

# Year in review



## A gold medal performance

The Gold Coast was gripped by sporting fever this year as the long-planned for 2018 Commonwealth Games was held between 4 and 15 April.

Gold Coast Health was proud to play a role in supporting what was the largest sporting event to be staged in Australia this decade and the largest ever on the Gold Coast.

The Games touched virtually every aspect of our health service, from service modification required to respond to the Games, to ensuring our staff could access our facilities, to caring for the athletes presenting to our hospitals.

We undertook more than two years of extensive planning for the Games, working closely with

key partners including the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation and other government agencies to ensure safe and exceptional health service delivery throughout the event.

As the designated hospitals, Gold Coast University Hospital (GCUH) and Robina Hospital were the referral points for acute injuries and illness for athletes, spectators, Games officials and the media.

Gold Coast Health also established and staffed a polyclinic (a mini emergency department) and pharmacy within the Commonwealth Games Village while another 200 health service staff and hospital volunteers gave their time to volunteer at Games venues as Games Shapers.

The majority of our staff worked to maintain essential health services for the community during the Games period with all data showing that we managed the demands of the Commonwealth Games extremely well.

Presentations at GCUH (already the busiest emergency department in Australia) over the Games period and school holidays were up about seven per cent on the same period last year.

Included in the presentations were more than 440 directly related to the Commonwealth Games who were transferred to GCUH or Robina Hospital for treatment for conditions ranging from fractures to malaria and

dehydration. This number exceeded expectations, with previous Commonwealth Games reporting less than 100 patients transported to hospital.

There was a significant and successful Public Health response to the Games and, aside from a minor influenza outbreak in one team, there were no disease outbreaks throughout the period. Environmental health staff conducted 288 inspections of Games venues, investigated 25 complaints and collected 234 samples for testing, including food, water in swimming pools and ice baths, and drinking water.

The spirit of the Games was well and truly felt at Gold Coast Health, particularly as more than 60 athletes from across the Commonwealth visited with patients and staff. Among the athletes showing off their medals were a number of para-athletes who visited our rehab areas to inspire those recovering from accidents or illness.

The feedback from those who touched our service was overwhelmingly positive. Staff provided a welcoming experience and were commended for their professional approach by GOLDOC, Polyclinic staff, athletes and various Games family. The additional workload was well managed with no adverse medical events recorded and consistent performance in NEAT and POST. It was a culturally positive professional experience for our organisation.

This once-in-a-lifetime event has delivered some lasting legacies for Gold Coast Health. From stronger partnerships with partner agencies and the emergency services, including the Queensland Ambulance Service, to a myriad of opportunities to test health-service wide emergency response procedures. While there may never be another event like it for the Gold Coast, we are thrilled to have been part of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

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**6600+** athletes and team officials from 71 Commonwealth nations

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**440+** Games-related presentations to emergency departments at GCUH and Robina Hospitals

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**178** inpatient admissions were Games-related

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The number of athletes from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Jamaica that visited staff and patients **68**

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 Gold Coast Health staff operated the polyclinic in the Athletes Village.

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### Varsity Lakes Day Hospital opened

Varsity Lakes Day Hospital, a purpose-built surgical facility, welcomed its first surgical patients on 1 November 2017.

Gold Coast Health leased the facility from Health Care Australia to help ease the demand for theatre time at Gold Coast University Hospital.

Across six operating theatres, the Gold Coast Health team expects to perform 15,000 routine surgeries each year at Varsity Lakes including gastroenterology, gynaecology, orthopaedics, plastics and ophthalmology. This includes an additional 3000 endoscopies every year.

The new day hospital also increases valuable bed space and reduces the length of stay for patients waiting for surgery at Gold Coast University and Robina hospitals, as well as ensuring that Gold Coast Health maintains its excellent track record seeing all elective surgery patients within clinically-recommended timeframes.

Stage three of Varsity Lakes Day Hospital is planned to include the opening of a new 24-hour-a-day ward and bowel screening clinic, complementing the endoscopy procedure room.



## Schoolies medical tent frees up ED

A collaborative research study has confirmed that the Schoolies Hub health facility operated by Gold Coast Health and the Queensland Ambulance Service each year is a successful emergency department avoidance strategy.

With emergency department crowding and ambulance transportation rates continuing to increase annually, mass gatherings such as Schoolies and the Gold Coast Marathon can place additional pressure on the public health system.

Operating a temporary health facility at major events like Schoolies has shown to significantly reduce the number of presentations to hospital emergency departments.

A skilled team of Gold Coast Health professionals work alongside other health professionals and volunteers to operate the temporary health facility between 6pm and 2am for each day of Schoolies.



## Research funding drives innovation

Nine research projects by Gold Coast Health clinicians and staff shared in more than \$517,000 in funding courtesy of a partnership between the health service and Gold Coast Hospital Foundation.

The Research Grants Scheme provides seed funding for innovative health and clinical research projects that will improve the health of the Gold Coast community and the delivery of health care services.

These research projects, led by Gold Coast Health professionals and often involving collaboration with universities, combine high quality research with clinical practice and are contributing to the growth of Gold Coast Health's strong research culture.

Projects to receive up to \$100,000 over two years included:

- rapid diagnosis of sepsis in acutely ill children
- safety, tolerability and efficacy of cannabis-based medicine extract in slowing the progression of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and motor neurone disease
- responding to domestic and family violence in the context of maternity care.

## Coordination hub delivers patient benefits

Gold Coast Health has established a new hi-tech coordination hub, the first of its kind in Australia, to improve the flow and care of patients.

The new facility uses world-leading technology to provide real-time data that a dedicated team uses to streamline patient flow.

The Gold Coast University Hospital is the busiest Emergency Department (ED) in Australia. Together with the ED at Robina Hospital, there are more than 170,000 ED presentations every year.

Of those, more than 40 per cent required admission, which places pressure on the health service to find beds for these unscheduled patients on top of the beds required for those people who are already inpatients or scheduled for surgery.

Since the Coordination Hub opened, the journey for patients within the hospital has improved through more efficient bed management.

The data and co-location of teams has already resulted in several initiatives being implemented to further improve patient flow, including extending the Transfer Unit operating hours and allocating additional physicians to work alongside their ED colleagues at peak periods of demand.





## Responding to Domestic and Family Violence

Gold Coast Health understands the importance of recognising, responding to and referring patients and families affected by Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) that present to any area within the Health Service. Often the health sector is the first point of contact for identifying those affected by DFV and we are committed to implementing change and providing support for those in need.

Gold Coast Health has established a range of close relationships with local community-based organisations, with the intention of combining expertise and resources reduce the impact of DFV and to provide support to all those involved. The established relationships include:

- The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response (GCDVIR) – a community-based multi-agency response to domestic violence, including Queensland Police Service and the Department of Housing. Services work together to provide coordinated, appropriate and consistent responses to all individuals affected by DFV and to those who perpetrate domestic violence.
- Women’s Legal Service (WLS) – we have established a health justice partnership with WLS in response to findings from the Not Now Not Ever report. The service provides vulnerable women attending Gold Coast Health services with legal advice and support regarding a range of matters including family law, domestic violence and child protection issues.

- DV Connect – Gold Coast Health maintains a close relationship with DV Connect and regularly provides their contact to patients as a referral service.

In November 2017 Gold Coast Health staff took an oath to help raise awareness of White Ribbon Australia’s work to end men’s violence against women.

Chief Executive Ron Calvert, executives and staff pledged to ‘stand up, speak out and act’ ahead of White Ribbon Day. The event marked Gold Coast Health’s commitment to gender equality, diversity and a culture of respect at all levels of the organisation.

Gold Coast Health has also employed a Specialised Domestic and Family Violence social worker – the first in Queensland Health – who has been pivotal in building the health service’s capacity to respond to the issue of domestic and family violence over the past year.

The role provides education and training to enable doctors, nurses, allied health workers and the broader staff to be able to identify and appropriately respond to women who are experiencing domestic and family violence.

## New service reduces hospital time for children

Children's Hospital in the Home (CHITH) is a new Gold Coast Health specialist home-visiting service for children aged five to 18 to reduce time spent in hospital or avoid admission.

The CHITH team of nurses, a paediatrician and a physiotherapist provide care for children with chronic conditions in their own home. In just the first month of operation, CHITH cared for 12 children, preventing 82 days of in-hospital care.

The families caring for children with chronic conditions have reported a huge difference in their family life, due to spending much less time in hospital. They have also reported less stress for children with behavioral needs, who are more relaxed at home, and that the children are missing less learning time as the team will visit children at school.



## Volunteer achieves amazing milestone

Jan Hamilton has been volunteering for Gold Coast Health for a remarkable 30 years.

Fellow volunteers and Chief Executive Ron Calvert paid tribute to Ms Hamilton, who volunteers two mornings a week with roles including collecting and distributing internal mail and messages, assisting patients attending outpatient clinics and providing way finding for patients and visitors.

Initially she chose to volunteer at the former hospital because she was familiar with the environment through her own medical experiences.

Ms Hamilton is held in very high regard by her fellow volunteers, described as a perfect example of someone never letting their disability get in the way of supporting others.

## Positive patient outcomes from nurse navigator

Improved quality of life is cited as one of the most significant outcomes for patients using Gold Coast Health's Alcohol and Other Drugs Service (AODS) nurse navigator program during its first year.

Nurse practitioner Dr Warren Harlow was appointed to assist clients frequently presenting to hospital with substance abuse problems. These patients also had complex health needs and were at serious risk of further deteriorating health, contributing to a decline in their quality of life.

Dr Harlow developed and refined a new model of care, involving clients presenting at least five times to hospital within one month or at least 10 times during a year. At the commencement of the program, the average pre-intervention rating of client-reported quality of life on the Australian Treatment Outcomes Profile was 1.5 out of 10, but this improved to 5.4 in July 2017.

In the most positive cases, clients have reduced or stopped problematic substance use, and also reduced or stopped presenting to hospital. There have also been improvements in their social relationships and broader health including finance management and housing.





## Compassionate care resonates with Gold Coasters

The efforts of nursing staff to fulfil one of the greatest wishes of a terminally ill inpatient at Gold Coast University Hospital has been widely celebrated by thousands of Gold Coasters through social media.

The dedicated palliative care staff at GCUH helped the patient fulfil his dying wish to marry his fiancée, putting in the extra effort to improve the patient's quality of life and creating beautiful memories for him and his family.

The wedding was a perfect example of patient-centred care and one of many times where staff have supported their patients' end-of-life goals, including weddings, vow renewals and a bar mitzvah.



## State-of-the-art CT scanner for the Gold Coast

Gold Coast Health patients were the first in Australia to access cutting-edge scanning technology after the installation of \$1.5 million worth of CT equipment at Gold Coast University Hospital.

The iQon CT scanner, expected to scan about 500 patients each month, will provide clinicians with the data to better manipulate scanned images on the fly, making the investigation and diagnosis of cancer and other pathology faster and easier, including the detection of subtle lesions.

The IQon CT scanner technology will allow clinicians to map iodine distribution and subtract it from one image to compare it to the other, when searching for vascular blockages in the chest.

It also bridges the gap in soft-tissue scanning between MRI and CT scans as the iQon can better characterise tissue or bones to differentiate tissue composition such as finding out the composition of kidney stones.



## Gold Coast Health staff rewarded for ideas outside the square

Gold Coast's premier public health innovation event, The Improvers, awarded more than \$1 million in 2018 to staff ideas which will directly improve patient care.

This year, the Gold Coast Health's workforce submitted 224 project proposals across six categories. Thirteen finalists were invited to present their ideas in a one-minute presentation to a panel of judges and a live audience, with staff participating via a live stream as well. From new ways of recycling medical equipment to creating state-of-the-art rehabilitation spaces, each of the submissions is another step towards delivering better care to the Gold Coast community.

The 2018 category one winning idea was an electronic blood fridge management system which helps reduce blood wastage, particularly for trauma patients who have a critical need for blood and blood products.

Other winning ideas included Ultrasonic Wound Debridement machines for the vascular wound service to help prevent diabetic amputations, installing a CT/MRI simulator which prepares children for an MRI or CT which traditionally might require a general anaesthetic and buying a MOTomed to mobilise ICU patients in their beds to help prevent loss of body mass.

Since the launch of The Improvers in 2014, more than \$1.88 million has been awarded to staff to bring their innovative ideas to life and help to improve outcomes for our patients.



Members of the GEMITH team, from left, occupational therapist Georgina Alle, Dr Marlis Ryan, Hilary Peters and physiotherapist Dylan Lloyd.

### Hundreds of patients home sooner

More than 500 patients have benefited in the first year of the Geriatric Evaluation and Management in the Home (GEMITH) program.

The program involves a team of medical, nursing and allied health professionals supporting patients in returning home sooner.

The patients, most over age 65 and with geriatric syndromes, are assessed by one of GEMITH's two geriatricians while inpatients to see if they could avoid a long stay in hospital.

In the past, these patients would remain in hospital for rehabilitation until they are able to care for themselves at home. The GEMITH program allows them to leave hospital earlier and receive daily visits from a multi-disciplinary team who provide care in their own homes, until they are back to baseline health and can care for themselves.

The team works Monday to Friday, and is made up of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, a dietitian, a pharmacist, an allied health assistant and social worker.

### Emergency staff celebrate 10 years at Robina

Gold Coast Health celebrated a decade of providing emergency care at Robina Hospital since the emergency department opened on 3 September 2007.

When the emergency department opened, an average of 87 patients per day were seen, and by 2017, this number had grown to an average of 170 patients per day. This amounts to over 522,000 presentations in the past 10 years.

With the demand in presentations doubling, nursing staff numbers have significantly increased to meet this demand, from 49 originally to 117 today.

The Robina emergency department consistently tops the state for its national emergency access target (NEAT) performance.



Current and former Robina ED staff celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

### Taking care to Gold Coast palliative patients

An online patient consulting initiative has made a difference to hundreds of Gold Coasters in need of Palliative Care in a little more than 12 months.

Since its introduction to the health service in March 2017, more than 460 Gold Coast Health patients have benefited from the Telehealth interactive video-conferencing system.

Patients referred to the Gold Coast Health Palliative Care Service have reached a point in their care where their illness is life-limiting and their medical needs become more about quality of life and empowering them to make the most of their time.

Giving patients rapid access to a member of our Supportive and Specialist Palliative Care Service reduces the need to travel to specialists for consultations and subsequently enables patients to spend more time in the comfort of their own home.

Diabetes clinics, renal clinics and pain management are other areas of the health service striving to use Telehealth as part of daily operations in the future.



Breast surgeon Dr Rhea Liang

## Leading the way with breast cancer surgery procedure

Gold Coast Health's Breast Services is gaining a reputation as a leader in a new surgical procedure that is improving the accuracy and comfort of breast cancer surgery.

The procedure, ROLLIS – short for Radio-labelled Occult Lesion Localisation – is used to find breast cancers that are too small to see or feel and assist in locating the cancer during surgery.

Traditionally, a long piece of wire with a hook on the end is inserted into the breast which can be uncomfortable and dislodge, increasing the number of women who might require repeat surgery.

With the trial procedure, a 'seed' containing a small dose of radioactive iodine is inserted into

the breast at the cancer site remaining active for up to eight days. The precision of the seed allows for surgery that removes the cancer and a rim of normal tissue around it, while sparing the rest of the breast tissue.

Gold Coast Health are now national leaders in this procedure and ran the inaugural training workshop on the east coast, attended by 26 surgeons and radiologists from Australia, New Zealand and Thailand.

Gold Coast Health services about 350 new cancers annually and about one third of them require this procedure, so approximately 115 Gold Coast women each year will be helped directly.

**“First time going to the Gold Coast University Hospital for a leg re-cast and it was the best experience! The staff and volunteers were amazing, super helpful and friendly and I didn't have to wait long to be seen. The hospital itself was clean and tidy and the cafe/eating area had lots of choices. I would definitely go back! Great service!”**

– Leslie Bradley