

Working together to support multicultural communities in our region.



03 Supporting leaders to empower their communities

Combining resources to meet community needs.

04 A region rich in stories, culture and diversity

31 per cent born overseas, 20% from non-English speaking countries.

08 One man's hope and vision

Faysal Ahmed Salat shares his experiences in Australia.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Baugull nyungai Gurumba bigi Maroomba biggee

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.

In the spirit of reconciliation, partnership and mutual respect, we will continue to work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to shape a health system which responds to the needs and aspirations of the community.



About us

Brisbane South PHN (Primary Health Network) has a vision for the best possible health and wellbeing for every person in the Brisbane south region.

We partner with local health organisations and communities to build a health and wellbeing system in which every person in the Brisbane south region, especially those with the greatest need, is supported to live well and experience care that is connected, high-quality and easy to access.

Get in touch with us via contactus@bsphn.org.au or call **1300 467 265**.

In this issue

- 02** CEO message
- 03** Supporting leaders to empower their communities
- 04** A region rich in stories, culture and diversity
- 06** Partnering to connect the health care system
- 08** One man's hope and vision
- 09** Our impact

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CEO Message

The Brisbane South PHN region is home to over 1.2 million people — many from different backgrounds and cultures. 31 per cent of people in our region were born overseas and 20 per cent were born in non-English speaking countries, making us the most culturally diverse region in Queensland with:

- the highest refugee settlement in Queensland
- the largest Pasifika and Māori community in the country.

Brisbane South PHN's focus is on improving health outcomes and experiences for our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population by working with partners to ensure health care is accessible, culturally appropriate and inclusive. Brisbane South PHN is proudly the only PHN to have a multicultural health team, and across Australia are seen as a leading PHN in this space. We co-ordinate the national effort to improve cultural responsiveness across PHNs and are one of two PHNs on the Department of Health and Aged Care's CALD Communities Health Advisory Group.

The high cultural diversity within our region brings great strength and collectivism. This can be seen in the range of community and faith-based groups and organisations across Brisbane south.

The strong connections between multicultural services and our communities are a key asset in our region. However, our diversity brings complexity in maintaining engagement and reaching all groups.

We know that people from multicultural backgrounds, particularly non-English speaking backgrounds, will often face additional barriers to accessing and navigating the Australian health care systems, including:

- language barriers, for example, accessing interpreting services
- health literacy challenges
- cultural safety and appropriateness of available health services.



The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the health access and equity challenges that people from CALD backgrounds face. Fortunately, it has also resulted in momentum gaining and new opportunities at both state and national levels to focus efforts on ensuring the health system better meets the needs of CALD communities.

We're calling on long-term government and philanthropic investment for our multicultural health strategies and health care system reform initiatives, so that we can continue to deliver and expand on the great work we have already achieved.

I hope you enjoy this edition. Please don't hesitate to drop me a line if you'd like to get in touch.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Bosel". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Kind regards
Mike Bosel
Chief Executive Officer

Supporting leaders to empower their communities

Amongst many culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations, natural leaders - people of influence within their communities, play a critical role in supporting their communities on how to look after their health. To ensure that leaders are equipped to do this, Brisbane South PHN in partnership with Mater Refugee Health, established a health literacy project.

Natural leaders were trained and supported to co-design material, tailor information and deliver content about the health system in an engaging way that was meaningful for their communities.

To date, 37 leaders have been trained in navigating the Australian health system, from 24 cultural backgrounds. Information has been delivered to 1,261 CALD community members.

'After this workshop I will take my medication correctly and tell my doctor if I'm on different medications. I learnt how to communicate with others and how to access medical services,' program participant.

However, acting as a natural leader can be taxing. At times leaders may feel a responsibility to provide mental and emotional support to the community because of challenges including:

- language barriers
- access to culturally appropriate care
- fear and stigma.

Brisbane South PHN funded Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, to implement a program to support natural leaders to:

- better manage their own needs and levels of burn out
- provide support and information to their communities.

The program has been successful, with participants now understanding the need to also support their own mental health.

'Previously I would not share my problems or feelings with any of my peers, but after the workshops I feel comfortable talking to each other and we know that the discussion is confidential and it really helps. There is always somebody who has some advice and we support each other,' program participant.

With a commitment to ongoing funding, programs like these can continue to do amazing work supporting our CALD communities.



A region rich in stories, culture and diversity

The Brisbane South PHN region is home to over 1.2 million people. Of this, 31 per cent were born overseas, with 20 per cent coming from non-English speaking countries. We have over 240 languages spoken across our region, making us rich in stories, culture, and diversity.

Strong community connections

At Brisbane South PHN, we are strongly connected with our multicultural communities and service providers. This allows us to hear about the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and helps us plan how to effectively use our funding, or partner with others, to provide services that meet their needs.

Services provided by our commissioned services and partnerships include:

- health literacy and system navigation
- mental health support
- older persons health
- child health
- vaccination
- chronic disease care coordination.

In addition to this, we provide training and resources that assist our health workforce to be culturally responsive when working with people from CALD backgrounds and know how and when to engage interpreters.

Data gathering and its role in improving health and wellbeing

There is a need for consistency in capturing data relating to the health status and needs of multicultural people at national, state and local levels in Australia.

Brisbane South PHN advocates across health and other sectors for better collection of CALD data, including:

- country of birth
- language spoken
- whether an interpreter is required
- cultural background or ethnicity
- year of arrival in Australia.

Without access to sound data, CALD communities' health and wellbeing needs are not clear, service usage by CALD communities remains uncertain, and the ability to plan for the future is difficult. In the absence of accurate data, Brisbane South PHN works closely with partners and community organisations, who allow us to build trust and long-term relationships that help us to identify the communities' needs.

Early adopters

'We have long advocated for free interpreting services for private allied health providers to improve quality of services and equity of access,' explained Andrea Vancia, Program Manager, Multicultural Health, Brisbane South PHN.

'While waiting for the government to implement this, we allocated local funding for our own program.'

As a result of collective advocacy across the multicultural health sector, in October 2022, the Australian Government expanded their free interpreting service to include some allied health professionals across selected local government areas including Logan and Brisbane.

Planning for a prosperous future

As a PHN we continuously strive to deliver much-needed services to ensure health care system equity. Currently, we receive small amounts of short-term funding. Unfortunately, being unable to provide services long-term erodes community trust. Short-term funding is unsustainable and creates uncertainty, which can be a barrier to embedding services and achieving long-term positive impacts.

Consistent, reliable funding is needed to plan for a prosperous future that would allow us to increase the scale and sustainability of our work to support our CALD communities.

With stable funding we plan to continue to improve the health of our CALD communities by:

- expanding programs to improve health literacy and support determinants of health
- expanding small grass roots health and community programs to better support discreet CALD community needs
- increasing targeted CALD health service provision to better support choice and control
- working with partner organisations to develop placements and support primary care to assist with health employment pathways
- engaging, recognising and remunerating bicultural workers – allowing them to act as links between health services and the community.

At Brisbane South PHN, we are tremendously proud of our strong relationships with our system partners. Together we are building a health system that supports multicultural communities in our region.



Celebration of Queensland holi 2018. Rock riverside park, Brisbane, Australia.

Connecting communities with our health care system

Brisbane South PHN works closely with our health care system partners to plan, leverage strengths, and combine resources to more efficiently meet the needs of our CALD communities.

Refugee Health Connect

People from refugee backgrounds often have additional health challenges and complexities as a result of exposure to substantial hardships and human rights violations. In 2014, significant issues for newly arrived humanitarian entrants trying to access health care were identified by our partners. In response, we collaboratively established Refugee Health Connect, a partnership between Brisbane South PHN, Mater Refugee Health, Metro South Health, and Brisbane North PHN.

Together, we provide a single point of contact to:

- assist service providers navigate new arrivals through the Australian health system
- build the skills of primary health professionals who support communities.

‘This allows the primary health care sector to manage the care of families of refugee backgrounds in both culturally and clinically appropriate ways,’ explained Andrea Vancia, Program Manager, Multicultural Health, Brisbane South PHN.

Enabling primary care to better manage the needs of people from refugee backgrounds is critical for our region. In 2022 re-opened borders saw a return of humanitarian entrants. However, with significant workforce and resource challenges in primary care compounded by the pandemic, general practices have limited capacity to support newly arrived refugee peoples.

There is an ongoing need for more financial and partnership support in this area.



Driving good health and wellbeing outcomes with Pasifika and Māori peoples

We identified that a high number of Pasifika and Māori peoples in our region are experiencing barriers to good health and wellbeing outcomes.

Some of these barriers, caused by visa limitations, include lack of access to:

- health and social support services
- education and employment opportunities.

We worked collaboratively with local community members and organisations, Metro South Health, and Children’s Health Queensland, to develop a unified approach to improving outcomes.

‘A first of its kind in Australia and New Zealand – together we developed and are implementing the Pasifika and Māori Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework and Action Plan for our region,’ said Jen Newbould, General Manager, Brisbane South PHN.

The framework guides:

- how the region delivers health services
- the collaboration of community services and representatives together with health organisations.

Already, this work is highlighting community needs well beyond our region. View the Pasifika and Māori Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework and Action Plan at pasifikamaorihealthstrategy.org.au

Our ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Brisbane South PHN has been instrumental in working with multicultural health stakeholders to ensure equity and access to information and services for CALD communities and service providers.

During this time, we have successfully advocated for:



plain language and translated resources from government health departments



video interpreting to be made available through the government's Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National).

We are active members of:

- Queensland's CALD COVID-19 Health Engagement Project.
- The federal government's CALD COVID-19 Advisory Group.

We also commissioned services to help increase CALD COVID-19 vaccination:



1,600+
COVID-19 vaccines administered, including to people without access to Medicare



87
COVID-19 education activities conducted across community settings



One man's hope and vision for culturally-safe health care for refugees

Somalian-born Faysel Ahmed Salat, a Refugee Health Consultant with the Mater, fled his country in 2001 due to civil war. After spending 12 years in a refugee camp in Eritrea, Faysel arrived in Australia.

Now, nearly 10 years on, Faysel is president of the Somalia Community Association of QLD where he provides much needed support to newly arrived humanitarian entrants - providing information, filling out forms, helping people to access services, and sharing translated resources and videos, like Brisbane South PHN's videos on how to call an ambulance.

Faysel acknowledges that the health system in Australia is complicated. Without navigators like him, translated resources, videos, and health literacy training, it is difficult for new Australians to navigate the system and access health care.

'The health system here is different to the refugee camp and has lots of paper work. Some people can't read or write in their own language, and can't understand English yet. This makes it hard for them to find the right information,' Mr Ahmed Salat said.

After living in Australia for a couple of years, Faysel experienced firsthand just how challenging accessing healthcare can be for someone with limited English.

While accompanying his non-English speaking father to a doctor's appointment, Faysel was asked to stay out of the room. Although interpreters are available free of charge for GPs, an interpreter was not engaged.

'If there is misunderstanding between my father and his doctor, that is very dangerous', said Mr Ahmed Salat.



'If people don't feel respected, if they have a bad experience, then it's hard for them to go back to the doctor again. Then we see people trying to treat themselves and trying to do what makes them feel better and eventually ending up in Emergency.'

Luckily, because of the support and training Faysel had received, he knew his rights and supported his father to find a GP that was willing to engage an interpreter.

Like Brisbane South PHN, Faysel's hope and vision for his community is that they feel respected and supported to get the culturally appropriate health care that they need.

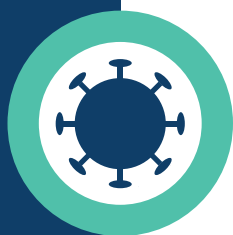
Our impact

Our work supporting multicultural health has meant that:



1,600+

COVID-19 vaccines administered, including to people without access to Medicare



87

COVID-19 education activities conducted across community settings



1,261

community members attended health literacy education about the Australian health system



130

CALD people supported through our care coordination service



270

allied health professionals registered for our interpreting for allied health program



415

episodes of care were started in 2022 for people born overseas through our CALD mental health programs

Our member organisations

Brisbane South PHN has 21 members from across communities, not for profits, health and peak bodies who provide critical support for our work across policy, health reform and other matters – including opportunities to improve the mental health of people in Brisbane south. We are grateful for their guidance and expertise as we seek to support the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes for every person.

