practice. Additionally, during site visits and evaluation interviews, teaching staff most closely engaged with the BWLW program reported that early diagnosis, appropriate medication and/or therapy sessions, and changes to their own classroom practice have led to notable improvements in student behaviour and engagement. BWLW allows for an integrated workforce of education and health professionals to respond holistically and promptly to risk factors influencing child development and learning outcomes. It demonstrates that when schools, communities and governments invest resources during these years, it can bring benefits to children and the wider community.



“I think sometimes teachers have so much to try and figure out up here. They’re working on differentiation of the curriculum, trauma-guided practices, supporting students with hearing...so many different things. And most of our teachers have three years or less experience. Having specialists come up and say, ‘here are some strategies for you to try in this context’, means that those teachers aren’t trying in their free time to research and come up with that. They’ve been given it to try and then they’ve got someone to come back to.”

– Condensed feedback from an experienced teacher at a participating BWLW school

Program objectives

-  Conducting classroom and individual student developmental needs assessments and targeted therapy where needed
-  Conducting home visits and introducing conversations in the home and community around comprehensive care and specific intervention strategies
-  Strengthening knowledge and capacity of school staff through training in identifying learning difficulties and utilising evidence-based strategies in the classroom environment



Allied health program benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability

Since 2019, CheckUP has been working to improve school attendance and engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living with disability, and developmental or learning difficulties in remote Northern Territory communities through the Allied Health in Remote Schools Project (AHRSP).

Program objectives



Deliver psychology, clinical psychology, occupational therapy, speech therapy and audiology services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the school/home/community environment



Enable the parent/guardian/family and the community to support and have a shared understanding of the therapy interventions to ensure best practice outcomes for the children



Strengthen the knowledge and build the capacity of school staff (including teachers, support staff and Remote Schools Attendance Strategy workers) to identify and address learning and development difficulties

The AHRSP is funded as part of the Australian Government's Plan to Improve Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with Disability, which was developed to facilitate better access to culturally appropriate mainstream services for Indigenous people living with a disability. The AHRSP aims to identify and address developmental delays and disabilities that may lead or have led to disengagement and poor learning outcomes. The project involves the provision of allied health services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living with disability in the communities of Papunya and Yuendumu.

Most referrals to the AHRSP have been identified through classroom screening, followed by referrals from teachers. The referrals from teachers demonstrate a level of

engagement and understanding of teaching staff in identifying students with suspected developmental concerns or disabilities that would benefit from the project.

Despite COVID-19 delaying the commencement of service delivery and creating disruptions in the following years, 487 allied health therapy sessions have been provided to date. Of the 487 allied health therapy sessions provided, the majority (83.4%) were group sessions, followed by individual (15.0%) sessions and group-based student education sessions (1.6%). The delivery of small group sessions for students was observed to be the most effective means of providing therapy as students were more engaged, focussed, and excited to be involved if one to two peers were present.

Another facet of the AHRSP is teacher capacity-building and support party sessions, which can occur between a member of the allied health team, teaching and support staff, parents/guardians/carers, community members and other stakeholders. The purpose of these sessions is to enable carers of students and the community to support and have a shared understanding of the therapy interventions to ensure best practice outcomes for the children, as well as strengthen the knowledge and build the capacity of the school staff to identify and address learning and development difficulties. Since the project commenced, 208 teacher capacity-building and support party discussions have occurred.

Additionally, a suite of resources were developed and shared across both the Papunya and Yuendumu schools to support school staff in the implementation and development of strategies to address student needs while the team is away from community. Resource development sessions can occur following requests from school staff or originate directly from the allied health therapy team. The types of resources developed include those that assist in creating more structure in the classroom and make use of a plethora of tools such as student name tags for name identification, visuals for days of the week, weather and shapes, play dough mats for fine motor skills and general creativity, as well as literacy/sight word cards.



Project Outcomes

The following data provides aggregated information about the AHRSP services delivered from Term 1, 2021 to Term 2, 2022 with the two participating schools.

- **56** students have been referred to the program
- **46** students received allied health therapy sessions; of these,
 - 33 (71%) students received occupational therapy
 - 44 (95%) students received speech therapy
 - 19 (41%) students received psychology
- **487** allied health therapy sessions were provided
 - 73 individual sessions provided
 - 406 group sessions provided
- **206** speech pathology sessions were provided
- **242** occupational therapy sessions were provided
- **39** psychology sessions were provided
- **10** students have not yet received a therapy session and waiting to receive therapy on future visits



Initiative highlights the importance of 'Awareness, Belonging, Connection'

Mental illness can affect anyone. About half of all Australians experience it in their lifetime and about one in five experience a mental health issue in any one year.

Queensland Mental Health Week is an annual awareness initiative, funded by the Queensland Mental Health Commission, that promotes individual and community mental health and wellbeing, boosts awareness of mental illness, and celebrates the contribution of the mental health and community sectors.

Leading the coordination of the week for the fifth year in a row in 2022, CheckUP continued to strengthen a strong cross-sector collaboration that has seen the initiative increase its reach and impact each year.

'Awareness, Belonging, Connection' was introduced as the new theme for the week and reflects the important factors that help people maintain positive mental health and wellbeing. CheckUP developed an accompanying vibrant visual identity using the artwork 'Stronger connection creates strong health' by proud Mayi woman Leah Cummins. The painting is Leah's interpretation of the theme. Both the theme and visual identity, which were reflected throughout a suite of community and school-specific resources, were positively received with many event organisers taking inspiration from the theme in their event planning.

A record-breaking 445 events were registered this year, helping bring the message of wellbeing to the heart of communities. To support many of these activities to occur, a record 117 grants were provided through the Queensland Mental Health Week Community Events Grant Program, which is administered by CheckUP. The Commission generously provided \$130,000 in grant funding, which was disseminated to organisations all across the state, from Cairns to the Gold Coast and west to Mount Isa.

Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Ivan Frkovic said Queensland Mental Health Week served to remind all Queenslanders to prioritise their mental health and wellbeing.

"Queensland Mental Health Week events and activities provide a focal point for awareness, education, and understanding of mental health and wellbeing, and help foster community connection and inclusion for those living with mental illness, their families, carers, and support people," Mr Frkovic said.

"Anyone can be susceptible to mental ill-health.

"Importantly, increased community awareness helps break down stereotypes around mental illness and helps people recognise stigma when it occurs."

CheckUP CEO Ann Maree Liddy said there were many ways people can participate in Queensland Mental Health Week each year, including hosting or attending an event and starting conversations on mental health.

"Queensland Mental Health Week is a time when people are prompted to find out more about mental health and seek help for problems they may be facing," she said.

"A conversation can play a powerful role in connecting someone to the care they need."

CheckUP encourages the community to save the date for Queensland Mental Health Week 2023, which will be held from Saturday 7 October to Sunday 15 October, and consider how they want to get involved.

For more information please visit www.qldmentalhealthweek.org.au.

For 24/7 crisis support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14, or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467. In an emergency, call 000.

About the theme



Awareness is about understanding the things we need to maintain and boost our mental wellbeing, and knowing when we need to reach out for help and where to get it



Belonging is about looking out for each other, ensuring we feel safe and supported, and understanding that however we feel, we're not alone, and that there are others going through the same thing




Connection is about our relationships with our friends, families, and those that we care about, as well as the groups, clubs, and networks around us that we rely on to help keep us happy and healthy, wherever we live, work, or play

"We would like to recognise the contribution and collaboration of the numerous partner organisations and stakeholders involved in preparations for the week, as well as those who hosted events and helped raise the profile of the initiative."

- CheckUP CEO Ann Maree Liddy





Measuring effectiveness of culturally safe practices in Indigenous eye health surgery

Over the past 12 months, CheckUP has committed staffing and resources to a newly formed evaluation team, to explore the impacts and outcomes of service delivery across Queensland.

As part of this, CheckUP has begun the implementation of a suite of validated survey tools to measure both surgical outcomes and the level of cultural safety reported by surgical patients within the Eye and Ear Surgical Support (EESS) program. The overall aim of the EESS program is to improve and fast-track access to surgical services and support a culturally appropriate pathway into surgery for predominantly rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diagnosed eye and ear conditions who have been on long waitlists for surgery.

CheckUP has been trialling two standardised, validated Patient Reported Outcomes (PROMs), which look at quality of life pre and post-surgery for patients undergoing eye and ear surgery. By measuring these outcomes from the patient perspective, CheckUP can get first-hand data on the impact of the surgery on the everyday life of the patients undergoing it.

CheckUP has also co-designed a Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREM) survey with

patients, health professionals, academics, and other stakeholders, with the purpose of capturing and evaluating critical aspects of the patient experience – from leaving home/community through to undergoing surgery. The EESS journey focuses strongly on patients feeling culturally safe and CheckUP's PREM measures the degree to which this is achieved through the domains of communication, decision-making, respect, access to family support, and addressing practical barriers of travel and accommodation. By measuring and increasing the cultural capability of service providers and working to ensure healthcare provision is culturally safe for patients, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients are more likely to engage with, access, and recommend EESS to others within their community.

CheckUP hopes to demonstrate the effectiveness of the EESS service model in improving patients' quality of life and experiences within this pathway using these PROM and PREM tools. CheckUP also provides direct patient feedback to service providers delivering these surgeries,

to encourage continuous improvements. While still in the trial phase, early responses have already resulted in changes being made in practice and processes, thus completing the feedback loop. While the tool is still in the validation stages, it is great to see the uptake and enthusiasm from service providers in working together to implement and deliver better services across all our EESS sites.

The evaluation team recently presented this project to the National Indigenous Eye Health Conference, where there was significant interest from EESS providers in other states and territories regarding the implementation of the PREM survey, and the possibility to extend into other areas.

[CheckUP staff look forward to working with new providers to continue the extension of this project. If you are interested in supporting the development and implementation of methods for evaluating culturally safe eye surgical pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland, then please contact us.](#)

Wakai Waian Healing

supporting mental health needs of communities across the state

While Wakai Waian Healing (WWH) mental health teams continue to conduct visits across the sites of Palm Island, Woorabinda, Thursday Island, Biloela and Gladstone, the new financial year has seen services being extended to Charleville, Quilpie, Cherbourg, and Innisfail. The support of CheckUP and experience of delivering services consistently for several years across many sites has provided the WWH team many experiences, reflections, and opportunities for growth.

WWH CEO and senior psychologist Edward Mosby said staff regularly yarn about the relationships that have been formed with individuals, families, and communities.

“Consistently and regularly travelling to remote locations is demanding for staff, however the team have always felt these factors are surpassed by the opportunities and privileges that have come from spending time with the communities we visit,” Edward said.

“WWH staff maintain the view that in relationships it is a ‘two-way street when it comes to learning, growth and healing’. While there appears to be a good level of satisfaction and some encouraging outcomes from the work WWH staff have performed, we very much retain the view that we have had the great privilege to hear many, at times sensitive, yarns about the lives and histories of individuals, families and communities and acknowledge that with this comes responsibility and accountability.”

WWH has not only been delivering one-on-one and group sessions face-to-face but also collaborated with services and communities to enhance their own capacity around mental health matters. WWH have been involved in the establishment of Family and Domestic Violence Services, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Services, NDIS pathways and the embedding of telehealth mental health services.

Edward explained that cultural safety and responsiveness have been a big focus for WWH's services, particularly as they work across several different unique sites.

“Ensuring that we deliver our work in a way that meets the needs and desires of the communities we are serving has always been seen as essential,” he said.

“Being open to feedback from local families has been important and has allowed us to be critical about ourselves in a supported, sincere, and genuine way.

What local community members are saying:

“Thank you for helping me understand more about myself.”

Coming to these sessions has really supported me to help our mob.”

“It’s great to know if we want to yarn we have someone that we know and can trust.”

“Delivering services to regional, remote and very remote parts of Queensland with the support of CheckUP has allowed WWH to grow in its wisdom, knowledge and skills when it comes to the delivery of specialised mental health and wellbeing services. Investing this growth back into vulnerable communities is supporting families to become more empowered in their wellbeing as they discover existing strengths and opportunities.”

LEFT: The Wakai Waian Healing team visits Woorabinda. Pictured in the front (L-R) is mental health worker Julyess Jarvis and psychologist Ed Mosby. Pictured at the back is psychologist Joe Sproats and mental health worker Simone Giles.

RIGHT: Sunset over Woorabinda. Photo credit Ed Mosby.



Outreach services help meet health needs in NPA

To ensure community health needs are met and to encourage better service uptake in the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA), CheckUP and NPA Family and Community Services have been working closely together.

Various Outreach service providers are contracted by CheckUP to visit the region, including more recently, a podiatrist, physiotherapist, and exercise physiologist.

NPA Family and Community Services Program Manager for Clinical Health Services Karyn Sam said these additional allied health services have provided accessible and quality of care to the people of NPA.

"People with diabetes have been able to access an annual diabetic foot check, which is in line with evidence-based practice," she said.

"This has been reassuring to the clients and the service; knowing that we are delivering a holistic care approach is fantastic."

Karyn said they had received a range of positive feedback from clients

about the visiting service providers, with comments including, "we don't have to be on a waiting list" and "our needs are attended to sooner rather than later".

"NPAFACS considers this feedback as excellent, as it is our priority to ensure that health needs are addressed effectively and in a timely manner," she said.

"People with diabetes have been able to access an annual diabetic foot check, which is in line with evidence-based practice."

Charters Towers podiatrist helps communities' step towards good foot health

Mark Robinson has been practicing podiatry for 19 years, and during this time he's had the opportunity to work in a variety of settings, including community health, high-risk foot clinics, hospitals, and private practice. Now operating Towers Podiatry from Charters Towers, Mark has spent the last seven years providing Outreach services to rural and remote communities throughout Central and Western Queensland. Mark regularly travels to Cardwell, Richmond, Hughenden, Townsville, Bowen, Clermont, Dysart, and Middelmount. During his visits, he provides a full scope of podiatry services, including diabetic assessment, nail and footcare, treatment of foot pain, and orthotics. By working as an Outreach provider Mark is able to deliver these services locally, allowing residents to avoid travelling long distances to access care.



Mark Robinson

How do you stay up-to-date with healthcare advancements or industry news?

I sit in on a lot of webinars and talk to colleagues regularly. I also keep in touch with other allied health professionals, diabetes educators, and physiotherapists that I have worked with over the years.

What message do you have for health professionals who may be considering becoming an Outreach provider?

If you can do it, you should do it. By providing services to some of the remote communities you develop an appreciation for how good we have it in the big cities in regard to healthcare access. It also teaches you to be able to work with minimum equipment and materials because no matter how much gear I have in the car there is always a client who needs something that I haven't brought, so I have to modify and adapt an existing device to meet their needs. At the end of the day, I feel it makes you a more versatile clinician.

Anything else you would like to share?

The majority of clients I see are retired people who have grown up in the community. Recently I have noticed especially in the last twelve months, that there has been an increase in people leaving the major towns and moving to smaller isolated communities. For some, it was to try and avoid COVID-19 and for others, it was due to the high cost of rentals and housing in the larger towns. In my opinion, there will be an even greater need for Outreach services in the future if this trend continues.

"I enjoy finding out about the history of the communities I visit and there is always at least one local who recalls how the town was 20 or 30 years ago."

Charter flight ensures cardiology visit continues

Following severe weather events in February 2022, flooding meant the Metro South Cardiology team were not able to access Goondiwindi via usual driving routes. Wanting to ensure the planned visit still went ahead, CheckUP in collaboration with Metro South Health were able to re-allocate funding and organise a charter flight so that cardiac Outreach services could continue in the rural town.

As a result, the planned appointments with the cardiology team were able to

go ahead, with 18 local patients being able to access the care of specialist cardiology physicians and cardiology sonographers. Being able to stay agile amid disruptions caused by weather events and COVID-19 restrictions has been especially crucial over the last two years. "Working in collaboration with CheckUP's Outreach providers, the Metro South Cardiology team has been able to enable continuity of care and access to health services for local patients in towns such as Goondiwindi."

"Working under the hub and spoke outreach model the Cardiology Team at Princess Alexandra Hospital have been able to maintain vital tertiary services into rural and remote towns across Darling Downs and South West HHSs ensuring equity of care for these communities."

— Metro South Health



Bradley has recently moved to Mt Garnet. His diabetes requires regular monitoring and he travels to see a general practitioner in Atherton. Bradley reports being very grateful for having access to support from a credentialed diabetes educator and other allied health providers within his hometown of Mt Garnet and thus minimising his need to travel to Atherton or beyond for these vital services.



Helping kids in Cape York "see more and be more"

CheckUP identified that there was a need to support the optometry services in the Northern Peninsula, Cape, and Lower Gulf regions of Northern Queensland.

"With funding from CheckUP, the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation were able to support a school screening initiative that enabled a support a team of four optometrists to visit eight remote locations."

Referral pathways were identified in the beginning to ensure a collaborative approach between visiting optometrists, local health services, and schools.

OneSight recently delivered screening services in the Lower Gulf and The Cape schools, including, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Pompuraaw, Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Normanton.

Throughout the program a total of four optometrists and optometry students conducted 2784 occasions of service screenings across eight locations.

"The OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation were thrilled to be able to bring services once again to the school children in the Cape & Gulf areas of Northern Queensland," Wayne Hogan from the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation commented.

"Our team is proud of our partnership with CheckUP in making sure that children in these regional and remote locations have the same access and chance of education through clear sight, as those kids in the metropolitan areas."

Through consultation with CheckUP's visiting optometrists and the profession in general, it is apparent that due to the modern lifestyle children are spending more time in front of screens. With this, there has been a continuing rise in myopia, also known as short-sightedness. For children who have already developed myopia, early detection provides the best chance of slowing down its development and reducing the risk of problems later in life.

Increased services to Mt Garnet

Earlier this year CheckUP worked with the Mount Garnet community to understand what additional Outreach services could be of benefit to the local area. Through this process our team helped identify a need for increased Outreach services in the areas of podiatry, dietetics, and diabetes education.

Chris Messina, a qualified pharmacist and a credentialed diabetes educator, is the founder of Green Jelly Bean Diabetes. Chris has been able to visit Mount Garnet as an Outreach service provider throughout 2022. He offers flexible appointment times and home visits, ensuring his patients receive the care that they need. Pictured above is Chris conducting a home visit with his patient Bradley.

Previously, long travel distances had been a barrier to some patients seeking care. The implementation of increased allied health services to the community is set to result in improvements to waiting times and in the general health and wellbeing of the community members.

Pharmacist Chris offers flexible appointment times and home visits, ensuring his patients receive the care that they need.



LEFT: Patients enjoying a community BBQ hosted by Mt Garnet's local health service.

Join the CheckUP Community

and help champion health equity

Stay connected. Stay informed. Stay involved.



CHECKUP

Creating healthier communities and reducing health inequities is at the heart of all that CheckUP does. However, this cannot be achieved in isolation. It requires a genuine and continued commitment to working with other like-minded organisations and individuals.

CheckUP's membership program strengthens our role as a connector, bringing together a group of people from across the health and community services sector united in a passion for better health for people and communities that need it most.

In addition to offering membership to organisations, CheckUP recently introduced a new Supporter category for individuals who believe in our vision.

It is simple to become a member and each category comes with great benefits.

Organisational Member

- Eligibility**
Organisations that are supportive of or have a bona fide interest in the achievement of CheckUP's vision
- Voting status**
Voting member
- Fees**
\$500 per annum
- Benefits**
- Voting rights at CheckUP Board Director elections.
 - CheckIN monthly newsletter.
 - Free attendance at face-to-face Queensland Primary Health Care Network quarterly meetings (usually \$50 per attendee).
 - Discounts for CheckUP events and forums (25%).
 - Invitations to CheckUP member-only events (e.g., Christmas member mingle).
 - Face-to-face networking opportunities with CheckUP members and stakeholders providing a forum to connect with other like-minded organisations.
 - Membership certificate posted upon payment of annual invoice.
 - At least one face-to-face meeting with CheckUP CEO or representative per year.

Supporter

- Eligibility**
This category is only open to individuals and can include personnel from member organisations
- Voting status**
Non-voting
- Fees**
FREE
- Benefits**
- CheckIN monthly newsletter.
 - Invitations to CheckUP events/forums
 - Discounts for CheckUP events and forums (10%).
 - Networking opportunities at CheckUP events.

Apply for
membership today

To apply for CheckUP membership:
Register online at www.checkup.org.au
or contact CheckUP on 07 3105 8300

Changing the world for Queenslanders with epilepsy

The National Epilepsy Support Service is launched

For the first time, Australians with epilepsy and the people who care for them can access expert advice and resources under one roof. One of CheckUP's members, Epilepsy Queensland, is part of this exciting new initiative!

The National Epilepsy Support Service (NESS) will change the world for 30,000 Queenslanders living with epilepsy, providing high-quality information and support.

The National Epilepsy Support Service is a free, Australia-wide phone line that provides support and information to people of all ages and at all stages of life.

In Australia, research has shown that 90% of people with epilepsy feel that they don't have access to the help they need – the National Epilepsy Support Service aims to change this.

Epilepsy Queensland Chief Executive Chris Dougherty said that every day the organisation was hearing from people impacted by epilepsy who wanted it to be easier to find evidence-based, accurate, and contemporary epilepsy information, no matter where they lived.

"This is why epilepsy organisations across the country came together to create the National Epilepsy Support Service. It's just the beginning of how we are changing the world for Aussies with epilepsy, together," he explained.

When customers call the NESS, they speak with an epilepsy support worker who understands how epilepsy affects health, wellbeing, and daily life. The NESS provides information on a range of topics, including epilepsy and seizure management, seizure first aid, and strategies to minimize seizure triggers.

The service can provide information tailored for children and young people, older Australians, CALD communities, and people with a disability. Callers can also contact the NESS for guidance on how epilepsy could impact pregnancy, diet, education, or employment.

When people require ongoing comprehensive support, the NESS team will organise a referral to their state epilepsy organisation.

As the state's peak consumer body Epilepsy Queensland leapt at the opportunity to be part of this exciting new initiative, which connects more Queenslanders impacted by epilepsy to their vital services. Assistance with epilepsy education and training sessions, information, guidance, and support for people with epilepsy and their families are just a phone call away.



Looking for support? Call the National Epilepsy Support Service.

NESS operates Monday to Saturday, 9.00am to 7.00pm (AEST) at 1300 761 487. NESS is not a medical emergency line. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 000.



"This is why epilepsy organisations across the country came together to create the National Epilepsy Support Service. It's just the beginning of how we are changing the world for Aussies with epilepsy, together."
- Epilepsy Queensland CEO Chris Dougherty

Genomics training for general practitioners

Genomic medicine is a rapidly evolving field with many clinical applications.

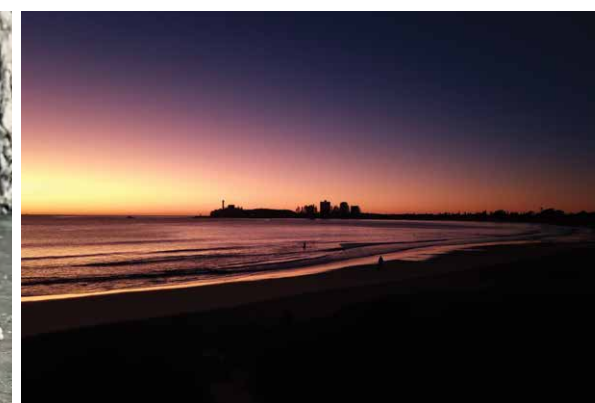
While individual genetic conditions are often rare, as a collective, genetic conditions are very common with approximately 60% of people being affected with a disorder that has some sort of genetic background. Genomic technologies are being applied to both monogenetic and complex diseases. Additionally, genomics is informing management of both genetic and non-genetic disease.

The Genomics for the General Practitioner eLearning resource is intended to provide relevant information about genomic medicine to assist general practitioners in the implementation of genomics into their everyday practice. The self-paced course comprises of five distinct modules and takes approximately four hours to complete from start to finish.

The Genomics for General Practitioners education program is a collaboration between CheckUP, Queensland Genomics, the Genomic Institute, Queensland University of Technology and the Genomics Primary Care Advisory Group. The initiative was funded by Queensland Genomics. Access to the eLearning modules is available via genomics-checkup.talentlms.com.

Gallery of Annual Photo Competition submitted entries

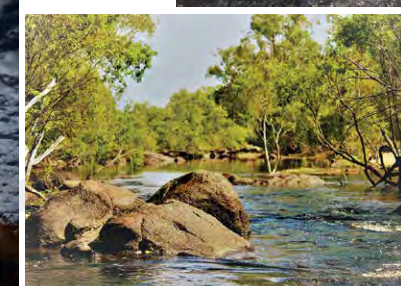
CheckUP would like to thank the entrants of our Annual Photo Competition. The images and stories that accompanied them were wonderful, making it difficult to select the winners. Below is a compilation of some of the fabulous entries that came our way. Enjoy, and keep snapping to get ready for next year's competition.



Congratulations to our competition winners...

Human interest category winner (L) – Louise Pratt
Natural environment category winner (M) – Paul Penumala
People's choice winner (R) – Jenna Mottin. Pictured is Kate Larkin

Submission highlights...





CheckUP staff and Board respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to the land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and future leaders.

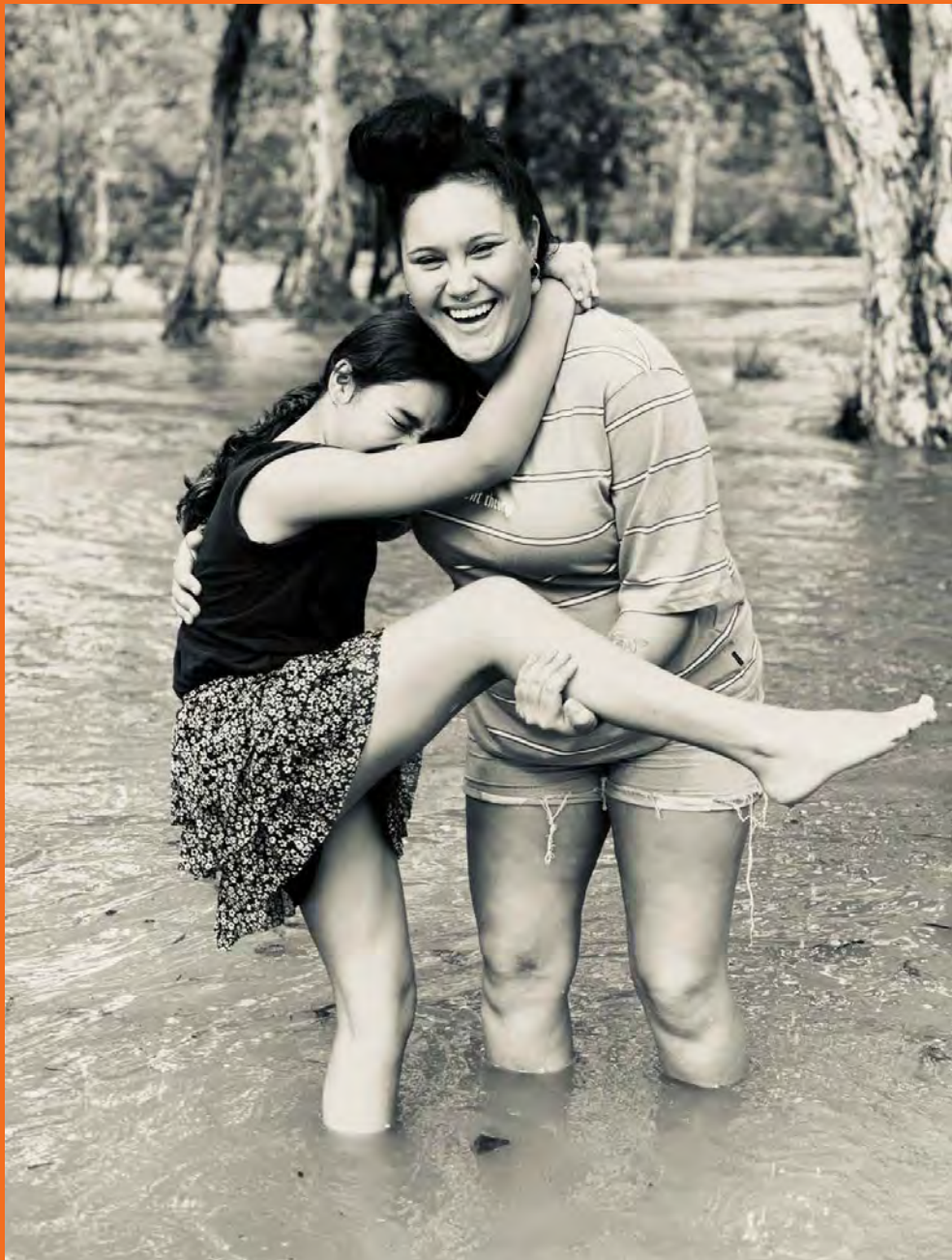


Image by Louise Pratt, winner of CheckUP's Annual Photo Competition "Human Interest" category.



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