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Your local health news | April/May 2017



## The human side of ED

A touching story from Queensland's busiest emergency department p. 3

## Breaking down barriers in mental health

New videos aim to reduce stigma related to mental illness in the elderly p.5

## Red alert on hidden sugars

New campaign to reduce sales of sugary drinks at Gold Coast Health p.6

## Inside this issue

- 4 Innovative idea gives mums first look at newborns
- 5 New Mental Health Act comes into effect
- 6 Updated referrals reduce wait times
- 7 Foundation transforms bereavement support room
- 8 Investing in future health workers

Cover: Paramedic Gary Berkowitz, emergency registrar Angela Burgett and emergency consultant Mohammed Raisuddin are part of the professional and compassionate team who care for patients at Gold Coast Health's emergency departments. An insight into the collective care provided by our ED staff featured in an article penned by Gold Coast Health emergency consultant Shahina Braganza. See article on page 3



# Board News

## Message from the Chair – Ian Langdon

### Volunteer insights for Board

**Many visitors to Gold Coast health's facilities across the region may not be aware that the helpful people you see in blue shirts are in fact members of our Volunteer Service.**

Our more than 300 volunteers come from all backgrounds and share a willingness to contribute to the community.

Volunteers are an essential part of the successful functioning of Gold Coast Health. They offer support in many ways from listening and chatting with patients and their families, assisting with directions, supporting patients who arrive for clinic appointments and assisting with ward activities. Their efforts help make a patient's stay a little more comfortable.

Gold Coast Health Board members have always known how incredibly important our Volunteer Service is however we have an even greater appreciation of the service they provide after deciding to join our 300 volunteers in shifts across our health service.



Board member Judy Searle with a patient at Gold Coast University Hospital during her shift as a volunteer.

Board member Judy Searle first suggested the idea late last year and the Board was very enthusiastic about participating as part of our commitment to engage more closely with patients and staff.

I recently completed my first shift with volunteers at Robina Hospital and it gave me a great opportunity to meet staff, patients and visitors in a more casual way.

As I pushed the café trolley around, I talked with many of our clinicians about some of the challenges of working with patients who are very unwell.

I met one patient who has been coming into hospital for 15 years to receive kidney treatment, so it was really great to hear her insights into how our service has evolved and how much they appreciate the work of our volunteers.

The volunteer shifts are providing the Board with an opportunity to talk to many people about what is happening across the health service, to understand how our community is using our services and, importantly, how we can improve.

It is also providing us with the opportunity to experience first-hand the work and dedication of volunteers, but also to see how important the volunteer role is with respect to interaction with patients and providing a social support.

I am so thankful that we have so many wonderful people who want to serve their community in this way.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, you can find out more on the Gold Coast Health web site. [www.goldcoast.health.qld.gov.au/](http://www.goldcoast.health.qld.gov.au/)

## Feedback drives Imaging improvements

**Significant changes have been introduced at Gold Coast University Hospital's Medical Imaging Department in response to feedback from patients and staff.**

The Medical Imaging multi-disciplinary teams developed action plans to address the key concerns raised by staff and patient satisfaction surveys.

Staff have worked together to implement changes to benefit patients and staff including:

- increasing the number of nurses who are on call to improve patient and staff safety
- developing a new poster to help patients identify doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, improving transparency and making it easier for them to complete the patient survey correctly.

"Assisting patients to identify the different members of the multidisciplinary team is important for patient-focused care and it now means we receive better quality data from the patient surveys," said Nurse Unit Manager Chris Plaisier.

# Life and death shows human side of ED

**Dr Shahina Braganza's touching story about life and death—inside Gold Coast University Hospital's Emergency Department has captured the hearts of social media.**

**Shanina's article, 'When humanity is all we have to offer', has been read and shared by tens-of-thousands of people.**

**Shahina said her story is "about the collective care provided by the team—not just to the patients but to each other".**

**Shahina believes she has the best job in the world "but sometimes even the best job in the world can suck a little."**

Recently, I looked after a woman in her early thirties. Let's call her Emily. She had been completely well earlier that afternoon. She returned home from an outdoor activity and collapsed. By the time she arrived in our emergency department (ED), it was 60 minutes later. We continued our efforts for a further 15 minutes until we got back a blood gas and performed a bedside ultrasound of the heart, both of which confirmed to us that any further efforts would be futile.

As I braced myself to go and speak with her family, I realised that, despite having done this several times before, this time I had no words. The main thought in my head was that I was wearing a bright yellow frangipani in my hair, and how out of place it was going to seem.

I sat with Emily's husband (let's call him Brad) and his two friends who had accompanied him. The social worker and senior nurse were also in the room. My consultant colleague had spoken to Brad a few minutes earlier to get some more information that may aid our efforts—I asked him to join me as he had already met the family.

I decided I had to cut to the chase: Brad was beside himself awaiting news of Emily and although what I was about to tell him would destroy him, I needn't prolong the agony of getting there. I briefly ran him through what happened at home, what the ambulance service had done, what we had done – and that we had not been able to revive Emily. Normally I make sure to use the words "She has died", so that there can be no misunderstanding. But I didn't have the opportunity, as Brad placed his head in his hands and began to howl with grief.

I wanted to tell him that absolutely everything had been done by him, by the ambulance service and by us, and that if Emily had had any chance of survival, it had been given to her. I wanted to tell him that I didn't think she had suffered, as her collapse had been so sudden.

All he could manage between his sobs was "Why?"

All I could manage in return was "I don't know".

When the social worker advised gently that Brad could come and see Emily when he was ready, he asked in torment, "How can you ever be ready for something like this?"

How can you ever be ready for something like this? Emily left behind a shattered family which included Brad, but also her two young children, and two parents who suffered the ultimate injustice of surviving their child.

I left the relatives' room to return to the resuscitation pod. An intensive care QAS paramedic who works with the High Acuity Response Unit (HARU) was still in the department. "Gary, it was a consolation to be able to tell the family with confidence that Emily had had the absolute best care in the community," I told him.

Now Gary is, in my opinion, the best paramedic in the world. A few months ago, he spoke to our ED about his experiences in



*GCH emergency consultant Shahina Braganza, right, with paramedic Gary Berkowitz and emergency registrar Angela Burgett.*

pre-hospital medicine. He told us about working in a war zone and transferring a patient who had unsurvivable injuries into a facility with no resources. He talked with a sense of anguish about making the silent decision to give this patient the total remaining doses of painkillers and sedative before he left him.

Despite the fact that Gary is an everyday superhero, he responded to my statement with "Thank you for saying that".

The medical officer working with the ambulance team seemed almost apologetic that they had made the decision to transport the patient despite a prolonged resuscitation. "We wanted to make sure that there was nothing more we could offer".

In addition, the ED was the correct place to have the conversation with the family, to provide the additional support of a social worker and senior nurses, and to provide a space where they could say their goodbyes to Emily.

This tragic case also allowed other positive experiences.

My consultant colleague was due to go home when Emily arrived. Without words or intrusion, he simply stayed. He accompanied the family to the viewing room (while I took over care of a man with drug-induced psychosis who was attempting to tear our ED apart); he filled out paperwork; he checked on other staff. When I suggested for the third time that he should go home to his own family, he softly replied "you go have a cup of tea and I'll leave when you get back".

The early shift registrar did the same. She contacted the coroner and the police. She also filled out paperwork. She set about finding lactose-free milk formula for Emily's baby who was being exclusively breast fed until now.

Throughout the rest of the shift, I heard colleagues ask each other "Are you okay?"

The administration officer brought nurses cups of water, muttering that they never looked after themselves properly.

In the midst of this horrible case and the sucky part of being in the best job in the world, it helped to be working with the best team in the world.

When I sat with Emily's mum later that evening, I asked her if she would like to tell me a little about her daughter. I learned that Emily had liked to sing since she was four years old, that she was a proud and doting mother, that her older daughter was currently Daddy's girl but that the younger baby was firmly bonded with her mum. She was a kind and thoughtful daughter, who had spent the previous day with her mum, as today was mum's birthday...

As I immersed myself in the story, I was once again reminded that even in tragedy, even in grief and despair, we are truly privileged to be allowed into people's lives.

We can't always make things better, but we can be there. When our clinical expertise has nothing further to offer, our simple sense of humanity must and can be enough.

## Innovative idea gives mums first look at newborns



*Mum Misty Walsh meets her new born baby after viewing her c-section on the babycam at Gold Coast University Hospital.*

### Mothers who have caesarean births can now share the first minutes of their baby's life, thanks to technology being trialled at Gold Coast University Hospital.

Previously, mothers only got a fleeting glimpse of their newborn before waiting up to 20 minutes while medical and nursing staff performed standard health checks on the baby.

The simple technology, a babycam which has been trialled since September 2016, allows the mother to watch from the operating table as her baby is checked by health staff.

Anaesthetist Dr James Drew initiated the idea, saying he felt for mothers who were often left waiting while their partners and staff got to experience the child's first minutes.

"Often the father pops back to show her photos or staff came back with news on the baby, but I felt it was disappointing for the mother because she often missed out on seeing her baby in the early few minutes," he said.

Since the babycam trial began about 50 mothers have had the opportunity to watch their baby during the first few minutes after birth via the device, which does not record footage.

"Often the most satisfying moments are when mothers having their second or third baby are thrilled to see their baby because they know how much they missed out on when they had their first child.

"I've worked in five countries during the past 15 years, and this is the first time I have seen mothers having the opportunity to see their newborns on camera after having a caesarean delivery," Dr Drew said.

About a quarter of births at GCUH in 2016 involved caesareans.

"As one of nine children and being raised by an African-American mother separated from my Aboriginal father and siblings when growing up, puts me in a place of understanding with my clients."

## Benefits from shared mental health model

**A shared mental health model of care between Gold Coast Mental Health and GPs is helping long-term case-managed consumers return to an improved lifestyle in a non-stigmatising environment.**

The General Practice-based "depot medication service delivery" started in June 2015 when consumers were able to receive medication and care from GPs or Palm Beach and Ashmore Community Mental Health Centres.

Gold Coast Mental Health Primary Care Liaison Officer Nancy Granata said the model had been well-received by consumers and GPs, with many patients opting to receive medication to stabilise their mental health at private clinics.

"Consumers are receiving care and advice for a range of diseases and illnesses, not only their mental health, with many seeing a GP regularly for the first time," she said.

"The model has reduced the stigma often attached to attending our centres and our consumers now receive a much wider range of care in a non-stigmatising environment.

"It has empowered consumers to take ownership and responsibility of their physical and mental health."

The number of Gold Coast Mental Health Service consumers receiving depot medication under this model is between 50 to 80 per cent across the community teams.

Previously most only had the option of receiving this medication in a mental health community clinic.

Ms Granata said the model was consistent with the World Health Organisation's 2008 recommendation that mental health be integrated into primary care.

Gold Coast Health GP Liaison Unit's Dr Carl de Wet said the model resulted in a strong interface and collaboration between GPs, the mental health services and other primary health care providers.

"Building a strong rapport with their GPs and practice staff is helping these consumers onto a better path for their mental and physical health," he said.



*Gold Coast Health's Nancy Granata, second from right, with representatives from Doctors at Australia Fair, from left, Practice Nurse Shareen Pienaar, Dr Peyman Forouzandeh and Practice Manager Tamika Buckley.*

# Breaking down barriers in mental health

Gold Coast Health has launched a series of videos which aim to reduce the stigma related to mental illness in the elderly population.

Three consumers and a carer aged 65 and over share powerful stories about the challenges of living with a mental illness and their journeys to recovery in the three-minute videos produced by the health service's Older Person Mental Health Community team.

Occupational Therapist Jessie Blacker, who led the initiative, said as well as reducing stigma, the videos aimed to educate others and empower people to ask for help when help is needed.

"Mental illness can be a tough topic to talk about, but through the sharing of stories we can begin to break down the barriers and treat it just like any other illness," Ms Blacker said.

"As health professionals we can provide expertise in the diagnosis, treatment and care of those in our hospital service, but it is the consumers and carers who have first-hand real life experiences and can provide practical advice to others who are travelling the same journey.

The videos feature 81-year-old Joy who has lived with depression since she was 46; Joy's husband Nev who describes his experience of caring for Joy; Melvin who was diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder 20 years ago; and Clarice, 86, who sought professional help six years ago.



*Pictured at the launch are members of the Older Persons Mental Health Community team, from left, Medical Director Ravikumar Krishnaiah, Service Director Heidi Van Engelen, Team Leader Jo Knudsen and Occupational Therapist Jessie Blacker.*

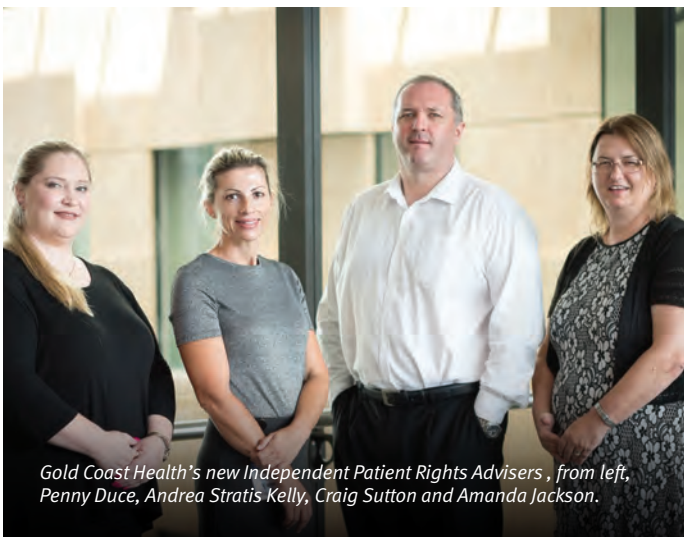
Ms Blacker and her colleagues hope the videos, which were launched at Robina Hospital recently, will empower other consumers and provide hope that recovery is possible.

The population of people aged 65 years and older living on the Gold Coast is estimated at 98,000.

Older Persons Mental Health Community provides specialised, community-based multidisciplinary services, including mental health assessment and treatment, for adults over the age of 65 years, who have a severe and complex mental health illness/disorder, which is complicated by problems/illnesses related to ageing.

Find the videos on YouTube on the Gold Coast Health channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/GoldCoastHealth>

# New Mental Health Act comes into effect



*Gold Coast Health's new Independent Patient Rights Advisers, from left, Penny Duce, Andrea Stratis Kelly, Craig Sutton and Amanda Jackson.*

**More than 150 consumers and carers attended an information session at Gold Coast University Hospital on the new Mental Health Act 2016 which started on 5 March.**

Patient rights are at the forefront of the new Act, which replaces the Mental Health Act 2000.

Safeguarding patient rights includes allowing access to:

- A statement of rights when Mental Health consumers arrive at Gold Coast Health facilities
- Family and community supports
- Information about treatment and care
- Independent Patient Rights Advisers.

Gold Coast Health has four of Queensland's 28 Independent Patient Rights Advisers and they were introduced at the information session. Their role is to advise patients and their nominated support people, family, carers and other support people of their rights under the Act.

Funding is provided to GCH to employ the advisers however they operate independently as part of a state-wide system.

The role of support people is also strengthened under the new Act, with 1-2 nominated people able to receive and discuss confidential information about the patient, and to represent them at the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

The new Act is far more patient-focused than before, according to GCH Mental Health and Specialist Services Clinical Director Kathryn Turner.

"The main object of the Act is to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of people who have a mental illness who do not have the capacity to consent to be treated," Ms Turner said.

More information about the new Mental Health Act is on the Queensland Health website.

## Updated referrals reduce wait times



Carl de Wet, far right, at Hope Island Medical Centre with, from left, Dr Andrew Weissenberger, Sandra McElroy, Kahli Bestzynski and Anthea Blower.

**Patients attending Hope Island Medical Centre have been among the first to benefit from the introduction of updated external referral templates.**

The templates, adapted according to the new Clinical Prioritisation Criteria (CPC), will be used by all General Practitioners referring patients to Gold Coast Health outpatient services.

The updated templates will help reduce outpatient waiting times through streamlined management, according to GCH GP Liaison Unit Manager Dr Carl de Wet.

“The main benefit for our health service is that we receive complete referrals,” he said.

“This results in more efficient and consistent triaging of patients with fewer review appointments.

“Outpatients will see GCH specialists within clinically recommended times.”

Since December Gold Coast Health referral templates have been successfully trialed at six GP clinics, including Hope Island.

Hope Island Medical Centre Practice Manager Anthea Blower said the changes to the templates had been well received by the 21 GPs involved in the pilot at her practice.

“Our clinic found they are a very useful part of CPC implementation,” she said.

## Red alert on sugary drinks

**Gold Coast Health is leading by example in the fight against obesity with the implementation of a better drink choices campaign.**

Gold Coast Health facilities will reduce the number of sugary drinks available for sale and vending machine drinks will be colour-coded to make it easier to identify high sugar levels.

Senior Health Promotion Officer Helen Clifford said Australia’s consumption of sugar had increased in the past decade, with sugar-sweetened beverages like soft drink being a major contributor.

“The health service recognises its role in providing a workplace and service that supports people to be healthier and happier,” Ms Clifford said.

“It’s easy to forget the hidden sugars in drinks and subsequent contribution to excess energy intake. For this reason drinks have been categorised into red, amber and green categories to help us better understand the healthier choice options.”

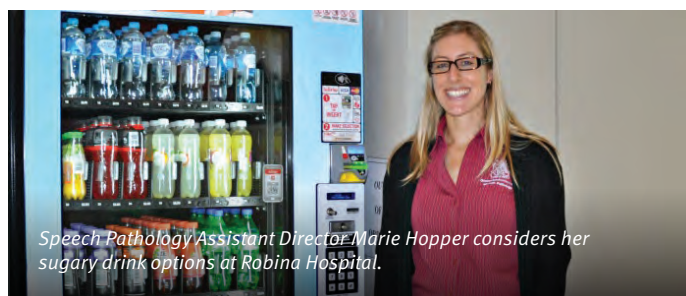
Red choices are high in sugar and have minimal nutritional benefits. Amber drinks still have minimal nutritional benefit, but contain less sugar or artificial sweeteners. Green drinks are best as they include mostly water or in small amounts provide good nutrients with less than 12 grams of sugar.

This campaign aligns with the Australian Council of Medical Colleges’ six-point plan for action on obesity in Australia.

Gold Coast Health has 16 drink vending machines across the health service. Once colour-coding has been introduced, each machine will contain a maximum of 20 per cent red, 40 per cent amber and 40 per cent green choices.

Through the advertising and colour-coding it is hoped that staff and patients will feel supported to choose healthier products.

For more information visit <http://www.healthier.qld.gov.au/get-started/>



Speech Pathology Assistant Director Marie Hopper considers her sugary drink options at Robina Hospital.

## Patient positives

### Mental Health

I would like to mention the superb care that I have received since I was admitted as a patient. Upon arrival with my doctor’s referral the administration staff were absolutely amazing in being very discreet and upon my admission with the appropriate staff I was treated absolutely wonderfully.

My stay in the ward was one of the best forms of recovery I have experienced in my life. The jokes by some of the staff healed me so much faster. Don’t ever change.

### GCUH

Wish to express profound appreciation at the superb care I received in your hospital when recently in your care.

I presented with evidence of four or more recent strokes and atrial fibrillation. That I have suffered no ill effects from my procedures is testament to the high quality of care being provided by this magnificent hospital. I saw inter-departmental cooperation that was solely focused on better patient outcomes as the various specialities worked on the problem and in a profession where humility is not necessarily the norm, there seemed to be a refreshing lack of ego among doctors.

It’s sometimes too easy to forget how lucky we are to have hospitals like the University Hospital. To all the staff there, one and all, GREAT JOB.

## Foundation transforms bereavement support room

**A new Bereavement Support Room has been lovingly upgraded by Gold Coast Hospital Foundation to give parents a private and comforting space to deal with perinatal loss.**

Grieving parents and families who have been affected by the loss of a pregnancy or baby now have access to a beautifully refurbished private room thanks to generous Gold Coast Hospital Foundation donors.

The dedicated Bereavement Support Room in the Maternal Fetal Medicine Unit at Gold Coast University Hospital has been completely transformed by the Gold Coast Hospital Foundation from a sterile and clinical environment into a calming and personalised space.

The room has been decorated with a lounge, chairs, rug, mirrored console, and tea and coffee-making facilities – all set against a stunning full-length coastal wall wrap.

It offers mothers, partners and their families a quiet place away from other areas of the hospital to deal with a devastating diagnosis, receive counselling, and attend follow up appointments.

In addition to the Bereavement Support Room, two waiting rooms also received a much-needed facelift with new furniture, artwork and a feature wall wrap.

Thanks to Woolworths Gold Coast stores and their generous local customers for helping fund the improved spaces.

The Foundation hopes the enhanced spaces provide some comfort to the families that use them.



*The Bereavement Support Room has been transformed by the Foundation.*

## Register now for Gold Coast Marathon

**Put your running shoes on to help patients overcome hardship.**

Register with Gold Coast Hospital Foundation to join Team Health at the 2017 Gold Coast Airport Marathon.

Team Health's runners will hit the pavement for a worthy cause on July 1-2, raising vital funds to benefit ill or injured children and adults at Gold Coast University Hospital, Robina Hospital and other Gold Coast Health facilities.

Register through Gold Coast Hospital Foundation by Wednesday April 26 to receive a 10 per cent discount and Team Health marathon shirt.

It's a great way to tackle a personal fitness challenge while also helping local patients. Plus there are fantastic prizes up for grabs for the highest fundraisers.

Visit [www.gchfoundation.org.au/events](http://www.gchfoundation.org.au/events) to register now.



*Run for Team Health at the Gold Coast Airport Marathon.*

## Abseil for life

**Don't miss Gold Coast Hospital Foundation's most unique and thrill-seeking event taking adventure fundraising to dizzying new heights.**

The first event of its kind on the Gold Coast, Abseil for Life will see participants dare to abseil down one of the Gold Coast's most recognisable structures for Gold Coast Hospital Foundation.

The exciting charity fundraiser will be held over two full days on May 19-20 and will feature an abseil, zip line, flying fox and skywalker.

All funds raised will help provide lifesaving equipment and research to help unwell children and adults.

Visit [www.gchfoundation.org.au/events](http://www.gchfoundation.org.au/events) to secure your spot and find out which iconic local structure you'll be abseiling off.

## Investing in future health workers

### Gold Coast Health is helping Pimpama State Secondary College prepare future generations of health workers.

The health service donated equipment to the high school's Health Service Centre where students get a glimpse of how patient care in a hospital setting works, ahead of potentially establishing a career in the health industry.

Gold Coast Health Board Chair Ian Langdon said it was an easy decision to assist Pimpama State Secondary College and the health service's facilities team identified a number of items no longer required.

"We were able to donate a used electrically-operated hospital bed, a patient monitor, bandages and other hospital consumables that were past their used-by-date," he said.

"Not only is a positive outcome for the school and its students, but an efficient use of resources."

Mr Langdon said Gold Coast Health was a tertiary organisation which welcomed hundreds of university students during medical and nursing placements each year.

"I have no doubt there are some future health workers studying at Pimpama State Secondary College.

"I hope this donation shows the secondary students of Pimpama that a successful health service is built not only on doctors and nurses, but also the support staff and ward clerks who play an important role in quality patient care," Mr Langdon said.

Principal John Thornberry said Pimpama State Secondary College opened in 2013 and had grown from strength to strength.



Gold Coast Health Chair Ian Langdon, left, with students Gemma, Brienna and Kaylee, Principal John Thornberry and local MP Michael Crandon

Its Health Services Centre was launched last year to deliver Certificate II in Health Support Services and Certificate III in Health Services Assistance qualifications.

"It's nice to partner with our local public health service in this way. The donations are greatly appreciated and will help ensure our students get a valuable learning experience," Mr Thornberry said.

Gold Coast Health delivers public health services to a population of 527,000 people and is the Gold Coast's largest employer with more than 8000 staff.

## Volunteers dig deep for community garden

### A dedicated and energetic team of volunteers rolled up their sleeves to kick off the new community garden at Gold Coast University Hospital.

A group of employees, their partners and community members cleared a garden area behind the hospital in readiness for indigenous plants, fruit trees and raised garden beds.

A seed propagation education session was also provided by volunteer horticulturalist Susie Maas on the day to help volunteers learn how to successfully raise seeds for the garden

The produce garden will grow herbs and vegetables for use in patient meals and to connect patients to nature.

If members of the community would like to get involved in this project, please contact Gold Coast Health on (07) 5687-6460.



Jason Smith and Lyn Mansfield were among the team of volunteers at GCUH's new community garden.

The community garden project was a winner in Gold Coast Health's 'The Improvers' program, receiving \$10,000 from Health Minister Cameron Dick to create a functional and sustainable produce garden.

**healthwaves+**  
Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service

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For feedback and distribution:

Phone: 07 5687 4027

Email: [goldcoasthealth@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:goldcoasthealth@health.qld.gov.au)

Write: Communication and Engagement

1 Hospital Boulevard Southport QLD 4215

