

South West Hospital and Health Service

PULSE

APRIL-MAY 2026 EDITION



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We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands across the South West. We also pay our respects to the current and future Elders, for they will inherit the responsibility of keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture alive, and for creating a better life for the generations to follow.

We believe the future happiness and wellbeing of all Australians and our future generations will be enhanced by valuing and taking pride in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—the oldest living culture of humanity.

SOUTH WEST TRADITIONAL OWNERS

- Augathella – Bidjara** (Bid-jara)
- Bollon – Kooma** (Coo-ma)
- Charleville – Bidjara** (Bid-jara)
- Cunnamulla – Kunja** (Koun-yah) with other interests
- Dirranbandi – Yuwaalaraay** (You-wal-a-ray)
- Eromanga – Boonthamurra** (Boon-tha-murra)
- Eulo – Budjiti** (Bud-ji-ti)
- Injune – Bidjara / Iman** (Bid-jara)
- Mitchell – Gunggari** (Gon-gari)
- Morven – Gunggari** (Gon-gari)
- Mungindi – Kamilaroi** (Car-milla-roy)
- Quilpie – Boonthamurra, Mardigan, Wongkumara** with other interests
- Roma – Mandandanji** (Mand-an-dand-gee)
- St George – Kamilaroi, Mandandanji, Bigambul and Gungarri** interests
- Surat – Mandandanji** (Mand-an-dand-gee)
- Thargomindah – Kullilli** (Coo-lee-lar)
- Wallumbilla – Mandandanji** (Mand-an-dand-gee)

This newsletter is produced by the South West Hospital and Health Service. All feedback and contributions are welcome. All published material has been approved by the Health Service Chief Executive.

Contact: SWHHS_Communications@health.qld.gov.au

Cover Image: PODSQUAD team – Physio Emma, Nurse Yolanda, Student Physio Vishnu and Health Promotion Officer Jenny – at the Charleville Under 8’s Day 2026



QUALITY



COMPASSION



ACCOUNTABILITY



ENGAGEMENT



ADAPTABILITY

“ Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not. ”

Dr Seuss, “The Lorax” (published 1971)

From the Board Chair

It is with great excitement that the South West HHS four-year Strategic Plan will be released in the coming weeks. The 2026–2030 plan is the culmination of many months of consultations, feedback on draft documents and the sharing of draft versions seeking further refinement from staff, health consumers and healthcare partners. The Board wishes to express their sincere thanks to those who provided thoughtful developmental feedback which has informed the plan. From 1 July, this plan will serve as a strategic roadmap which will guide operations until June 2030.

Whilst the details of the plan will be revealed in due course, I can reveal that one of the key changes to the plan is ‘WeCare’. WeCare is an acronym that represents a set of values that the South West HHS will action daily, to ensure we are delivering equitable health outcomes for all. This means that what we do, in our respective roles within the HHS, is characterised by us all working together in alignment with the WeCare values, to deliver high quality, culturally safe, reliable and integrated healthcare. To put it simply, it is all about ‘better health, together’.

Whilst our strategic plan represents our core South West HHS priorities, if each one of us shows up each day with passion and commitment, and works guided by the values of WeCare, we will have a lot of safe and quality caring happening.

It was with great delight that we welcomed three new Board members to the South West Hospital and Health Board governance team at our April meeting, which was held in Roma. A warm welcome is extended to Cameron O’Neil, Louise Winten and Mitchell Rigby, who are all long-term residents of South West Queensland, living in Roma, Morven and Charleville respectively, whom all care ‘a whole awful lot’ (as Dr Seuss would say) about delivering better care, together.

The May Board was held in Quilpie and the South West Hospital and Health Board team enjoyed catching up with ‘those who care’ in the Quilpie area, including our ever-giving volunteer CAN members, friendly Multipurpose Health Service (MPHS) team members and health consumers in the Bulloo River catchment area. In June, the Board team visited Injune, and met with staff and health consumers alike.

Karen Tully, Board Chair
South West Hospital and Health Board



So, what are our WeCare values?

- Wellbeing
- Engagement
- Courage
- Accountability
- Respect
- Excellence





From the Health Service Chief Executive

Welcome to the second edition of The Pulse for 2026, our update for communities across the South West.

It's been a busy and energising time across South West Hospital and Health Service, and I'm pleased to share the progress, achievements and stories that reflect the strength of our people and our connected communities. This edition highlights the many ways our teams are working together to improve health equity, strengthen services and deliver care closer to home.

One of the most encouraging developments since our first edition has been the completion of our Staff Culture Compass survey. With a record response rate of 71 per cent, this is a strong endorsement of our workforce's willingness to have a voice and shape our future. I want to sincerely thank every staff member who contributed. Your feedback is invaluable and will directly inform how we continue to build a positive, supportive and high-performing culture across our service.

You'll see throughout this edition the dedication of our people in action, from celebrating International Nurses Day and our incredible midwives (International Day of the Midwife), to recognising long-serving staff and emerging leaders like Jorja, whose journey into nursing reflects the opportunities we are creating locally. Initiatives such as Exercise Right Week, Patient Experience Week and Domestic and Family Violence Month also demonstrate our commitment to supporting healthier, safer communities.

We are continuing to invest in growing our own workforce and strengthening our services, particularly in mental health, community-based care and workforce development. Updates from teams such as HOPE and TRACC, along with our presence at events like the Balonne Careers Expo, highlight how we are building capability and connection across the region.

Importantly, this edition also showcases how we are working in partnership with our communities to advance health equity, because we know better outcomes are achieved when we listen, collaborate and act together. We also came together with our communities and staff to acknowledge Anzac Day. In Injune, our staff cooked up some delicious Anzac biscuits with the residents.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge our Board, led by our Chair, for their ongoing leadership and engagement across the South West, and to congratulate our South West Spirit Award recipients who embody the values we are so proud of.

Thank you for your continued support of South West Hospital and Health Service. I hope you enjoy this edition of The Pulse and the stories of the people who make our service what it is.

Injune residents cooking Anzac biscuits for this years Anzac Day.

Dr Anthony Brown
Health Service Chief Executive





OUR COMMUNITIES

WORKING TOGETHER to progress health equity across the South West

South West HHS continues to take meaningful steps on its health equity journey, with strong community partnerships and local voices guiding the way.

Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Engagement, Shelley Lawton, said recent engagement across the region reflects a genuine commitment to listening, learning and acting alongside community.

Shelley said a key milestone was the development of the Cunnamulla Action Plan, marking an important shift towards a more focused, place-based model that responds directly to local needs. Through a series of three community yarning sessions, including a workshop held on 7 May 2026, community members and partners have come together to identify priority areas that will guide the plan and align with the broader Health Equity Implementation Plan.

Shelley said this approach ensured the community's voice was central to shaping services.

“The Cunnamulla Action Plan is about walking alongside community and making sure decisions are grounded in local knowledge and lived experience,” she said.

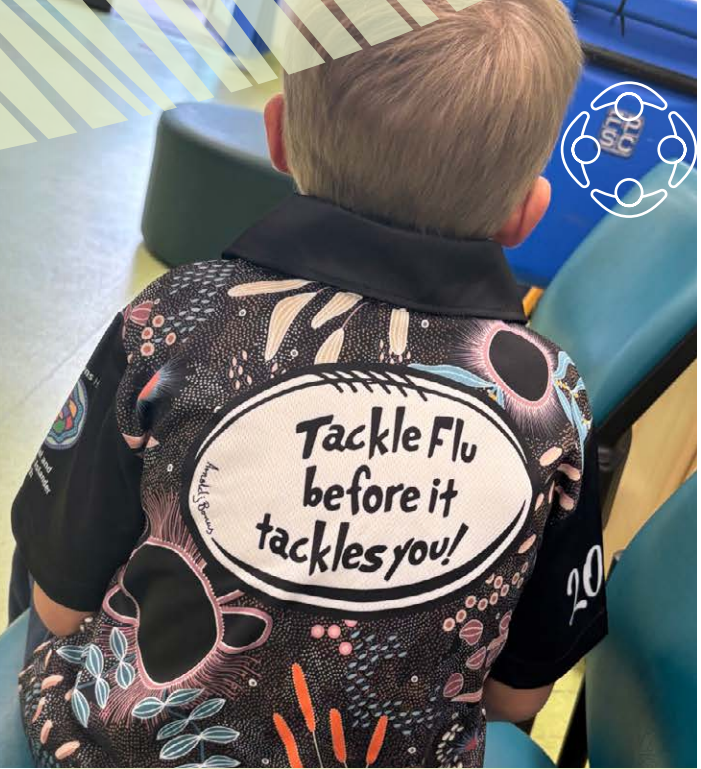
“It strengthens *Our Way – Together*, ensuring our actions are not only strategic but truly responsive to what matters most to community.”



The draft plan is now nearing completion and will soon be released for community feedback. Once finalised, implementation will be embedded within existing governance structures to ensure strong oversight and ongoing monitoring.



A strong response to tackle the Flu



Community connection has also been at the heart of the Tackle the Flu campaign, now in its 15th year of collaboration between Darling Downs and South West HHS.

Delivered in partnership with First Nations health teams and Primary and Community Care, the campaign brings together prevention, education and culture in a way that resonates across communities.

At each clinic, community members receive a free flu vaccination and a locally designed First Nations shirt, creating a welcoming and culturally meaningful environment.

Shelley said the strong turnout reflected growing trust and awareness in the communities.

“Tackle the Flu is a great example of what happens when we work together in a culturally respectful way,” she said.

“It’s not just about vaccination, it’s about connection, trust and empowering people to take control of their health.”

This year’s clinics saw outstanding engagement across the region:

| COMMUNITY | VACCINATIONS |
|-------------|--|
| St George | 174 a record year! |
| Charleville | 100 attendees |
| Dirranbandi | 81 more than doubled from 40 last year |
| Roma | 90+ attendees |





Strengthening voices through advisory leadership

South West HHS is also inviting community members to help shape the future of health services through the First Nations Health Equity Advisory Committee, with expressions of interest now open.

The committee will play a vital role in:

- ✓ Supporting the shared journey toward health equity under *Our Way – Together*
- ✓ Ensuring First Nations voices, cultural authority and lived experience are central to service design and delivery

Shelley encouraged participation from across the region.

“Community-led guidance is critical to achieving lasting change. We are looking for people who are passionate about improving health outcomes, Elders, community members and partners across sectors, because it takes all of us working together,” she said.

This initiative reinforces South West HHS’s ongoing commitment to closing the gap in health outcomes and strengthening partnerships across the South West.

She said staff also have an opportunity to show their support for health equity, with Closing the Gap shirts now available for order.

“This year’s shirts, available in navy, will be distributed to facilities across the region in July, offering staff a visible way to demonstrate their commitment to reconciliation and culturally safe care,” Shelley said.

“From community-led planning in Cunnamulla to record-breaking participation in Tackle the Flu, the message is clear, progress happens when communities are heard, respected and actively involved. Everything we do is about strengthening partnerships and building trust.

“Together, we are creating a system that works better for our communities, now and into the future.”

Show your support for health equity – Closing the Gap shirts are now available for order. This year's shirts, available in navy, will be distributed across the region in July

For more information about the Health Equity Advisory Committee or to request a Closing the Gap shirt, contact the Office of the Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Engagement at SWHHS-EDATSIHE@health.qld.gov.au or phone 07 4620 2278.

South West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) ATSIAC (from left): Lane Brookes, Amanda Fox, Shelley Lawton, Emmy-Lou Davis, Joanna Turnbull, Megan Allwood, Cheryl Lang, Taneale Lawton, Donna Hooper and Angelia Peak.





INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST

This year's International Nurses Day saw South West HHS come together to recognise and celebrate the nearly 500 nurses who deliver care across our diverse and far-reaching region.

From our hospitals and multipurpose health services to community and outreach settings, the day highlighted the dedication, compassion and expertise that define nursing in the South West.

Guided by this year's theme, "Our Nurses. Our Future. Caring for nurses strengthens economies," celebrations acknowledged not only the vital role nurses play in patient care, but also the importance of supporting, valuing and empowering the nursing workforce to sustain strong and healthy communities into the future.

Across the HHS, a shared theme emerged, nursing is more than a profession; it is a commitment to community, connection and making a meaningful difference every day. While celebrations took place across all facilities, the reflections of several nurses highlighted the experiences shared by many working in rural and remote healthcare.

Nurse Practitioner Candidate Kara Dean captured the purpose that unites the profession.

"As nurses, our purpose at every level is to make a meaningful difference for our patients, families and communities. In rural health, empowerment means being trusted and supported to work confidently to our full scope of practice," she said

This sense of opportunity and growth was echoed by Registered Nurse Shae Cochrane, who reflected on her journey.

"Rural and remote nursing has challenged me, taught me resilience and confidence, and allowed me to work across such a broad scope of practice," Shae said.

Across the South West, nurses consistently highlighted the unique nature of rural practice, where no two days are the same and clinicians develop a diverse and adaptable skillset.

Clinical Nurse Robin Tully described rural nurses as "expert generalists", working across multiple clinical areas and building strong, lasting connections with their communities.

"You take on anything from emergency to aged care... rapidly enhancing and diversifying your clinical and assessment skills," she said.

A strong sense of community connection was another common theme.

"You're not just caring for patients, you're caring for people you genuinely get to know," Shae said.

Alongside the professional rewards, staff also spoke about the lifestyle benefits of working in the South West.

"Living in the bush has great rewards, a slower pace of life, living in a community you love," Robin said.

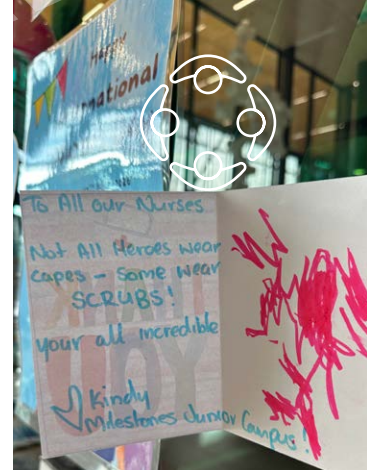
International Nurses Day also provided an opportunity to recognise the vital contributions of nurses in every role, from early career clinicians and graduate nurses through to experienced leaders and specialists, all working together to provide safe, high-quality care across the region.

The day served as a powerful reminder of the impact of a supported and empowered nursing workforce.

Kara highlighted when nurses were valued and enabled to practise fully, the impact on care is profound and life saving.

South West HHS extends sincere thanks to all nurses across the service for their ongoing dedication, professionalism and commitment to caring for our communities.

Your impact is felt every day, in every community across the South West.





CELEBRATING MIDWIVES ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST



Gabby and baby Ruby

As the calendar turned to May, communities across the South West came together to recognise International Day of the Midwife (IDM) on 5 May, a moment to honour the skilled professionals who stand alongside women and families at one of life’s most important milestones.

For Executive Director Nursing and Midwifery Services, Mr Chris Small, the celebration is both professional and deeply personal.

“Midwives are the heart of our maternity services. This year’s theme reminds us just how vital midwives are in delivering safe, respectful and compassionate care to women and babies, no matter where they live. Across the South West, our midwives go above and beyond every single day,” Chris said.

This year’s theme shines a spotlight on the crucial role midwives play in improving outcomes for mothers and newborns, while advocating for stronger support, recognition and investment in the profession. It’s a message that resonates strongly across the region’s rural and remote communities, where access to dedicated maternity care can make a life-changing difference.

At Roma Hospital, the celebration took on an extra layer of joy. In what staff have fondly described as a “perfectly timed baby boom”, the first 10 days of May saw 10 babies safely welcomed into the world, a remarkable run that captured the essence of midwifery care in action.

“Ten babies in 10 days was something special. Behind every one of those births is a team of incredible midwives providing expert care, reassurance and support to families at such a significant moment in their lives,” Chris said.

Each arrival brought with it a unique story, first-time parents meeting their newborns, growing families expanding, and midwives guiding each journey with calm expertise and kindness. For the teams on the ground, it was a powerful reminder of why they do what they do.

“Moments like these highlight the dedication and teamwork of our midwives. They’re there through every contraction, every decision and every celebration – making sure families feel supported, safe and cared for,” he said.

Across the South West, IDM was marked not just as a day of recognition, but as an opportunity to celebrate a workforce that is essential to community wellbeing. From busy regional hospitals to smaller rural facilities, midwives continue to be a trusted and steady presence, bringing new life into the world while strengthening the fabric of their communities.

As the celebrations wrapped up, one message remained clear:

Midwives are not only caregivers, they are also advocates, educators and champions for women and families.

And in places like Roma Hospital, where 10 new lives began their journey in just 10 days, their impact is felt in every heartbeat, every first cry, and every family forever changed.

“We are incredibly proud of our midwives across the South West. International Day of the Midwife is a chance to say thank you, but their value is something we recognise every single day,” Chris said.





STRENGTHENING THE SOUTH WEST THROUGH CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

Across the South West, a quiet but powerful movement has been building, one grounded in connection, resilience and community strength. TRACC (Tackling Regional Adversity through Connected Communities) has brought people together, sparked important conversations and created lasting partnerships aimed at supporting the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities across the region.

From the outset, TRACC has focused on a simple but impactful idea: that connection is key to overcoming adversity.

Through a series of events, workshops and on-the-ground initiatives over the past few months, TRACC has been working to bring together health professionals, community leaders, service providers and residents, creating spaces where people could share experiences, learn from one another and build practical solutions tailored to local needs.

South West HHS's Penny West said a highlight of TRACC's events had been its strong emphasis on collaboration across sectors.

"Health, social services, education and community organisations have all played a role, breaking down silos and working together in ways that strengthen support networks across the South West," Penny said.

"These partnerships have not only improved access to services, but also helped ensure that care is more coordinated, culturally appropriate and responsive."

Penny said another key achievement had been the focus on community-led conversations.

"TRACC has provided opportunities for communities to have a voice, to speak openly about the challenges they face, whether it be isolation, access to services, mental health, or the impacts of regional adversity," she said.

"These conversations have been vital in shaping initiatives that are grounded in real experiences and local priorities. Throughout the program, there has also been a strong emphasis on capacity building.

"Workshops and engagement activities have supported individuals and organisations to build skills, strengthen networks and develop practical strategies to better respond to adversity. From frontline staff to community champions, participants have walked away better equipped to support those around them.

"Importantly, TRACC has celebrated the strength and resilience already present within South West communities. While acknowledging the challenges of living and working in regional and rural areas, the initiative has also shone a light on the determination, innovation and compassion that defines these communities."

Penny said the impact of TRACC could be seen not only in the events that have taken place, but in the ongoing connections that continue beyond them, stronger relationships, improved communication pathways and a shared commitment to supporting one another.

"As the initiative continues to evolve, one thing remains clear - TRACC is more than a program — it is a collective effort to ensure that no one in the South West faces adversity alone," she said.

Through connection, collaboration and community spirit, TRACC is helping to build a stronger, more resilient future for the region.



EXERCISE RIGHT WEEK INSPIRES FRIENDLY COMPETITION ACROSS SOUTH WEST

From 23 to 30 May, South West HHS staff came together to celebrate Exercise Right Week, embracing this year's theme of encouraging people to "move more, more often – the right way."

Throughout the week, a series of fun and engaging physical challenges were held across hubs including Charleville, St George and Roma, with participants testing their strength, balance and endurance.

Staff took part in three key challenges:

- ➔ Grip strength testing
- ➔ Balance holds
- ➔ Plank endurance

The activities sparked friendly competition and plenty of laughs, while also highlighting the importance of maintaining physical health and functional fitness at every age.

At Charleville, participants impressed with strong results across all categories, including standout performances from Mac, who achieved the top grip strength score of 71kg, and Jess, who recorded an incredible seven-minute plank hold.

In St George, balance and core strength were on show, with Meg achieving the longest balance hold of six minutes and 15 seconds, while Laura led the plank challenge with a time of over six minutes.

Roma participants also demonstrated great effort, particularly in grip strength and balance, contributing to the overall success of the week.

South West HHS Exercise Physiologist Megan Andrews said the week was about more than just competition.

**Across all sites,
the overall winners were:**

GRIP STRENGTH:
Mac (Charleville) – 71kg

BALANCE:
Meg (St George) – 6 minutes 15 seconds

PLANK HOLD:
Jess (Charleville) – 7 minutes



"Exercise Right Week is a great opportunity to remind people that movement is medicine. These simple tests show how strength, balance and endurance play a vital role in our overall health, helping to prevent falls, manage chronic conditions and improve quality of life," Megan said.

She said the strong participation across multiple sites highlighted the enthusiasm of staff and communities to prioritise their health.

"It's fantastic to see so many people getting involved and having fun while learning more about their physical health. Small, regular amounts of the right exercise can make a big difference," she said.

Exercise Right Week aims to raise awareness of the benefits of exercise prescribed by qualified professionals, encouraging Australians to seek tailored, evidence-based support to improve their wellbeing.

The success of this year's activities has set a strong foundation for even bigger involvement next year, with participants already keen to beat their scores and continue their fitness journey.



PATIENT EXPERIENCE WEEK 2026

– PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST, EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

During Patient Experience Week 2026, South West HHS reflected on what it means to deliver truly person-centred care across a vast and diverse region, and the patient stories that bring this commitment to life.

Led globally by the Beryl Institute, Patient Experience Week reminds us that quality healthcare is about more than clinical outcomes. It is about how people feel, how supported they are, and how care is shaped around their individual needs, values and goals.

Across the South West, four patient journeys, Tegan, Gabe, Daniel and Ren, highlighted the strength of coordinated care, connection to community and the impact of services that reach people wherever they live and work. Read about their individual journeys on the following page.

While each journey is unique, together they reflect a common theme, care at South West HHS is connected, responsive and centred around the individual. From emergency treatment and specialist care to rehabilitation and long-term support, teams work collaboratively across hospitals, outreach services and communities to ensure patients receive the right care, at the right time, close to home.

Patient Experience Week 2026 highlighted the importance of relationships, communication and teamwork in shaping positive healthcare experiences. It reinforced that every interaction, from a first appointment to ongoing follow-up care, plays a role in building trust, confidence and better outcomes.

Thank you to our teams across the South West who live and breathe patient-centred care every day, supporting our communities to feel informed, supported and empowered throughout their healthcare journey.



PX 20 WEEK 26



Tegan

Tegan's story reflects the importance of continuity and culturally responsive care. Diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease, Tegan remained connected to specialist teams through telehealth and local support from Roma Cardiac Services, nurses and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers. Following successful valve replacement surgery in 2026, she returned home to complete cardiac rehabilitation in Roma, with a program tailored to her needs. Her journey highlights how coordinated care across services ensures patients feel supported every step of the way.

Gabe

For Gabe, a farm manager from the St George region, patient experience meant timely, flexible care that worked around his life. After being diagnosed with a cardiac condition, Gabe's care was coordinated between St George Hospital and Princess Alexandra Hospital, including specialist procedures and ongoing local support. With a home-based rehabilitation program designed around his work commitments, Gabe was able to recover safely while remaining on the land.

"I am amazed at how quickly things have been made to happen... especially given where we live," he shared.



Daniel

Daniel's story demonstrates the power of rehabilitation and support close to home. After experiencing a heart attack just before Christmas, he was supported through specialist care before returning to Charleville for cardiac rehabilitation. Initially uncertain, Daniel quickly gained confidence through an individualised program and supportive team. Over six weeks, he improved his fitness, made positive lifestyle changes and embraced healthier habits.

"Just do it," Daniel said. "It makes you healthier, and the team supports you to achieve your goals."

Ren

For Ren, patient-centred care meant ongoing support to rebuild confidence and independence. After emergency treatment for a serious cardiac event and specialist care in Brisbane, Ren returned to St George for cardiac rehabilitation. Through a structured program and supportive team, he improved his strength, balance and mobility – and returned to the activities he enjoys, including fishing.

"I would definitely recommend it... the staff have all been great," Ren shared



JORJA'S JOURNEY FROM TRAINEE TO THEATRE NURSE

Under the wide blue skies of Roma, where community runs deep and familiar faces are part of everyday life, Jorja Wiedman's journey into nursing feels both grounded and inspiring.

"I have always been a Roma local," Jorja explained. "My nursing journey actually began while I was still in high school."

Like many in small towns, her path started close to home. During school, Jorja completed a school-based traineeship, gaining her Certificate III in Individual Support while working in aged care for two years. It was there, among residents whose lives were full of stories and experience, that something shifted.

"At the time, I never imagined nursing would become my career, but caring for the elderly opened my eyes to how rewarding healthcare could be," she said.

After graduating, Jorja set her sights on furthering her education and moved to Toowoomba to begin her nursing degree. But the timing was far from ordinary. The COVID-19 pandemic changed everything.

"Unfortunately, this was during COVID, which meant I had to return home to Roma and complete the remainder of my studies externally," she recalled.

Back in the familiar rhythm of her hometown, Jorja found an opportunity that would shape her future. While studying, she began working at Roma Hospital as a University Student in Nursing (USIN) on the ward.

"That role gave me valuable insight into rural healthcare. It showed me firsthand what it was like to work as a nurse in a close-knit rural community," she said.

When Jorja completed her degree, her journey took an unexpected but rewarding turn. She secured a position as a perioperative nurse in theatre, an area she had never previously considered.

"It's become an incredibly rewarding career path. Working as a perioperative nurse within the South West has given me the opportunity to give back to the community I have always called home," Jorja said.

Inside the theatre environment, Jorja has built a diverse and highly skilled practice, working across anaesthetics, recovery, and scrub/scout roles. But for Jorja, rural nursing offers something deeper than clinical experience.

"One of the things I value most is the diversity of experience and opportunities available. You build a broad skill set, gain hands-on experience, and become involved in many aspects of patient care that you might not encounter elsewhere," she said.

Equally important are the people she works alongside.

"Rural healthcare teams are incredibly supportive. You quickly build strong friendships and professional connections with your colleagues. You're not just caring for patients. You're caring for people you know, families you have grown up with, and a community that supports one another," Jorja said.



Jorja with her grandmother Kathy

"There is a real sense of meaning in being able to make a difference close to home, while still maintaining an amazing work-life balance and enjoying the lifestyle the South West has to offer."

Perhaps the most special part of Jorja's story, however, is one that spans generations. Standing side by side in the photo is someone who helped shape both her life and her career, her grandmother, Kathy Wiedman.

"One of the most special parts of my journey is being able to work alongside my grandmother. She has been an enrolled nurse since she was 16 years old," Jorja said.

It is a rare and meaningful connection, two generations caring for the same community, walking hospital corridors together with shared purpose.

"Not many people can say they share a career in healthcare across generations," Jorja reflected. "It's something I am incredibly proud of."

For those considering following a similar path, Jorja's advice is simple and heartfelt.

"Do it. Rural nursing provides countless opportunities for personal and professional growth. It builds your confidence and independence, and you have the chance to make a genuine impact within your community every single day," she said.

From a high school traineeship in aged care to the operating theatre in Roma, Jorja Wiedman's journey is a testament to the power of community, opportunity, and staying connected to where it all began.



DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION MONTH

As Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Prevention Month comes to a close, South West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) reflects on a month of strong collaboration, meaningful conversations, and community-led action across the region.

Throughout May, our teams worked alongside key partners, service providers and community organisations to deliver a diverse range of activities aimed at raising awareness, strengthening knowledge, and reinforcing the message that domestic and family violence has no place in our communities. These events, coordinated and supported by Kamal Mustafayev and Heather Scriven, along with our broader teams, created opportunities to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds across the South West.

From community information sessions and awareness stalls to interagency events and local campaigns, we were proud to stand alongside our partners to provide education and resources that empower individuals to recognise the signs of DFV, support those affected, and understand how to seek help.

These collaborative efforts have played an important role in amplifying a consistent message across the region: everyone has a part to play in preventing violence.

Heather Scriven, Social Worker Adv DFV, emphasised the significance of this work.

“The month has highlighted the strength of our communities when we come together with a shared purpose,” she said.

“Increasing awareness, reducing stigma, and encouraging respectful relationships are essential steps in preventing domestic and family violence.



Heather Scriven

“These conversations cannot stop at the end of May.

“This year’s theme centred on the importance of collective responsibility and community action to end domestic and family violence.

“Across the South West, this was reflected in the many partnerships formed and strengthened, demonstrating that prevention and support requires a united and sustained effort.”

While DFV Prevention Month provides a powerful platform, the message remains clear, awareness and action must continue every day.

Heather said being informed, speaking up, and supporting those impacted by domestic and family violence was not limited to a single month; it is an ongoing commitment for all of us.

South West HHS extends sincere thanks to all staff, partners, and community members who contributed to the success of this month’s activities. Together, we will continue to promote safety, respect and wellbeing across our communities, today and every day.



SUPPORTING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES FROM THE GROUND UP

Across South West Queensland, more communities are taking local action to support healthier and more connected lifestyles thanks to our Healthy Opportunities through Prevention and Empowerment Service (HOPE).

HOPE Program Manager Cate McKenna, said the team could definitely see momentum growing across the South West communities.

“We’re seeing a real shift toward community-led health and wellbeing,” Cate said.

“People are coming together not just to learn about healthy eating, movement and mental wellbeing, but to actively support each other in making those changes stick.”

Recent activities across the region highlight this approach in action. From Cook + Connect sessions at Surat Library, where residents shared practical tips for eating well on a budget, to nutrition sessions with parents at Dunkeld Playgroup, there’s a strong focus on building skills, confidence and connection.

“Healthy habits are easier when they’re shared. Programs like Cook + Connect are about more than food, they’re about creating welcoming spaces where people can learn, connect and feel empowered. That sense of ownership is continuing to grow, with local organisations now embedding these initiatives into their own programs,” Cate said.

“Community-led Cook + Connect sessions are already being delivered by partners such as CUC and Quilpie Shire Council, demonstrating the sustainability of these approaches.”

Cate said HOPE’s broader work was also expanding, including strong engagement through Wellness My Way, with more than 100 new participants joining through recent flu vaccination clinics across the South West.

“We’re meeting people where they are. Whether it’s at a clinic, a careers expo or a local event, every interaction is an opportunity to support better health outcomes,” she said.

The HOPE Community Connector Network is another key driver, with 55 local connectors promoting wellbeing initiatives and leading activities across the region.

“Our connectors are passionate community members who are making a real difference on the ground. They’re helping spread positive messages and creating opportunities for others to get involved. Community voices also remain central to HOPE’s work, with the newly launched HOPE Community Survey inviting residents to share what matters most for their health and wellbeing. We want to keep listening and learning from our communities.

“Their insights guide everything we do.”

As the program continues to grow, Cate said one thing was clear: local leadership and connection are at the heart of lasting change.

“When communities lead the way, we see stronger, more sustainable outcomes,” she said.

“It’s an exciting time for health and wellbeing across the South West.”

HOPE Service Health & Wellbeing Survey

Scan the QR code to have your say about the health and wellbeing in your community.





OUR TEAMS

MELLISA WAKEFIELD REJOINS SOUTH WEST AS GENERAL MANAGER ACUTE SERVICES

South West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) is pleased to welcome back Mellisa Wakefield, who recommenced in May as General Manager Acute Services.

With more than 36 years of experience in the healthcare sector, including over a decade in senior Director of Nursing roles across regional and rural services, Mellisa returns to the South West bringing deep expertise, strong leadership and a genuine passion for rural healthcare.

Chief Executive Dr Anthony Brown said Mellisa's appointment comes at an important time for the organisation. I'm delighted to welcome Mellisa back to South West HHS. She brings a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record in rural and remote healthcare. Her leadership will be instrumental as we continue to progress our strategic priorities and strengthen acute services across the region," Anthony said.

In her new role, Mellisa will oversee and manage all acute services across the health service, a significant and complex portfolio focused on ensuring safe, high-quality, and accessible care for communities across the South West.

For Mellisa, the return is both professional and personal.

"It's really special to be back. Having had the opportunity to work in other health services, I can say with confidence that we have something unique here in the South West. There's a genuine commitment to patient care, and people truly work together as a team for the benefit of the community," she said.

Originally from Winton, Mellisa's rural upbringing has shaped her understanding of the challenges and strengths of regional communities. Her passion for healthcare began at a young age after a childhood hospital experience that inspired her to pursue nursing and dedicate her career to making a difference in people's lives.

After time away working with Wide Bay HHS and Central Queensland HHS, Mellisa says she is looking forward to reconnecting with staff and communities across the region.



"I'm most excited about working with our workforce and our communities. Rural healthcare is incredibly rewarding. People may not always realise the breadth of experience, career development, and impact you can have working in these settings," she said.

Mellisa highlighted access to services and workforce sustainability as ongoing challenges in rural and remote healthcare, but also opportunities for innovation and growth.

She is particularly passionate about strengthening models of care and ensuring equitable access for all patients, regardless of where they live.

"We need to continue to look at how we deliver services differently, how we improve access for people in more remote areas and ensure we're meeting the needs of each community. Every community is different, and our approach needs to reflect that," she said.

Looking ahead, Mellisa's vision focuses on understanding community needs, addressing service gaps, and fostering a strong, supportive workplace culture built on safety, respect, and collaboration.

"It's about working together, within our teams and with our communities, to deliver the best possible care. Supporting our workforce and strengthening partnerships will be key to sustaining high-quality healthcare across the South West," she said.

Mellisa will be based in Roma and is looking forward to meeting staff and community members in the coming weeks as she settles back into the South West HHS team.



CELEBRATING DECADES OF DEDICATION ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST

South West HHS is proud to celebrate three incredible milestones, recognising the commitment, compassion and community connection of staff who have dedicated decades of service to the region.

In Roma, Gail Pettit recently marked an impressive 30 years of service as a valued member of our Operational Services team. Gail's behind-the-scenes contribution has been vital to keeping services running smoothly, ensuring patients, staff and visitors are supported every day. Her reliability, strong work ethic and pride in her role reflect the important part Operational Services staff play in delivering quality care.

In Augathella, Noeleen McQueen also celebrated 30 years of service as a nurse, providing care and support to her community across generations. Known for her compassion and dedication, Noeleen has been a constant presence for many families, delivering not just clinical care, but reassurance and connection when it's needed most. Her career is a true reflection of the strength and impact of rural nursing.

Adding to this celebration, Anthony Wollaston, Nurse Practitioner in Quilpie, has reached an outstanding milestone of 30 years with Queensland Health. Anthony's extensive experience and advanced clinical skills have made a significant impact across the region, supporting patients with high-quality, accessible care closer to home. His leadership and commitment continue to strengthen healthcare delivery in rural and remote communities.

Together, these milestones represent more than years of service, they tell a story of dedication, resilience and a deep commitment to the South West.

At South West HHS, it is people like Gail, Noeleen and Anthony who make a lasting difference, supporting patients, strengthening communities, and embodying the true spirit of our health service.



Congratulations Gail, Noeleen and Anthony, and thank you for everything you do for the South West.





ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY

We proudly recognised Administrative Professionals Day at the start of May, an opportunity to celebrate the vital contributions of our administrative workforce across the South West HHS.

This day serves as an important reminder of the critical role these professionals play in supporting our clinical teams, ensuring smooth operations, and helping deliver high-quality healthcare services to our communities.

Administrative Professionals Day has a long history, originating in 1952 as National Secretaries Day in the United States during a time when there was a shortage of skilled administrative workers following World War II. The initiative was introduced to recognise the value of administrative roles, support professional development, and encourage more people to enter the field. Over time, the celebration evolved to reflect the broad scope and growing complexity of these roles, and in 2000 it became known as Administrative Professionals Day.

While the date varies internationally, in Australia it is typically celebrated on the first Friday in May, providing an important opportunity to acknowledge the professionalism, adaptability, and expertise of administrative staff across all sectors. Today, it is recognised globally to honour the essential “behind-the-scenes” work that keeps organisations running effectively.

Administrative professionals are often the first point of contact for patients and stakeholders, setting the tone for compassionate and efficient care. Behind the scenes, they coordinate complex systems, manage information, and keep services running seamlessly. Their adaptability, attention to detail, and commitment underpin the delivery of safe, effective healthcare, particularly in rural and remote settings.

Emma Humphreys, South West HHS Director of Activity Based Funding said within the South West HHS each area required a unique set of clinical skills.

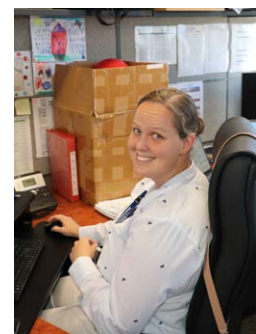
“This diversity also extends to the Administration Professionals who support these areas and the broader organisation. I have the privilege of partnering with our Administration Professionals each month through our Network Forum. The forum provides a valuable platform for professional growth, collaboration, and networking, supporting individuals to build capability while strengthening connections across the organisation,” Emma said.

The Administration Professionals Network Forum continues to play an important role in strengthening capability, fostering collaboration, and creating opportunities for connection across geographically dispersed teams. It highlights the organisation’s commitment to investing in people and supporting ongoing professional development.

Emma also acknowledged the dedication shown across the workforce.

“I would like to sincerely thank everyone who comes to work each day striving for excellence. Your dedication, professionalism, and commitment ensure our communities receive the best possible healthcare in the bush. The impact of your work is felt well beyond our organisation, making a meaningful difference to our communities,” she said.

Administrative Professionals Day is more than a moment of recognition, it is a celebration of the people who keep our services connected, coordinated, and compassionate. Their work is essential, their impact far-reaching, and their contribution deeply valued.





EXPANDING WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE AT ROMA HOSPITAL

Dr Laura O'Grady, Dr Sally Street, Mollie Neate, Lily Stone, Sophia McQueen, Zoe Goltz

Roma Hospital is improving access to women's health services with the introduction of a new Senior Medical Officer (SMO) women's health clinic, providing more appropriate, patient-centred care for non-urgent gynaecology and early pregnancy concerns.

Previously, many women with these conditions presented to the Emergency Department, which was not always the most suitable environment for their care. The new clinic offers a calmer, more tailored setting, supporting both clinical needs and patient comfort.

Dr Sally Street, SMO with Rural and Remote Medical Services South West HHS, said the clinic represents an important step forward for local care.

"This clinic gives women access to the right care, in the right place, at the right time," Sally said.

"Moving these presentations out of the Emergency Department allows us to provide a more appropriate, culturally safe and supportive environment for women in our community."

She said the model also brought significant training benefits, giving registrars valuable hands-on experience in women's health while working under the supervision of experienced clinicians.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for our registrars to build their skills and confidence in a supported environment," she said.

"We're already seeing growing interest in advanced skills training, which is important for strengthening our rural workforce into the future."

Early results from the clinic have been encouraging, with improved care pathways already evident.

Sally said two patients have been directly admitted through the clinic, demonstrating more efficient coordination of care and better outcomes for patients.

"The clinic reflects a broader commitment to continuously improving services for rural and remote communities," she said.

"This is about making sure women in Roma and surrounding areas can access high-quality care close to home.

"It's a positive step towards delivering more responsive, patient-centred services that meet the needs of our community."



OUR RESOURCES

FORENSIC TRAINING MILESTONE IN THE SOUTH WEST

South West HHS has taken an important step forward in strengthening local support for victim-survivors, recently hosting its first Forensic Medical Examination workshops in the district.

Held across Roma and Charleville last month, the two-day workshops were delivered by Forensic Medicine Queensland and marked the first time this specialised training has been offered within the South West.

A total of 16 clinicians, 14 nurses and midwives, along with two doctors, participated, building critical skills to support adult victim-survivors of sexual assault.

Annika Fox, Registered Nurse with the Sexual Assault Response Service (SARS), said the workshops were a significant achievement for the region.

“This training brings vital forensic capability closer to home, ensuring our communities can access timely, compassionate and expert care when it is needed most,” Annika said.

“The workshops focused on developing clinicians’ skills and confidence in conducting forensic medical examinations, while also reinforcing the importance of delivering trauma-informed care. Participants had the opportunity to strengthen their understanding of best practice approaches that prioritise patient choice, dignity and re-empowerment.”

Beyond clinical skills, the training also created valuable opportunities for collaboration.

Clinicians from across the South West connected with each other and with partner organisations, helping to build stronger relationships and a more coordinated response to sexual assault across the region.

“As a health service, South West HHS is committed to ensuring victim-survivors are supported by a multidisciplinary, compassionate and responsive care model - especially in rural and remote communities where access to specialised services can be more complex,” Annika said.

“This milestone reflects the growing capability of the Sexual Assault Response Service (SARS) and its ongoing commitment to improving access to care across the South West.”

“By investing in local training and partnerships, South West HHS continues to strengthen the support available to communities, ensuring that care is not only accessible, but delivered with empathy, respect and professionalism when it matters most.”





SOUTH WEST STAFF SHARE THEIR VOICE THROUGH CULTURE COMPASS

South West HHS staff across the region have had their say in the new Culture Compass employee survey – reaching a massive **71 percent** engagement.

This was a state-leading participation rate reflecting the commitment of our people to continuously improve our workplace and the experience of working at South West HHS.

The survey is based on the Gallup engagement framework and includes 12 science-based engagement questions designed to better understand staff experience and workplace culture.

The survey was recently introduced to South West Hospital and Health Board members, who welcomed the new approach and recognised the value of hearing directly from staff across the organisation.

Since the survey launched, People and Culture - Organisational Development teams have travelled across the South West visiting facilities including Quilpie, Augathella, Charleville, St George, Surat, Mungindi and Dirranbandi to support staff participation and encourage conversations about workplace culture.

Jennifer Armstrong, Manager Organisational Development (People and Culture), said the roadshow had highlighted how passionate staff are about helping shape the future of our workplace.

“It’s been incredibly valuable hearing directly from our teams about what it truly feels like to work at South West. Staff have been open, engaged and genuinely invested in helping us understand what is working well and where improvements can make the greatest difference,” Ms Armstrong said.

The survey has been intentionally designed to be short and easy to complete, taking approximately five minutes, while still providing meaningful insights that can support clearer and more actionable improvement plans for managers and teams.

During visits to sites, staff were also able to ask questions directly about confidentiality and survey reporting.

“We know confidentiality is important to our staff, particularly in smaller rural and remote communities. It was important for us to be visible, answer questions directly and reassure staff that all responses are completely anonymous,” Ms Armstrong said.

The team said it had been encouraging to see the level of engagement across the region, particularly at Dirranbandi, where staff were highly engaged, welcoming and enthusiastic about sharing ideas and experiences to help strengthen their workplace culture.

St George staff were also acknowledged for their strong support of the initiative, with local leadership encouraging teams to take the time to participate and have their say.

The Culture Compass survey closed on 31 May.





BETTER RURAL CARE INAUGURAL EVENT

The Better Rural Care Research Symposium 2026 – big dreams • sure steps – is the inaugural event for South West HHS, of what is positioned to become a flagship annual forum.

The event brings together South West HHS staff, clinicians, health researchers, emerging leaders, education and training partners, and colleagues from HHSs across Queensland, to collaborate and spark innovation.

For the 2026 event, the primary target audience is South West HHS clinicians. The aim is to expand upon the success and scale of the event year on year, and establish the Better Rural Care Symposium as Queensland's leading annual rural and remote health symposium.

Showcasing:

- ➔ Research, quality improvement and innovation across South West HHS
- ➔ Collaboration with universities, research and community partners
- ➔ Emerging clinicians taking their first steps into research
- ➔ First Nations leadership and culturally grounded practice
- ➔ Shared learning across rural and remote health services

The symposium is aligned to, and supports delivery of, the South West HHS Research Strategy 2026–30.

**Join the conversation. Bring your spark.
Limited places available.**

[Register today ➔](#)

[Event Program ➔](#)



BETTER RURAL CARE

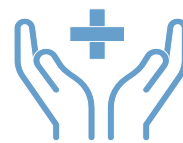
RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
big dreams • sure steps

9 September 2026

ROMA EXPLORERS INN



Every question we ask in research is a spark that can light a fire of change



OUR SERVICES

STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST

The South West Hospital and Health Service (HHS) continues to make meaningful strides in improving mental health care, with the recent Mental Health Consumer Advisory Network (CAN) quarterly meeting reinforcing a shared commitment to accessible, community-focused support.

Held on Monday, 18 May 2026, the meeting brought together consumers, clinicians, and service leaders to reflect on progress and shape the future of mental health services across the region. South West HHS Executive Director Primary and Community Care, Rebecca Greenway, welcomed the outcomes of the discussion, highlighting the importance of collaboration and lived experience in service design.

“The strength of our mental health system lies in how well we listen, adapt, and work together,” Rebecca said.

“These meetings are vital - they ensure services are shaped not just for the community, but with the community.”

She said a key highlight was the continued growth of the Stride Universal Aftercare Service, which supports individuals following a suicide attempt or those experiencing crisis.

“Funded through the Primary Health Network (PHN), the service has broadened its referral pathways to include trusted community organisations such as Lifeline and Anglicare,” Rebecca said.

“This expansion ensures more people can access help in ways that feel comfortable and familiar, particularly for those who may prefer community-based care over hospital settings.

“We know that recovery doesn’t look the same for everyone.

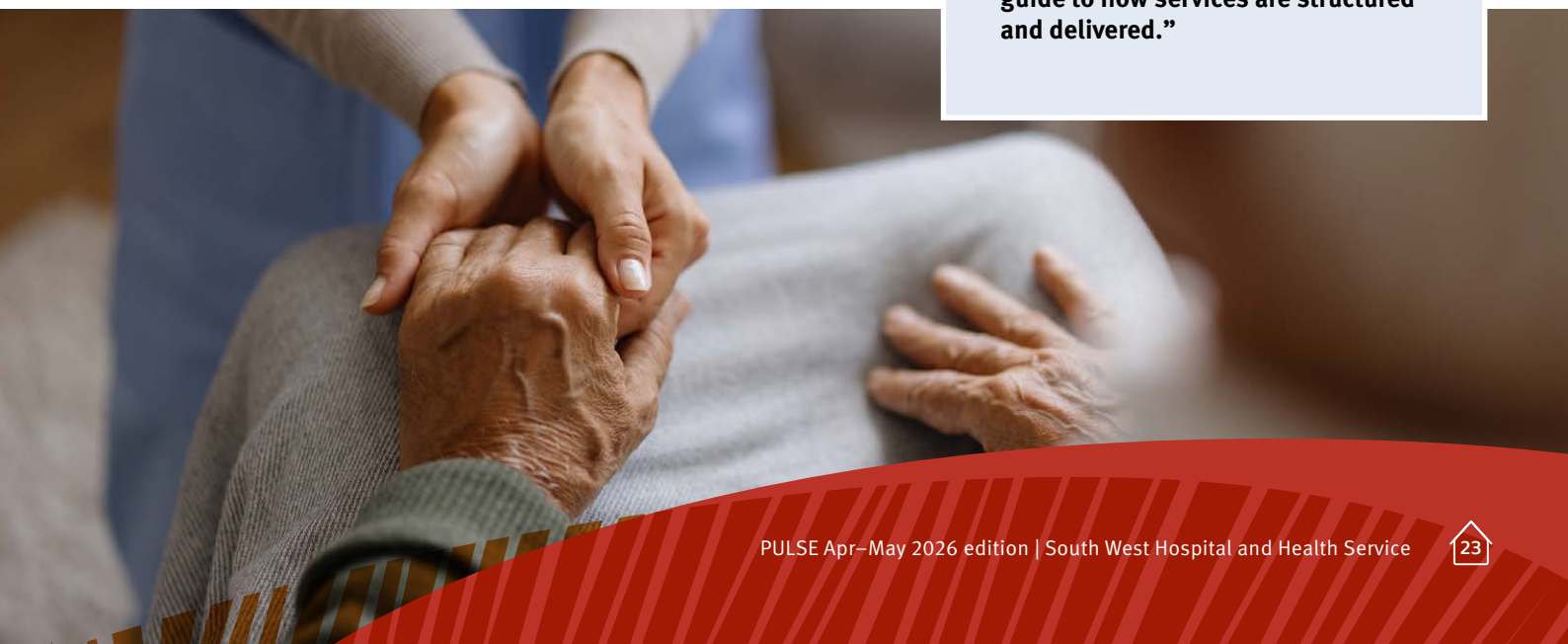
“By strengthening partnerships and widening referral pathways, we’re making sure support is more flexible, responsive, and accessible when people need it most.”

A new home for Roma mental health services

The relocation of the Roma Mental Health Service to the Hawthorne Street facility marks another significant milestone. While most teams have transitioned to the new site, the acute care team continues to maintain a presence within the hospital to ensure continuity of critical services.

“Staff have welcomed the upgraded facility, which includes improved meeting spaces and refreshed environments designed to support both staff wellbeing and client engagement,” Rebecca said.

“Plans are also underway to develop a pictographic service profile, which will provide a clearer, more visual guide to how services are structured and delivered.”



Growing services to meet community needs

The meeting also showcased the broader evolution of mental health services across the South West, underpinned by a hub-and-spoke model and strengthened through the Better Care Together funding initiative.

Rebecca said this investment had enabled increased staffing and the development of specialised services, including:

- ➔ Aftercare programs
- ➔ Alcohol and other drugs (AOD) support
- ➔ Dedicated Indigenous mental health workforce roles
- ➔ Future planning is focused on consolidating clinical services within the Hawthorne Street community hub, further enhancing coordination and the overall consumer experience.

“Investment through Better Care Together is helping us build a more connected, culturally responsive system,” she said.

“Importantly, it’s enabling us to expand services that reflect the unique needs of our rural and remote communities.”

Improving communication with consumers

Rebecca also highlighted that clear, consistent communication with consumers remained a priority.

“The meeting provided an update on new Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs (AODS) brochures, which have now been finalised and submitted for publication. These resources will offer standardised information on available services, including rural generalist GP psychiatry and medication reviews,” she said.

“Additionally, a new “Help Us Care for You” card will soon be introduced, giving consumers easy access to key information about their care and support pathways.”

Looking ahead: equity and leadership

The group also endorsed a proposal to focus the next meeting on First Nations mental health data and the Health Equity Strategy, reinforcing a commitment to culturally safe, equitable care across the region.

In leadership news, Shane Collett has been appointed as the new Service Director for the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Team. Commencing at the end of May, he brings a wealth of experience that will support ongoing service development.

“Strong leadership, combined with community insight, will be critical as we continue to grow and refine our services,” Rebecca said.

“We’re excited to welcome Shane and to keep building momentum.”

The next Mental Health Consumer Advisory Network meeting will be held on Monday, 17 August 2026, continuing the focus on improving outcomes and ensuring the voices of consumers remain central to service delivery.

Ms Greenway encouraged ongoing engagement from stakeholders across the region.

“This is a shared journey,” she said.

“We encourage anyone with feedback or ideas to connect with us, because together, we can continue to strengthen mental health care across the South West.”



SOUTH WEST CHAMPIONS “GROW OUR OWN” AT BALONNE CAREERS EXPO

The future of healthcare in the South West was on full display at the Balonne Shire Council Career and Jobs Expo held on 19 May at St Patrick’s School Hall in St George, where students, job seekers and community members came together to explore local career opportunities, and the vital role they can play in strengthening their own communities.

Executive Director People and Culture, Katie Eckersley said South West HHS proudly supported the event, using the opportunity to amplify its Grow Our Own message, encouraging local people to pursue meaningful careers close to home, particularly in healthcare. Katie said the Allied Health and HOPE teams drew strong interest from attendees with engaging, hands-on activities designed to spark curiosity and showcase the diversity of roles available across the health service.

“From clinical pathways such as nursing, allied health and medical careers, through to non-clinical roles in administration, support services and community programs, students were given a practical look at how they can build a future without leaving the region. Career expos like this are incredibly important for regions like ours,” Ms Eckersley said.

“They create a direct connection between young people, job seekers and the opportunities that exist right here in their own communities. Our Grow Our Own approach is about supporting local people to train, work and build careers in the South West, because we know that when people stay local, they strengthen the fabric of their communities.”

Katie said the expo also highlighted the breadth of opportunities available within South West HHS, many of which were not always widely understood.

“We want people to see that healthcare is not just one career pathway, it’s hundreds. Whether you’re interested in hands-on patient care, supporting services behind the scenes, or working in community-focused programs like HOPE, there is a place for you. By showcasing these pathways early, we can help students and community members see a future here, not somewhere else,” she said.

Beyond inspiring future career choices, the event provided valuable opportunities for the HHS to connect directly with the Balonne community, strengthening relationships with local stakeholders including schools, council representatives and community organisations. The conversations held on the day offered important insights into how the program can continue to evolve to better support participation across the region.

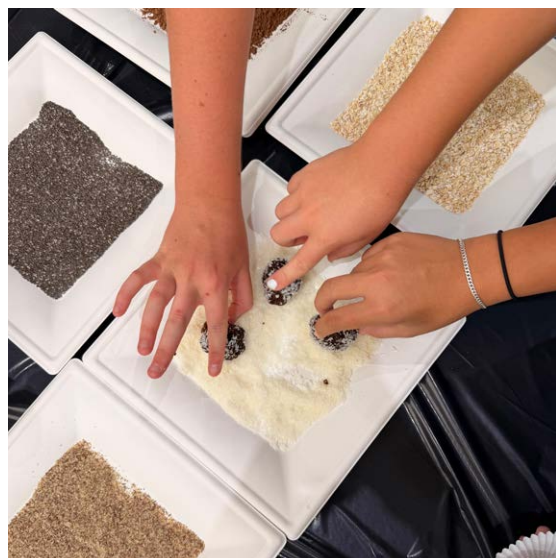
“Events like this are not just about sharing information, they’re about listening. We gain a deeper understanding of the barriers people face, the aspirations they have, and how we can tailor our programs to support them to succeed. The strong level of engagement at the expo reflects growing local interest in career pathways that allow individuals to stay connected to their communities while contributing to essential services.

“For us (South West HHS), the message remains clear - investing in local people is key to building a resilient, sustainable healthcare workforce for the future. When we support our own people to pursue careers locally, we’re not just filling roles, we’re building stronger, healthier communities,” Katie said.

“That’s the heart of Grow Our Own.”

The South West Careers Expo was once again organised by the HOPE Program and RESQ Qld, in partnership with Murweh, Quilpie and Paroo shires, and Charleville State High School.

Entry was FREE and open to all ages.





April 2025 #swSpirit

Please join us in congratulating South West Hospital and Health Services' (HHS) Establishment Support Officer (Organisational Development) Michelle Cabrera, our April #swSpirit recipient.



April Spirit recipient Michelle Cabrera

Michelle consistently goes above and beyond and truly embodies the values of quality, compassion, adaptability, engagement and accountability.

Emma Parker, Senior Content Writer and Web Advisor, described Michelle as the glue that holds people together.

"She is the kind of person who lifts those around her and strengthens everything she's part of," Emma said.

"Whether it's supporting service improvement, lending a hand wherever it's needed, or bringing people together, Michelle approaches her work with positivity, care and commitment."

Katie Eckersley, Executive Director People and Culture reiterated her positivity was infectious and shone through in anything she was working on.

"Michelle is always looking for ways to support service improvement and is happy to jump in whenever and wherever somebody needs a hand," Katie said.

"She's an awesome team member with a positive approach to getting things done well and a worthy #swSpirit recipient."

Emma also added how Michelle always goes above and beyond in her role.

"She does not simply complete tasks, she actively contributes to a stronger, more connected workplace," she said.

"She lives and demonstrates the values of South West HHS in everything she does.

"Michelle is the glue within our team. She brings people together, builds positive and respectful relationships, and creates an environment where others feel supported and included.

"She is forward-thinking, always looking for ways to improve how we work, and importantly, she brings people along on that journey. Her positivity lifts those around her and creates a connected, supportive and high-performing team."

Michelle's contribution extends well beyond her role, leaving a lasting and positive impact on team culture and the way we work together across South West HHS.

Congratulations Michelle and thank you for living the #swSpirit every day.



May 2026 #swSpirit



May Spirit recipient Mikayla Henningsen

The South West Hospital and Health Service is proud to recognise Mikayla Henningsen as the May recipient of the South West Spirit Award, an acknowledgement of her outstanding commitment to our values of adaptability, compassion, engagement, quality and accountability.

Mikayla is described by her colleagues as a highly valued and dependable team member who consistently goes above and beyond in her role within the South West Oral Health team.

District Senior Dental Assistant Sophie Hartley said Mikayla was a very valuable member of the team and consistently demonstrates a willingness to step up and help wherever needed.

“She is supportive not only to our patients but also to our staff, always offering assistance with a positive and dependable attitude.” Sophie said.

“Her natural instinct to help others shines through in everything she does. She is the kind of person who simply steps in and gets things done without hesitation or expecting anything in return.

“Her selflessness, dedication, and genuine care for others make her an incredible asset to our team.”

Beyond the workplace, Mikayla’s compassion extends into everyday moments, reflecting truly what it means to live our values. While on outreach in Charleville, Mikayla noticed an elderly man at a grocery store struggling at the checkout when his card repeatedly declined. Without drawing attention to the situation, she quietly stepped in and paid for his groceries.

Service Coordinator Megan Lesleighter highlighted the significance of this simple but powerful act.

“It’s a simple moment, but it strongly reflects our value of compassion, treating people with kindness, respect and dignity,” Megan said.

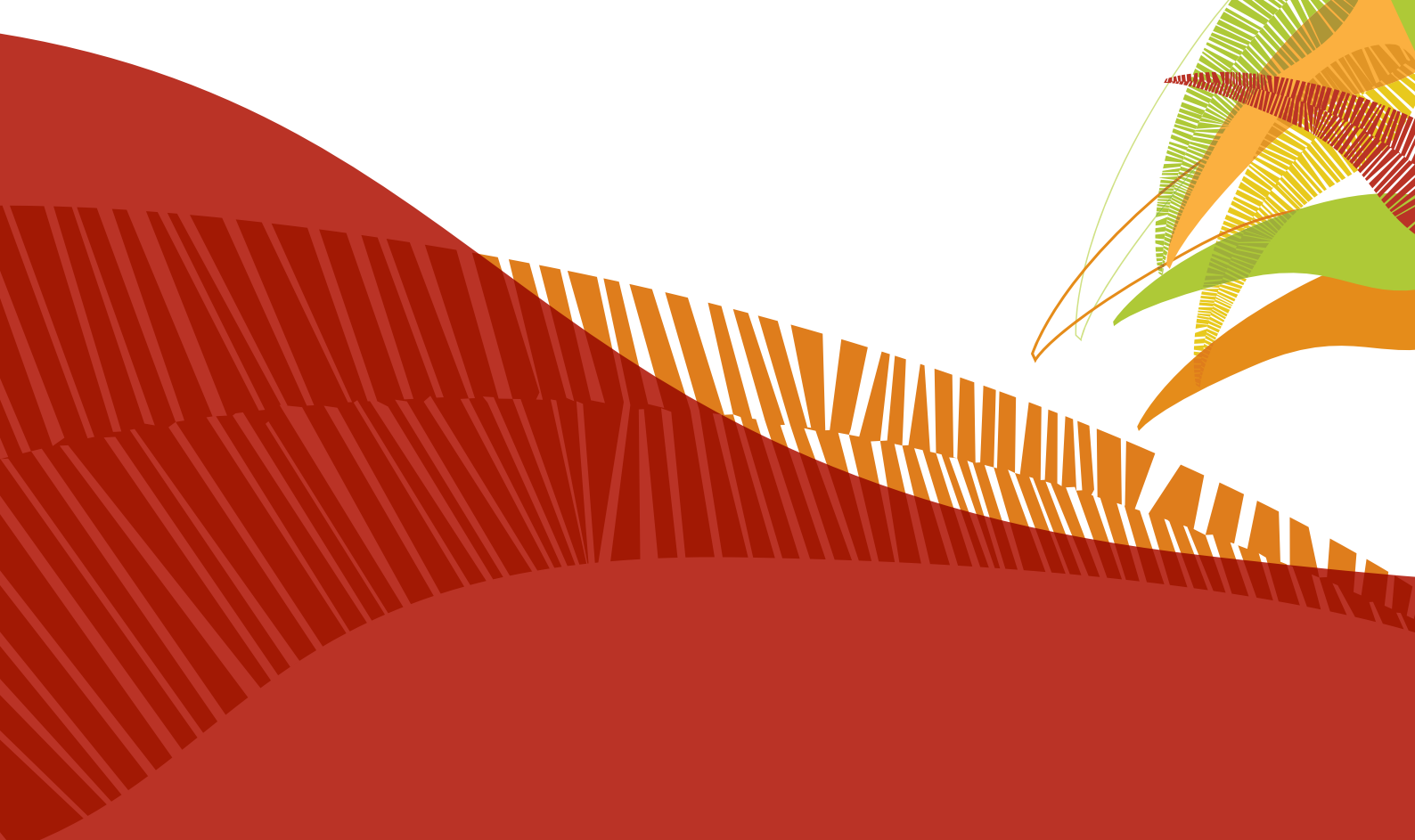
“What stood out most was the way Mikayla handled the situation with care and discretion, preserving the individual’s dignity during what could have been a distressing experience.

“It really highlighted the kind of people we have in our service.”

Mikayla’s actions, both in her professional role and in the community, embody the true spirit of South West HHS.

She demonstrates that delivering high-quality care is not only about clinical excellence, but about treating every person with respect, kindness and humanity.

Congratulations, Mikayla, and thank you for the difference you make every day.



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