

Bright magazine
Where health shines

Free

bright

**Sunshine
Coast
Health**



SPRING 26

Cover image:
Meet the doctors who
keep patients smiling

Wunya!



Acknowledgment of country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Kabi Kabi (pronounced Gubbi Gubbi) and Jinibara (Yinie-Bara) peoples, on whose land we provide our services. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Elders, past, present and emerging.

Welcome to the Spring edition of Bright.

It's hard to believe we're celebrating one year of this magazine. Over the past 12 months, Bright has become a great way to share the stories that remind us what healthcare is really about - people caring for people.

In this edition, you'll read about the Medical Emergency Team (MET) who are first on the scene when a patient's condition suddenly changes, sometimes before that patient has even made it to the ward. You'll meet our Clown Doctors, whose humour and kindness can transform a hospital stay for children and their families.

We're also celebrating two years of our publicly funded homebirth service, which has given more local families the opportunity to welcome their babies in the comfort of home with the support of experienced midwives.

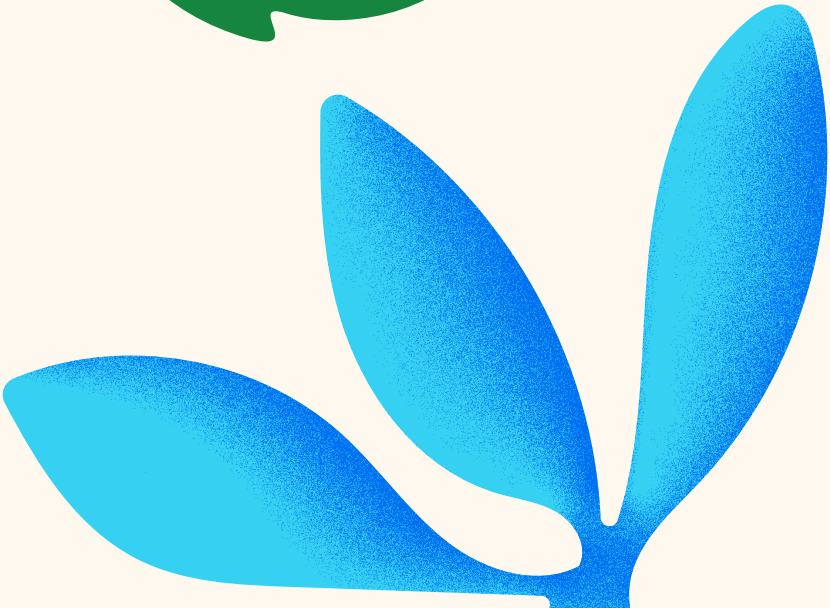
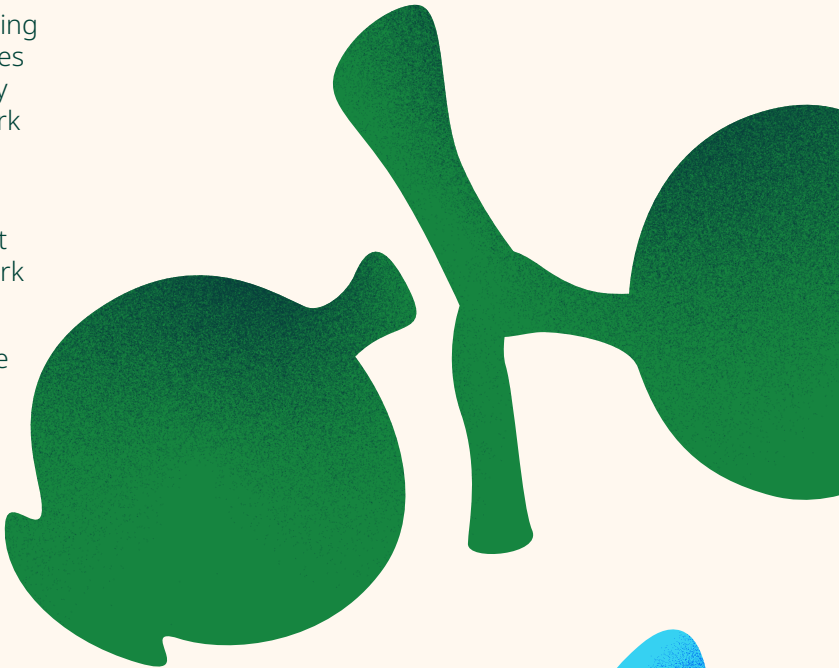
As our region continues to grow, so too does our responsibility to ensure locals have access to healthcare as close to home as possible.

A lot of my time is spent planning for the future, working with teams, our Board and partners to expand services and strengthen our workforce to ensure we are ready for future needs. These stories reinforce why that work matters, to improve care for our community.

Thank you for joining us over the past year. Whether you're a patient, family member or local, I hope Bright continues to provide an insight into all of the hard work our teams deliver.

I hope you enjoy this edition and as always if you have any feedback feel free to send it through to sc-communications@health.qld.gov.au

Dr Peter Gillies
Chief Executive





108 reasons to celebrate! Homebirth program marks two-year milestone

When Sunshine Coast Health launched its Publicly Funded Homebirth Program two years ago, the Maternity team had an ambitious goal in mind, 104 homebirths in 104 weeks.

In true Sunshine Coast Health fashion, they didn't just meet the target of one home birth each week, they exceeded it.

The service has now welcomed 108 babies (and counting) into the world at home, marking a milestone that reflects the growing demand from women and families to have access to broader birthing choices.

For Midwife Unit Manager Nicky Taylor-Edwards, the achievement is about far more than a number.

“There’s something incredibly special about supporting women to give birth in the place where she feels safest and most comfortable. Watching families welcome their baby at home, surrounded by love and familiarity is a privilege.”

Sunshine Coast Health’s Publicly Funded Homebirth Program is the first of its kind in the state. It offers women experiencing a low-risk pregnancy the opportunity to give birth in familiar surroundings under the care of experienced midwives.

“It’s been wonderful for us as a health service, but also as midwives. Seeing the team evolve has been amazing, to watch their competence and confidence grow has been special,” Nicky said.

Homebirth with a registered midwife is a safe option for many women, with many benefits. Women often report that they felt more comfortable and in control while labouring and birthing in their own environment.



How the publicly funded homebirth program works

- 1. Check your eligibility**
The program is available for women with a low-risk pregnancy who meet the clinical eligibility criteria. You can visit Sunshine Coast Health’s website to check eligibility.
- 2. Join Midwifery Group Practice (MGP)**
Eligible women receive continuity of care from a dedicated MGP midwife throughout pregnancy, birth and after their baby is born.
- 3. Plan your birth together**
You and your midwife develop a personalised birth plan, with regular reviews to ensure homebirth remains a safe option.
- 4. Birth at home**
When labour begins, your MGP midwife comes to your home. A second midwife joins for the birth, with specialised equipment and emergency plans in place if needed.
- 5. Stay where you’re most comfortable**
Following the birth, you can recover in the comfort of your own home while your midwives provide postnatal care and support.

Edie’s welcome home



When Sunshine Coast mum welcomed her third baby, Edie, into the world, she did so surrounded by the comforts of home.

Fairy lights decorated the room, her partner was by her side, and her two older children were asleep upstairs when her midwife arrived.

“It was such a calm experience,” she said. “As soon as my midwife Sarah walked through the door, I felt completely relaxed and safe.”

After birthing twice through Sunshine Coast Health’s Midwifery Group Practice (MGP), choosing the Publicly Funded Homebirth Program felt like the natural next step.

“I’d always loved the idea of a homebirth because I’d hoped

for a spontaneous, unmedicated birth,” she said. “After researching it, I found the evidence supported positive outcomes for mothers and babies in low-risk pregnancies. It felt like the right choice for our family.”

After meeting the clinical eligibility guidelines for homebirth, Natalie was placed under the care of midwives Sarah Handby and Sarah McGarry for her pregnancy, birth and post-partum care.

Natalie went into labour on her due date.

“When Sarah arrived, everything just fell into place. I got into the pool, and after just a few contractions, Edie was born in the water, still en caul (inside the amniotic sac). I lifted her onto my own chest. It was incredible.”

For her, one of the biggest advantages of giving birth at home was staying in a familiar environment.

“There was no worrying about childcare, no deciding when to leave for hospital and no travelling while in labour. I could stay relaxed, and I think that really helped my labour.”

Natalie says she would recommend the Publicly Funded Homebirth Program to any eligible family considering it.

“We feel incredibly lucky to have had this experience. Bringing Edie into the world at home is something we’ll always treasure.”



Meet the Doctors who prescribe laughter

The moment Clown Doctor Hoopla puts on her bright red nose, something magical happens.

“The clown’s red nose is known as the smallest mask in the world,” she said. “But instead of covering something up, it uncovers the playful clown inside,” Dr Hoopla said.

And in a hospital setting, sometimes that’s exactly what is needed. At Sunshine Coast Health, Clown Doctors work alongside healthcare teams providing therapeutic humour, music and creative play to distract patients during painful procedures, ease anxiety and bring connection to patients and families.

For fellow Clown Doctor Loopy, the role is about much more than chasing a laugh.

“Most people think our job is about being funny, but it’s actually about listening. We don’t arrive with a script, we create each interaction based on the patient’s mood, personality and needs. Sometimes our greatest achievement isn’t making someone laugh out loud; it’s helping them feel seen, giving them a sense of control, or simply sitting quietly beside them,” she said.

Behind every red nose is a highly trained professional. Clown Doctors undergo rigorous auditions, extensive mentoring and ongoing training in areas including trauma-informed care, hospital procedures, infection control, improvisation and compassionate clowning. This is all overseen by Clown Doctors Australia.

“I think most people probably don’t realise the level of training we have. The auditions are tough, and the year of training that follows is equally tough and even as a fully fledged Clown Doctor we continue to participate in ongoing training that keeps us up to date with the latest research.”

“There’s a level of dedication to learning and improving going on behind the scenes that people probably don’t know about,” Dr Hoopla said.

For Dr Hoopla, becoming a Clown Doctor was more than 10 years in the making. After missing out on her first audition, she spent years honing her skills as a circus performer before trying again. Three years ago, she earned her red nose at Sunshine Coast Health.

“It’s an enormous privilege that children, and families allow us in when they are at their most vulnerable. To be there, to meet a child and invite them to play, to allow a parent to see their child being a child, it’s an enormous privilege that we don’t take for granted.”

Our Clown Doctors are proudly funded by Wishlist.



Get to know Dr Hoopla

Q: Why did you become a Clown Doctor?

A: I first heard about The Clown Doctors over 10 years ago when I was working as a freelance circus performer. I was immediately drawn to the idea because I have always believed that experiencing live performance is uniquely uplifting and should be accessible to all people (not just those who can attend a theatre). When I read that research has proven that laughter decreases stress and improves health outcomes for those in hospital, I knew this was work that I really wanted to get involved with.

Q: Tell us about the services you provide?

A: Our primary role at SCUH is to reduce anxiety. We do this through distraction during procedures that are being performed on children, bringing a sense of laughter and play to people who are anxious, and supporting the medical staff to be able to do their jobs as easily as possible.



Get to know Dr Loopy

Q: What drew you to become a Clown Doctor?

I’ve always believed that laughter has the power to heal. After years of performing and working with people, I realised I wanted to use those skills to make a genuine difference during some of life’s toughest moments. Being a Clown Doctor allows me to connect with patients and their families through humour, play and kindness. It’s a privilege to bring a little light into a hospital environment where people may be feeling scared, anxious or overwhelmed.

Q: What is the most rewarding part of the job?

The most rewarding part is seeing someone forget they’re in hospital, even if it’s only for a few minutes. Watching a child who was frightened begin to laugh, seeing parents relax, or helping a teenager smile after a difficult day reminds me why this work matters. Those moments of genuine human connection are incredibly powerful and stay with you long after your shift ends.

MET CN's: Sophie, Sam, Lauren and Abby (left to right).



Who is the nurse in the red scrubs?

You may have seen our wonderful nurses walking around our facilities wearing fun-coloured scrubs with creative patterns.

But have you seen our nurse in the bright red scrubs? Well, there is a good chance you haven't... because only one nurse is allowed to wear them on shift.

And that is the Medical Emergency Team Clinical Nurse (MET CN), and they play a critical role in the MET team. They wear distinct bright red scrubs, so the nurse is easily identifiable.

The MET team is a multi-disciplinary team. They are a specialised rapid response system used to treat deteriorating patients. They respond to, review, assess and provide intervention (if required) for all patients of concern within SCUH. This includes unwell and deteriorating patients or patients experiencing critical illness.



Sam has been a MET CN since 2018, and says the role is both challenging and rewarding.

"It requires rapid clinical decision making, prioritisation, clear communication and effective teamwork to ensure every patient receives safe and timely care."

The MET Clinical Nurse Service covers the entire SCUH campus 24/7 including all speciality areas and inpatient wards, as well as outpatient clinics and public areas.



Sindhu's Story

No two days are the same for our MET CN Nurses.

Sindhu is one of our incredible MET CN's who responded to an urgent call earlier this year.

"I received a call from the switchboard advising that a woman was in labour in the hospital car park. I immediately ran to the location and found the mother standing with her husband near the lifts. It was clear that the situation was urgent," she said.

"It quickly became apparent that there would not be enough time to safely transfer her to the maternity ward before the baby arrived.

"With no delivery equipment at hand and knowing that every second mattered, I made the decision to assist with the birth right there in the car park. I safely delivered the baby into my hands, ensured the airway was clear, stimulated the baby, and was relieved to hear the baby cry almost immediately."

Sindhu credits the delivery as a defining moment in her nursing career.

"While I was proud to have been able to help in that moment, what stays with me most is seeing a healthy mother and baby together and knowing they were both safe."

The MET Trolley

The MET Crash trolley stores the emergency equipment required to respond to a deteriorating patient.

Cardiac & Monitoring

Cardiac monitor, defibrillator and bag valve mask (BVM) to monitor vital signs, provide ventilation and deliver lifesaving treatment.

Airway

Equipment to open and maintain the airway, including oxygen, suction and airway adjuncts.

Medication

Emergency medicines for cardiac arrest, severe allergic reactions, low blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, seizures and emergency intubation.

IV Access

Equipment for intravenous (IV) and intraosseous (bone) access, including cannulas, syringes, giving sets and IV fluids.

Advanced Airway

Equipment for advanced airway management, including endotracheal tubes, laryngeal mask airways and video laryngoscopy.

Paediatrics

Specialised emergency equipment for babies and children, including a CICO (Can't Intubate, Can't Oxygenate) kit for rare, life-threatening airway emergencies.



A calming space to turn to: Crisis support comes to Nambour



Rob knows how daunting traditional Emergency Department settings can be for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

The bright lights and busy waiting areas can be overstimulating for someone seeking help.

Rob is now using his lived experience in an Advanced Support role assisting people to navigate their way through emotional distress at the new Nambour Crisis Support Space.

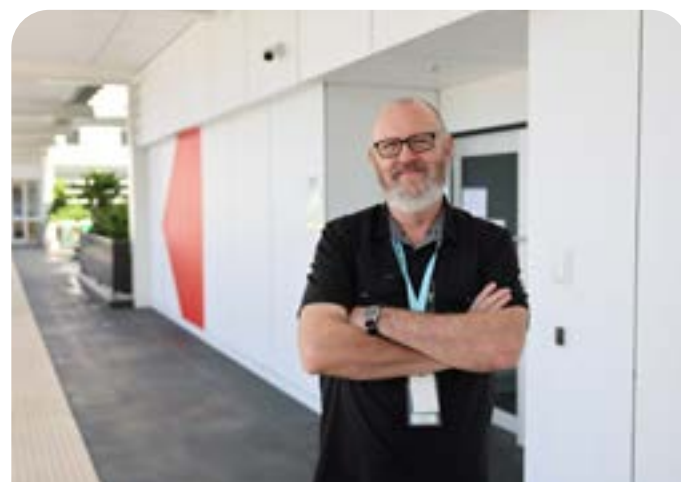
“We provide a collaborative service for people experiencing emotional distress, all set in a relaxing non-clinical space,” Rob said.

Unlike a traditional Emergency Department setting, the crisis support space provides a quieter, more relaxed environment focused on de-escalation, recovery, and connection.

It has been co-designed with people who have lived experience of mental health challenges, ensuring it meets the needs of those it is intended to support.

“My favourite thing about this role is helping people who are experiencing distress go from a confused emotional state to having them feel heard and validated in a safe non-judgemental space,” Rob said.

“Providing hope through my own lived experience of mental health issues goes a long way in assisting a person with finding a way through their distress.”



Sunshine Coast Health Director of Lived Experience Katie Barlow said the new crisis support space at Nambour Hospital provided a therapeutic environment.

“Crisis support spaces bring together peer and clinical support in a calm, homely environment, offering people a different pathway to get help when they need it most,” Katie said.

“This space is another important step in strengthening and transforming our mental health services to deliver better outcomes for our community.”

“A key feature of the Nambour space has been the co-design of the artwork, developed in partnership with people who use our services.”

“The result is a space that feels welcoming and inclusive, with a strong sense of belonging. It’s colourful, hopeful and creative, designed to feel like a meeting place rather than a clinical environment, and deeply connected to the local community.”

Crisis support spaces have already demonstrated positive outcomes across Queensland, including reducing ED presentations, unnecessary hospital stays, and the need for inpatient admissions.

The Nambour facility joins a growing network of crisis support spaces across the state, including the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. The service will be available seven days a week from 1pm-9pm, improving access to care when people need it most.

People seeking support can call the crisis support space directly during open hours, or call 1300 MHCALL (1300 642 255) 24/7 for advice on available services.



Designed for comfort

The Nambour Crisis Support Space has been thoughtfully designed to help people feel safe and supported, featuring:

- Fidget tools
- Weighted blankets
- Soft, dim lighting
- Calming, locally co-designed artwork
- Comfortable, homelike furnishings

Mental health support when it matters most

7 DAYS A WEEK 1pm–9pm

Need support?

Call the Crisis Support Space during opening hours.

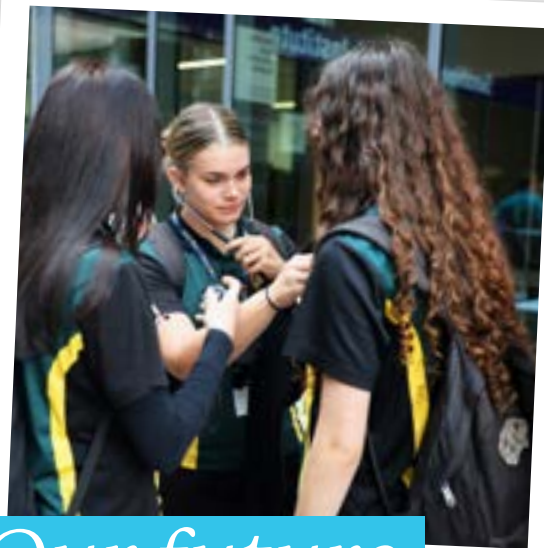
Any time, day or night:

07 5370 3232

1300 MHCALL

1300 642 255

24 hours • 7 days



Our future healthcare workers

How on earth do you decide your future career when you're still in high school? As teens, most of us wouldn't have even heard of half the careers that exist, especially in the health system!

To help understand the options (and grow our future workforce!), Sunshine Coast Health Institute invites hundreds of high school students on site every year, to gain hands-on experience of the many different careers in health.

This year almost 700 students had a taste of working in careers such as nuclear medicine, radiation therapy, prosthetics and orthotics, audiology and of course the popular choices of nursing and medicine.

"I think it's really important to capture students at a younger age, so it gives them an experience where they can decide if they want to enter into healthcare," SCHI Executive Director Dr Gemma Turato said.

If something sparked their interest, students could chat to representatives from TAFE Queensland, QUT, University of the Sunshine Coast and Griffith University, to start planning their pathway.

Showcasing health to our future workforce has never been more crucial, with demand for healthcare increasing with our rapidly growing community.

"We're going to need up to 45% more healthcare workers by 2034, and that's in both clinical and non-clinical teams."

Sunshine Coast Health runs a career fair for local schools each year.

Are more babies born in Spring?

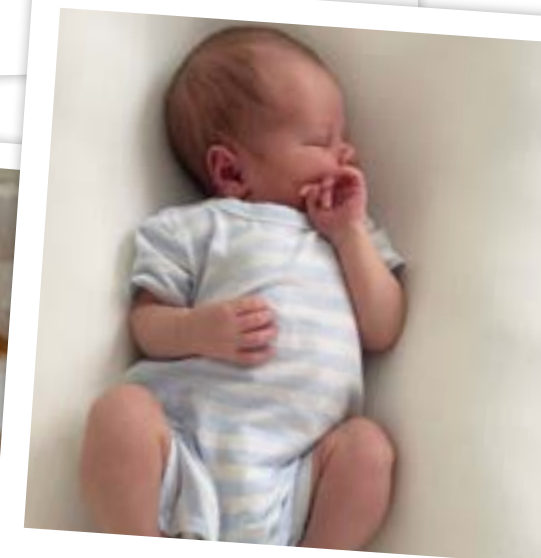
Ever wondered if there's any truth to the Spring Baby Boom theory? Ask most people when the most babies are born and they'll probably say Spring. But Queensland's birth numbers tell a different story.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, the stork seems to prefer Winter over Spring. July was the busiest month for Queensland births in 2025, with 5,404 babies arriving, while December came in second with 5,152 births. Overall, Winter (June to August) welcomed around 830 more babies than Spring (September to November).

On the Sunshine Coast, however, babies don't seem to follow any seasonal trend at all. Of the 3,401 babies born at Sunshine Coast Health in 2025, March was the busiest month, with 312 births, while April was the quietest, with 248. Birth numbers remained remarkably steady across the year, suggesting that when it comes to babies, they arrive whenever they're ready, regardless of the season.

Sunshine Coast Health total birth numbers 2025

Jan	299
Feb	277
Mar	312
Apr	248
May	308
Jun	296
Jul	292
Aug	291
Sep	269
Oct	273
Nov	254
Dec	282



Ren



Byron



What's on the menu?

A tender chicken parmigiana, a steak and mushroom pie, or even a hearty sweet potato and tofu curry.

Which new restaurant is this, you may ask?

It's actually the new menu being served for inpatients staying at Sunshine Coast Health hospitals.

Did you know that every item on our menu has been scrutinised by a panel of health professionals, chefs and consumers, to make sure meals deliver a healthy dose of nutrition and satisfaction?

Curating food for hundreds of patients, with a wide range of health concerns and nutritional requirements is no small feat.

Each plate must meet a long list of requirements.

Meals need to help people get better, be healthy, be adjustable for patients who might not be able to chew or swallow, be efficient to make in large quantities, reduce food waste, pass microbial testing and include limited allergens.

"Food is so important for patient recovery. So we really want people to enjoy the food, eat the food for the nourishment, to help them get home and back to doing the things that they love sooner," Acting Director Nutrition and Dietetics Sarah Phillips said.

Amongst all these criteria, the dietitians acknowledge food is also a really important part of connection and culture, so the chefs work hard to make meal time something patients look forward to.

"We really like it to be like home cooked, home style, even like restaurant inspired food that people can really get behind and really enjoy when they are here,"

said Head Chef Mark Reynolds.

The new meals undergo multiple rounds of production trials to get everything just right.

Then it's time for the best part... taste testing.

Consumer representative Lesley McGee was on the taste testing panel.

"To me nutrition is important because it's going to help my recovery, but also our diet is what we look forward to. And if it's presented beautifully, if it tastes lovely and you feel you're having something to help your recovery and rehabilitation."

"Everything was just very, very lovely, very tasty, well-presented, beautiful food."

The making of a new menu

The chefs

- Trial options that work with the processes and schedules of a large commercial kitchen.
- Consider how the food will store, freeze and be transported.
- Microbial testing to maintain food safety.

The dietitians

- Consider all the clinical and nutrition guidelines, to make sure meals meet the requirements of all patients.
- Check there's enough protein and energy with each serve, limit salt and sugar.
- Limit allergens.

The speech pathologists

- Check 'texture modified meals' meet the requirements for particle sizes and softness, so they are safe from a chewing and swallowing perspective.
- Some patients require different levels of texture.
- Example: The easy to chew diet = no stringy foods, no pips, no hard shell coating, soft enough to be cut with the side of a fork.

Get a behind the scenes peak at how SCUH's menu was developed here



The numbers

900,000

Meals produced each year across the health service.

SCUH is the busiest kitchen with:

1,570

meals made per day at SCUH

570,000

meals each year from SCUH



A dignified and calm final chapter closer to home

In difficult times it can be the little things that keep us going. Like cups of coffee, a walk in the garden, listening to the birds. They don't come close to taking away the challenges, but they are brief comforts among a storm of grief.

These are the moments that bring a softness to Ricky Lynch's memories of her husband's passing.

"I think it was just beautiful, it was dignified, calm," Ricky remembers.

Ricky's husband Joe spent his final chapter in palliative care at Maleny Memorial Soldier's Memorial.

Through her grief, Ricky is grateful for the opportunity to say goodbye in a peaceful environment, just a short drive up the hill from home.



"I think all the stress was alleviated, we didn't have stress, yes we had sadness and we had all these horrible things that were going on, but we didn't have stress."

Joe was one of the first people to be seen as an outpatient in a new palliative care clinic run out of Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital to give hinterland patients access to palliative care appointments closer to home.

"It was all very relaxed, so it was easy, it just made things easier for us."

The clinic is run by Dr Bec Devereaux, a rural generalist doctor with advanced skills in palliative care.

She said the clinic gives patients a local, dignified, caring, and compassionate service during their end of life journeys.

"We're able to have these remote patients not have to drive so far for these appointments, which are exhausting and tiring for these patients, so they're able to have outpatient support locally in their community by staff that live here and work here."

The appointments provide check-ups, treatments and supports, allowing patients to stay home with their families for longer.

As their journey progresses, they can also opt to come into the hospital for inpatient care.

"So by starting this clinic, patients are able to stay at home longer. They get support quicker. And we've now been able to support patients' end of life care at home."

Palliative care even extends into bereavement for their family, and Ricky is pleased to have maintained a connection with the hospital team.

"A big huge thank you, from me, from Joe and from our family and friends."

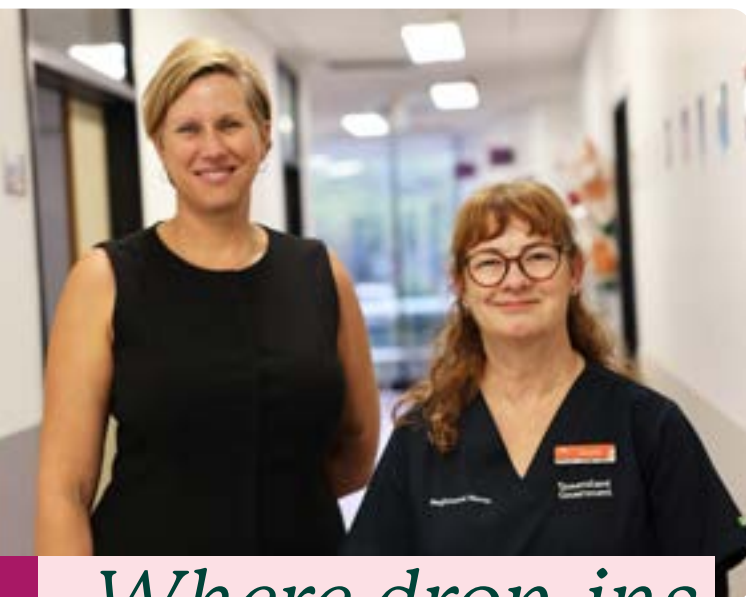
Ricky with a book about her late husband Joe – who was a well-known Irish storyteller, singer and poet and much-loved Maleny local.



What does palliative care involve?

"We help patients have the best quality of life because we can't necessarily give them quantity," Dr Devereaux said.

- Help with symptom management
- Ensure they have supports at home for nursing, cleaning and food, so the family can spend that quality time with their loved one.
- Discussions around decision making and determining what dignity of life looks like for them.
- Supporting family members through bereavement.



Where drop-ins are welcome...

Immunisation appointments are one of the most important items on your to-do list.

Finding time for appointments can be tricky for all of us... let alone busy parents who are trying to squeeze in healthy lunches, play dates and sporting commitments.

Enter the new drop-in immunisation clinic at Maroochydore Child Health.

The clinic's opened to give busy families, children and pregnant women a more flexible way to stay up to date with vaccinations without needing to book an appointment.

The clinic is open for walk-ins on Wednesday afternoons from 2pm, with final walk ins at 4.45pm.

It's designed for children aged 0-5 for childhood and influenza immunisations, adolescents who have missed their year 7 and 10 school immunisations, and women who need to get their maternal pregnancy immunisations.

Sunshine Coast Health Public Health Nurse Holly Whitfield said the drop-in clinic is one way to improve the region's immunisation rates.

"The Sunshine Coast has the lowest coverage in Queensland, especially areas like Maroochydore, Noosa and Noosa Hinterland, so back in 2024 Public Health and Child Health developed the Sunshine Coast Improving Immunisation Program and that was to help our low access so historically GPs were the only places that did immunisation clinics," she said.

"To create better access and increase those immunisation rates Child Health started running immunisation clinics across six areas across the coast and they've now got 15 clinics and immunise up to 400 people a month."

Maroochydore Child Health is located at 60 Dalton Drive, Maroochydore. People attending the clinic should bring their person health record book (red book) and their Medicare card.

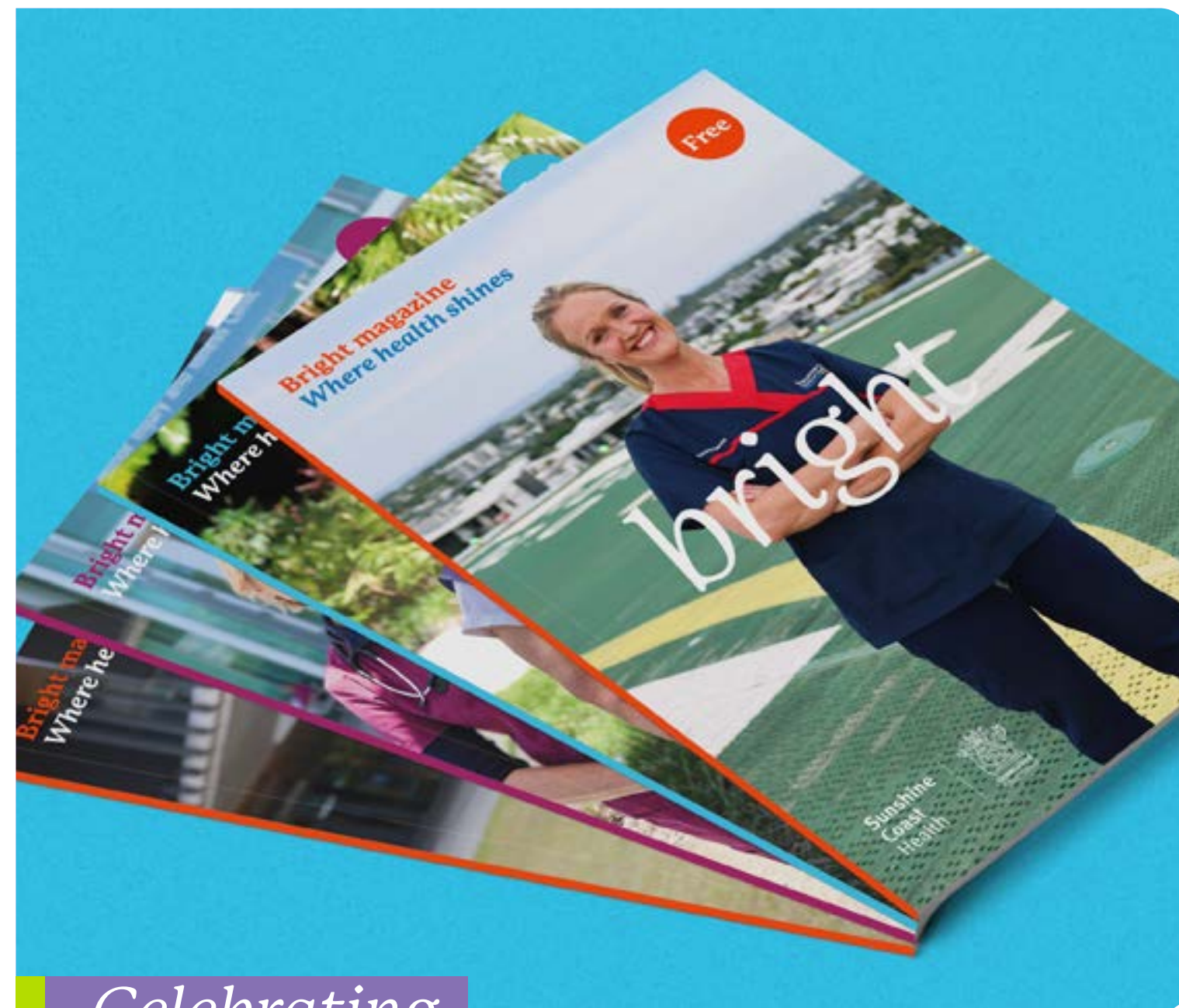
Those who prefer a booked appointment, can contact Child Health Access on 1300 591 494.



Needle-free flu immunisation

Kids and teens aged between 2-17 can now opt for influenza immunisation via a nasal spray, called FluMist.

"It's very easy, it's just one little squirt up each nostril – obviously we get mum or dad to have a cuddle with them – but most children are very accepting of the nasal flu mist, so they don't have to have a needle," Ms Armstrong said.



Celebrating One Year of Bright

For the past year, Bright has been shining a light on the people, stories and achievements that make Sunshine Coast Health such a special place. From life-changing patient journeys and innovative research to staff milestones and behind-the-scenes moments, every edition has celebrated the dedication, compassion and expertise of our teams.

More than just a magazine, Bright connects our people, showcases the incredible work happening across our health service, and reminds us of the difference we make every day. Here's to one year of inspiring stories, and many more to come.

You can catch up on the previous editions of Bright here



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