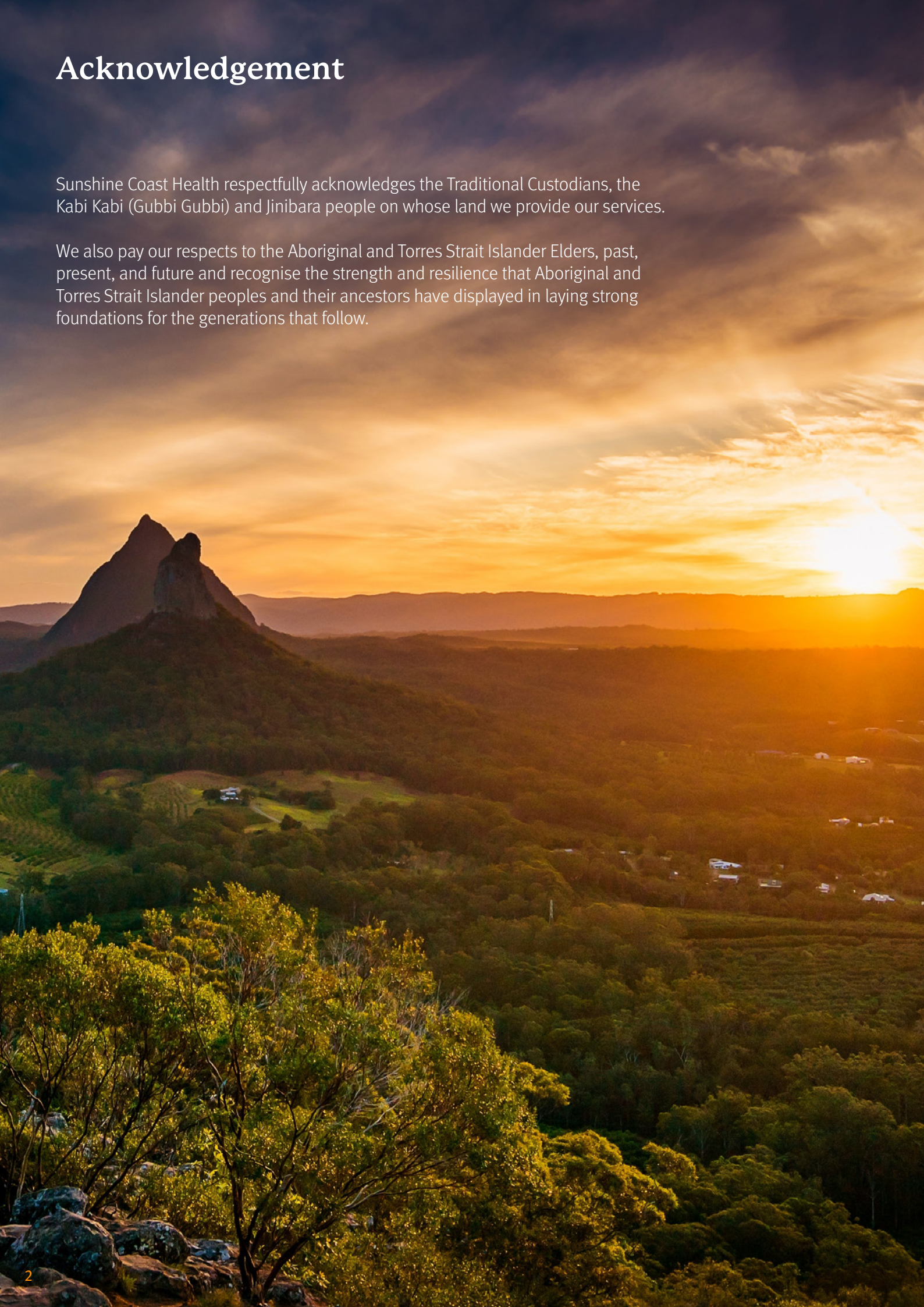


Disability Service Plan 2025-2030





Acknowledgement

Sunshine Coast Health respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians, the Kabi Kabi (Gubbi Gubbi) and Jinibara people on whose land we provide our services.

We also pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present, and future and recognise the strength and resilience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ancestors have displayed in laying strong foundations for the generations that follow.

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Message from the Executive Director of Allied Health and sponsor, Dr Gemma Turato

The Sunshine Coast Health Disability Service Plan 2025-2030 outlines our local health service commitment to providing safe, equitable, accessible healthcare to all individuals.

To serve our disability community effectively, our health service aspires to instill disability awareness and confidence in our service planning and delivery. We aim to actively reduce barriers and promote health equity by fostering our culture of continuous improvement and strengthening collaborative partnerships with our communities, to deliver accessible, high-quality healthcare for all.

As a health service, we acknowledge that achieving improved health outcomes for people with disabilities is fundamentally connected to having effective relationships with our consumers, as well as active engagement and feedback from our local population. Our Disability Service Plan was subsequently developed through a co-design method which embraces partnership and collaboration between healthcare staff, individuals with disability, and their support networks. Partnership with our consumers is integral to upholding core values of dignity, respect, and person-centred care.

Many people contributed to the development of the Sunshine Coast Health Disability Service Plan including:

- Sunshine Coast Health Disability Service Plan Consumer Working group.
- Sunshine Coast Health Disability Service Plan Steering Committee.
- Sunshine Coast Health staff.

We would like to sincerely thank you all for graciously providing your time, collaboration, insights and valuable feedback. Your contributions to the Sunshine Coast Health DSP will ensure cultural, systems, and knowledge developments are embedded into the plan. These developments reflect our commitment to providing a safe, inclusive and accessible health service.



A Personal Reflection of the Sunshine Coast Health DSP Working Group



Being part of the Sunshine Coast Health DSP working group has been an extraordinary privilege. As the group prepares to conclude its work, I want to recognise the engagement, motivation, and thoughtfulness that have characterised our discussions and efforts. The dedication of the working party in listening to and respecting every voice is truly remarkable; it's a genuine practice of valuing the lived experiences and insights of people with disabilities in our region.

Through the working party, we have laid a strong foundation for developing a new and effective disability plan tailored to the needs of our local community; one that is responsive, grounded in human rights, and committed to driving cultural change. Our collective efforts aim to create a healthcare system where services and environments address the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities, including those of my children. The emphasis on co-design is a core element of delivering better outcomes and fostering an inclusive healthcare landscape for all Sunshine Coast residents.

I sincerely hope that the progress we've made leads to continued advancements in healthcare for people with disabilities in our community. It would be an honour to remain involved in the ongoing development and implementation of the DSP, witnessing a future where our healthcare services meet the needs of all individuals within our community.

As we move forward, it is essential to maintain this spirit of co-design and collaboration. My vision for change includes specialised care that acknowledges the complexities of autism and other disabilities, cultivating compassion in healthcare, enhancing emergency support protocols to be more inclusive, integrating holistic approaches that consider co-occurring conditions, and fostering better coordination across services.

Together, with the insights gained from the Sunshine Coast Health DSP Working Group, we can create a healthcare system that empowers individuals with disabilities in our Sunshine Coast community to thrive, navigating the healthcare journey with dignity and respect.

Lisa Russell
Sunshine Coast Health Disability Service Plan Working Group Member



Sunshine Coast Health DSP aligns with Sunshine Coast Health's vision, purpose, and values of:

“Health and wellbeing through person-centred care”

“High-quality, cost-effective, innovative healthcare in collaboration with our communities and partners”



Integrity
We are respectful, trustworthy, equitable and honest in everything we do.



Compassion
We respect others, act with kindness, encourage and take time to listen to others.



Accountability
We take responsibility for our performance and behaviours and celebrate our achievements.



Innovation
We embrace change and strive to know more, learn more and do better.

Sunshine Coast Health DSP Purpose
To provide safe, equitable, accessible healthcare, and improved health outcomes for people with disability and reside on the Sunshine Coast.

Inclusion Commitment
Sunshine Coast Health is committed to improving healthcare for Queenslanders with disability and establishing health equity in being able to access health services and achieve quality health outcomes.

Human Rights Commitment
Sunshine Coast Health is committed to respecting, protecting, and promoting the human rights of people with disability and their interaction with the health system.

Disability
Disability is wide-ranging and comes in many forms. We acknowledge the language around disability is evolving and there is active debate in the community about the different preferences to describe disability¹.

The following definition has been proposed and endorsed by the Sunshine Coast Health DSP Working Group for Sunshine Coast Health to utilise and draws on references from many sources:

“Disability is very diverse. It can encompass intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory, physical, or psychosocial impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others². It can be visible or hidden and be recurring. People with disability are also diverse, with unique and individual needs and experiences³. Many people’s experiences with disability are shaped by more than their disability, by factors including their age, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, intersex status, and where they live⁴.

1 Queensland Government. (2022). Queensland’s Disability Plan 2022–27: Together, a better Queensland. Page 5. Queensland’s Disability Plan 2022-27 Together a better Queensland (dcssds.qld.gov.au)

2 Australian Human Rights Commission. (2024) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Human rights at your fingertips. Article One. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Human rights at your fingertips - Human rights at your fingertips | Australian Human Rights Commission
3 NSW Public Service Commission. (2024). What is Disability. What is disability | NSW Public Service Commission
4 Queensland Government. (2022). Queensland’s Disability Plan 2022–27: Together, a better Queensland. Page 5. Queensland’s Disability Plan 2022-27 Together a better Queensland (dcssds.qld.gov.au)

Carmel's story

I have worked in the Sunshine Coast Health for the last twenty years in many roles, primarily in Emergency Departments. In 2021, I was working as an Emergency Nurse Practitioner when I suffered a significant medical event. I was home at the time and came into SCUH as an emergency patient, where I spent the next six months in the ICU, stroke ward, and rehabilitation ward. After 2 ½ years of intensive rehabilitation, I returned to work with a permanent physical disability. Returning to work, if a person chooses to do so, is a significant rehabilitation outcome. I returned to work because I felt I could continue contributing to healthcare.

I have always loved work, patients, and my colleagues. Returning to work is associated with value and self-esteem, and I wanted to be a role model for my three daughters.

As a disabled person, you understand your abilities and strive to work to your maximal ability. You are also acutely aware of your limitations. The best outcome is that the limitations are approached under a reasonable adjustment policy, maximising the chance of success in the workplace. I had to learn the art of self-advocacy, which often presents as an uncomfortable conversation. Most advocacy conversations aim to raise awareness of the immediate situation and hopefully pave a better way for those with disabilities in the future. I am now working with the Sunshine Coast Health Virtual Acute Care Service (VACS) in an inclusive and dynamic team, fully maximising my abilities.

After my experience, I wondered and hoped I had shown compassion and gentleness to previous colleagues undergoing the same process. I also reflected on my past interactions as a healthcare worker with patients with disabilities and their carers. I am part of the Sunshine Coast Health DSP Steering Committee. I welcomed the opportunity to provide input into the DSP through a lived experience lens. I hope that one of the Sunshine Coast Health DSP's outcomes will be greater awareness and consideration of staff entering the workplace or returning to work with a disability. I am driven to be part of the DSP team and contribute to creating an inclusive workplace whilst being mindful of the challenges faced by those with disabilities. I would also love to see a disability-diverse workplace with employment opportunities matched to abilities.

Carmel Larkin



Introduction

Health equity is fundamental in improving health outcomes for people with disability. Every person has the right to access health services without discrimination (Qld Human Rights Act, 2019). Accessing healthcare may be challenging for people with disability because they may face attitudinal, physical, communication and financial barriers from other people in society⁵. The following quote highlights the importance of health equity;

“Better outcomes are achieved for people with disability when health providers understand their individual situation and circumstance, communicate well, do not allow disability to overshadow health issues, and provide services, premises and facilities that are accessible and appropriate.”⁶*

*(obscure, diminish)

Sunshine Coast Health acknowledges that people with disability experience many challenges when attempting to access appropriate health care. To reduce barriers and improve health equity, the Sunshine Coast Health DSP 2025-2030 has been developed to outline our vision and commitment to improving healthcare for people with disability accessing our health services.

This commitment is in accordance with:

- Anti-discrimination Act 1997 (QLD)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Human Rights Act 2019 (QLD)
- Disability Services Act 2006 (QLD)

It also reflects national and state policies and strategies such as:

- Australia’s Disability Strategy (2021-2031)
- Queensland’s Disability Plan 2022-2027: Together, a better Queensland (QLD)
- Department of Health Disability Service Plan 2022-2024 (QLD)
- The National Roadmap for Improving the Health of People with Intellectual Disability.
- The Disability Royal Commission – Final Report 2024
- The Independent Review into the NDIS (Bonyhady and Paul, Commonwealth of Australia 2023)



5 Queensland Government. (2024). “See me. Hear me. Respect me”. Campaign resources. <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/groups/people-with-disability/see-me-hear-me-respect-me-campaign>
6 Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2021). Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031. Page 27. 1781-australias-disability.docx (live.com)

Disability and Health Context

Nationally

As per the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, nationally⁷:

- 1 in 9 people under the age of 65 experience disability
- 1 in 2 people over the age of 65 years' experience disability
- 1 in 3 people with disability have severe or profound disability
- 36% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a disability and are twice as likely as other Australians to have severe or profound disability⁸.

People with disability report poorer general health and higher levels of psychological distress than people without disability⁹. In 2020-21, 31% of adults (aged 18 and over) with disability said their health was excellent or very good, compared with 68% of those without disability⁹.

Types of disability include – psychosocial, sensory, intellectual/cognitive, neurological, physical, and chronic health conditions. People with disability may experience combinations and overlaps of different 'types' of disability. Additionally, long-term health conditions may cause disability and having a disability may cause further health problems⁸.



In 2020-21, 31% of adults (aged 18 or over) with disability said their health was excellent or very good, compared to 68% of those without disability.

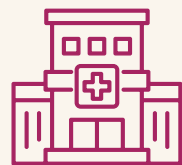


In 2020-21, 33% of adults with disability experienced high or very high psychological distress, compared with 12% of those without disability.

Source: People with disability in Australia 2024 - Summary Fact sheet 2: Health of people with disability? (aihw.gov.au)



People with disability access mainstream health services at a higher rate than people without a disability. In 2018, 26% of people with disability visited a hospital emergency department compared with 10% of people without disability.¹⁰



According to an Australian study in 2021 the rates of hospitalisation for people with intellectual disability ranged between three to 54 times higher than other people, and many of these were preventable admissions.¹¹

Queensland

Around 1 in 5 Queenslanders live with disability.¹²

An estimated 306,400 Queenslanders of all ages have a profound or severe disability. People with a profound or severe disability require assistance in everyday activities, including core activities such as self-care, mobility, and communication¹¹.

7 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release>

8 Queensland Health. (2023). Department of Health Disability Service Plan 2022-2024. Disability-Service-Plan-report.pdf (health.qld.gov.au)

9 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). 2024. Health of people with Disability. Health of people with disability - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)

10 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2022). Chronic conditions and disability. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dis/73-1/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents1/health/chronic-conditions-and-disability>

11 Queensland Government. (2022). Disability Statistics. <https://www.qld.gov.au/disability/community/disability-statistics>

12 Queensland Health. (2023). Department of Health Disability Service Plan 2022-2024. Page 9. Disability-Service-Plan-report.pdf (health.qld.gov.au)