



**phn**  
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## First Nations peoples of the Brisbane south region

The land, sea and waters of the Brisbane south region are the traditional countries of the Yuggera (Ugarapul, Jagera); Turrbal; Quandamooka / Minjerribah / Moongumpin (Nunukal, Ngughi and Gorenpul) and Yugambah (Mununjahlii, Gugingin, Bollogin, Wangerriburra, Minjungbal, Birinburra, Migunberri and Kombumerri) First Nations (and sub-clans).

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, and of the many different nations across the wider Brisbane south region. We pay our respects to the Elders, past, present and emerging as the holders of the memories, the traditions, the culture and the spiritual wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation. We acknowledge any Sorry Business that may be affecting the communities as a whole.



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# Introduction

## Mike Bosel, Chief Executive Officer



Baugull nyungai  
Gurumba bigi  
Maroomba biggee

Welcome.

We are delighted to bring you the first edition of Brisbane South PHN's Primary Health Impact magazine.

In each issue we'll examine various facets of community health, exploring the innovative ways that we partner with communities and health care providers to deliver the best possible health and wellbeing for every person in our region. For our first edition we're focusing on First Nations health, showcasing just some of the diverse programs that we deliver to First Nations peoples in Brisbane south.

Our region is home to the country's largest urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population; our strong partnerships with community leaders, elders and community organisations are in action every day as we support First Nations peoples to enjoy long and healthy lives. Lives centred in culture, with access to services that are strengths-based, prevention-focused, responsive, culturally safe, and free of racism and inequity.

We recognise that there is much work to do – and that we have a long journey ahead of us all until we have achieved equality in health outcomes for First Nations peoples. We are proud to be playing our small part.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought our community together as we collectively responded to emerging challenges. At Brisbane South PHN we have also been keeping a close eye on the ways in which COVID-19 has deepened existing inequalities or exposed new vulnerabilities. Equity lies at the heart of our work for the Brisbane south region and efforts to close the gap in health outcomes for First Nations peoples - despite the many challenges that COVID-19 continues to present - remain an ongoing priority.

As the year draws to a close, we wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season. We look forward to working alongside you in 2022.

*Mike Bosel*



# Working to support First Nations COVID-19 vaccination

Everyone in our region deserves equitable access to COVID-19 vaccinations, advice and care.

As part of our ongoing COVID-19 response, we have partnered with Brisbane North PHN to improve vaccine access for First Nations peoples. So far, this has included supporting general practices working in First Nations communities, arranging in-reach vaccinations within practices, and developing

software guides to assist in identifying and prioritising First Nations peoples for COVID-19 vaccination.

We are also working with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, Aboriginal Medical Services, Metro North Health and Metro South Health to improve access to vaccinations for those who would benefit from additional support.



# The Gift of Gallang

Youth programs that foster cultural connection for First Nations children have been successful at reducing rates of youth suicide and self-harm.<sup>1</sup>

The Gift of Gallang is a primary school-based wellbeing and suicide prevention program designed for First Nations children and led by First Nations facilitators. It was conceived after a tragic cluster of youth suicides occurred in the Inala area in 2016.

Community consultation confirmed that a reduced sense of belonging and lack of cultural connection had increased feelings of despair and hopelessness amongst First Nations children – a contributing factor in the increased suicide rate.

‘Gallang’ is a Jagera Nation word for ‘healing’; the program uses a strengths-based approach to teach the skills of emotional regulation, to foster connections to culture, and to remind children that they matter – to their friends, families and the broader community.

Supported by Brisbane South PHN, the Gift of Gallang is currently being delivered in Inala by Inala Wangarra Inc and, thanks to its success, will soon be extended to parts of Logan and Beaudesert.

<sup>1</sup> Gibson, M., Stuart, J., Leske, S., Ward, R. and Tanton, R. (2021), Suicide rates for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: the influence of community level cultural connectedness. *Med J Aust*, 214: 514-518. <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51084>



# Ensuring access to culturally safe services

## A new online tool for health care providers caring for First Nations peoples

Whilst the reasons for the gaps in health outcomes for First Nations peoples are complex and multifactorial, it is widely acknowledged that culturally appropriate and holistic health delivery systems improve health outcomes. This was highlighted in the 2019 AIHW report into cultural safety in health care for First Nations peoples, which found that 32% of First Nations peoples surveyed had not accessed health services when they needed to due to reasons such as language problems, discrimination and lack of cultural appropriateness.<sup>2</sup>

The Brisbane south region is home to Australia's largest urban First Nations population. Despite this, consultations with First Nations peoples and health professionals have indicated that finding culturally safe services can be difficult.

As part of our ongoing work to improve the provision of culturally safe health care in Brisbane south, we recently invited First Nations Elders, community organisations and other community leaders to participate in a forum to discuss health matters important to First Nations peoples in our region. This discussion informed our Health Needs Assessment, which guides our decisions about programmatic investment and design as we work to build a health and wellbeing system in which every person, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, is supported to access high quality, culturally safe health care.

At the forum we also heard that First Nations peoples often feel unwelcome in primary health care settings, experiencing a sense of cultural alienation, alongside a lack of transport and inflexible treatment options. Over time, this has led to a mistrust of mainstream health care and reluctance

to access services, even when the health consequences can be severe<sup>3</sup>.

Chronic health conditions, mental health and addiction to alcohol and other drugs were highlighted as particular challenges for First Nations communities in our region. Discrimination was a common theme that underpinned and exacerbated all of the health challenges that were discussed.

In response to this, and other issues, Brisbane South PHN has launched a sophisticated online directory – First Nations Health Focus – that connects primary health workers and First Nations patients with culturally safe health services in Brisbane south.

The First Nations Health Focus website is a tool for health workers who are committed to providing equitable health care in busy practice settings. Amongst other resources, it features a comprehensive directory designed for use by General Practitioners (GPs) during a consultation, offering a broad list of culturally safe health services in our region for First Nations peoples.

The site was developed in response to demand from primary health care providers, who wanted a quick and easy-to-use directory of well-established, culturally safe primary and allied health care services to connect and coordinate comprehensive care for patients who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Amongst other benefits, the website helps GPs to write chronic health care plans that include local, culturally safe health and allied health service providers for their patients.





Artwork by Jess 'Muralappi' Skeen-McKinnon commissioned for First Nations Health Focus

From culturally safe family and social support for pregnant women<sup>4</sup> to culturally safe support when working with First Nations patients affected by Domestic and Family Violence<sup>5</sup>, searches can be quickly and easily filtered by various additional demographics, health needs and locations to better match a patient with the most appropriate service/s for them.

Being serious about health system reform means being serious about listening. The development of our First Nations Health Focus website was only possible because of those who shared their insights, experiences, and expertise, helping us to better understand the big issues we face. We are grateful for their time and proud to be working alongside First Nations community leaders, Elders, groups, and organisations to identify gaps in primary

health care delivery, to find opportunities and to develop joint targets and actions that will help to close those gaps.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2021). Cultural safety in health care for Indigenous Australians: monitoring framework. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/cultural-safety-health-care-framework>

<sup>3</sup> Improving healthcare for Aboriginal Australians through effective engagement between community and health services; BMC Health Serv Res. 2016; Published online 2016 Jul 7. doi: 10.1186/s12913-016-1497-0

<sup>4</sup> This year, Brisbane South PHN allocated seed funding for Yulu-Burri-Ba to provide culturally provide culturally safe family and social support to women in the antenatal stage of pregnancy, working in partnership with Redlands Hospital.

<sup>5</sup> As part of the Recognise, Respond, Refer program, Brisbane South PHN is working with the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector to support the development of training to GPs and community-controlled staff on the provision of culturally safe support when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander patients affected by Domestic and Family Violence.

# On the road to improved health care in the Logan region with Gunya Meta Aboriginal Corporation

Access to good health care in the first years of life is crucial for improving health outcomes in adulthood. A lack of affordable transport to and from health care appointments can present significant barriers to care access and continuity.

These challenges are experienced by many First Nations peoples in our region, with many First Nations children living in locations of comparatively higher socio-economic disadvantage. Lower childhood immunisation rates are just one consequence of this disadvantage.

Brisbane South PHN and The Salvation Army recognised that this barrier to accessing health care exists in the Logan region, and commissioned Gunya Meta Aboriginal Corporation to provide transport to and from health care providers for local First Nations children and their families.

This is just one of the ways that we work with First Nations families and services to optimise child health and development; identifying and removing barriers where possible and helping families to stay connected to community and culture through place-based initiatives that support people where they are.



# Closing the Gap in aged care with 'Balgah binay' Healthy Ageing Hub, Inala Wangarra



New research has found the 2 most important factors for First Nations Elders when seeking health and aged-care services are the ability to relate to their health care providers on a cultural level, and to have access to an environment that is spiritually, emotionally and socially safe.<sup>6</sup>

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations and Centres like Inala Wangarra are well placed to link their Elders to health and aged care services, providing a safe and supportive environment where information, challenges and advice can be shared among friends and carers.

In a 2021 pilot program, Brisbane South PHN supported 5 community organisations in the region, including Inala Wangarra, with the introduction of Healthy Ageing Hubs. Healthy Ageing Hubs involve partnering with organisations in settings that older people regularly access in their communities, giving older people and their family members/ carers access to culturally appropriate and age-relevant health information.

Early feedback from First Nations community members who attended the Healthy Ageing Hub at Inala Wangarra was that purely information-based sessions on Advanced Care Planning or Healing from Past Trauma were overwhelming for participants. Instead, social activities focussing on connecting together over food and fun were suggested by the Elders.

The program was adapted to consolidate the feedback and incorporate the suggestions of the community. The educational-social activities subsequently introduced have proved popular. Since March 2021, approximately 300 Elders have attended the social events where activities like line dancing have provided an environment in which those attending can also learn more about various health and wellbeing topics. Drop-ins by providers have also been introduced, allowing primary health care providers to join Elders for a yarn in a safe and welcoming environment.

Community feedback about the adapted program has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 95% of survey participants reporting increased knowledge, confidence to seek help and willingness to recommend the sessions to another person.

In a gesture that speaks to the pilot program's success, Yuggera Elder Aunty Kerry Charlton gifted the Healthy Aging Hub with a new name: Balgah binay, which means "A coming together to learn and be uplifted".

<sup>6</sup>Larke, BM, Broe, GA, Daylight, G, et al. Patterns and preferences for accessing health and aged care services in older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. *Australas J Ageing*. 2021; 40: 145- 153. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.12864>

# Professor Cindy Shannon Chair, Brisbane South PHN Board

"I have worked extensively in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and am passionate about the role of primary health care and community-controlled models in delivering better health outcomes for Indigenous peoples. My other keen interest is in supporting workforce development through innovative models and partnership opportunities."

Professor Cindy Shannon is a descendent of the Ngugi people from Moreton Bay and is currently the Pro Vice Chancellor (Indigenous) at Griffith University. She is an Emeritus Professor with The University of Queensland (UQ) and in 2020 was made a Member of the Order of Australia (in general division) for contributions to Medical Education and Indigenous Health.



## Our member organisations

