

# healthwaves+

Your local health news | December 2014/January 2015

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**Gold Coast Health**  
Building a healthier community

Great state. Great opportunity.  
And a plan for the future.





# Board News

## Message from the Chair – Ian Langdon

When most people think about what makes up the operation of a health service, the common answer is doctors, nurses and allied health staff. Often, areas such as administration, patient liaison, food and environmental services are overlooked. But not as much as volunteers, the people that come into our hospitals and dedicate their time to our cause at no cost.

Gold Coast Health employs 300 volunteers who work across

Gold Coast University and Robina Hospitals, community health and Breastscreen facilities. Last year, they provided more than 30,000 hours of service (**see page 5**).

An additional 82 volunteers from other not-for-profit organisations including Radio Lollipop, Ronald McDonald House, Starlight Foundation and Miracle Babies also work with our staff and patients to assist in providing support services during difficult times.

Organisations such as Radio Lollipop (**see below**) which went on-air for the first time in England in 1979, give young patients a voice during their stay. Thirty eight volunteers help run the radio three times per week giving the children an opportunity to request their favourite songs, win prizes and hear their own voices on the radio. These activities give youngsters a haven of normality in the hospital day which in other respects is strange,

different and often scary.

International Volunteers Day on 5 December is an opportunity for the community to highlight the role and recognise the contribution of volunteers. More than six million Australians volunteer their time every year and our health service is just one of the areas that benefits from their selflessness and dedication to the community spirit. So thank you to all volunteers for the valuable service you provide.

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Cover Image: Maxillofacial surgeon Dr Dimitrios Nikolarakos is enthusiastic about enhanced surgical services (see page 3).

## Radio Lollipop on air

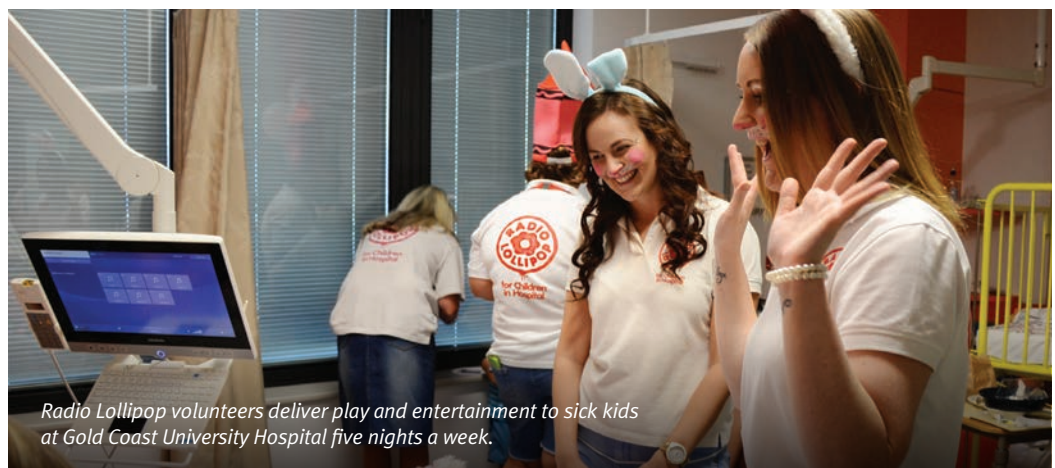
**Radio Lollipop is an international children's charity devoted to providing care, comfort, play and entertainment to children in hospital. As part of their commitment, the Radio Lollipop team broadcast live radio shows direct to each child's bedside television sets, delivering hours of entertainment and music.**

After settling into a brand new studio, the Gold Coast team now have the facilities to deliver bedside entertainment on the wards. The radio shows are currently running once a week with more to come, giving kids the chance to request their favourite songs, hear themselves live on air and help volunteers compere the show.

Radio Lollipop also continues to receive much support from local businesses. Recently, Ramsden Lawyers hosted a charity race day at the Gold Coast Turf Club to raise much needed funds for the organisation. Their support will contribute to crafts, prizes and games to help the volunteers keep children in hospital smiling.

The volunteer teams are currently operating Monday to Thursday nights and Saturday mornings.

For further information, email [volunteersgc@radiolollipop.org](mailto:volunteersgc@radiolollipop.org) or visit [www.radiolollipop.org](http://www.radiolollipop.org)



Radio Lollipop volunteers deliver play and entertainment to sick kids at Gold Coast University Hospital five nights a week.



*'Max Fax' doctors Ben Robertson, Ragu Krishnamoorthy, and Nicholas Beech attend to a facial trauma on their elective surgical list.*



## On time surgery is a focus for Gold Coast specialist teams

**Director Oral and Maxillofacial surgery Dr Dimitrios Nikolarakos is enthusiastic about the enhanced surgical services being provided to the Gold Coast community.**

The 'max fax' team work as part of a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) dedicated to treating patients with head and neck cancers.

"The MDT prides itself on a quick patient referral process which reflects world class clinical standards by achieving surgery within four weeks from the decision to treat," Dr Nikolarakos said.

"The MDT group includes ear, nose and throat (ENT), plastics, maxillofacial clinicians plus medical and radiation oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, dentist and allied health including speech therapy, dieticians as well as specialist nurses.

"Recent developments have included the use of 3D printing technologies to support reconstructive surgery (such as jaws) which is a topic also driving a collaborative research project with Griffith University.

There are a number of methods being used to support guaranteed on time surgery such as advance booking of smaller cases for elective lists and using dedicated head and neck surgery lists.

"We are always working on better ways to balance our acute surgery needs such as cancer patients with patients who require lower category elective services," Dr Nikolarakos said.

The service has grown exponentially over the past three years and is now the only dedicated MDT head and neck cancer team south of Princess Alexandra and north of Newcastle.

Ear, nose and throat, reconstructive and repair operations are covered under the recently announced Wait Time Guarantee.

## Swift surgery response



*Wayne Phillips has benefited from Gold Coast Health's commitment to reducing surgery wait times.*

**Wayne Phillips was in pain the day this photo below was taken – but he wasn't complaining.**

"I couldn't be happier," the 60-year-old explained a few hours after undergoing surgery on his hernia at Gold Coast University Hospital.

"I'm in a bit of pain naturally – my stomach has been opened – but to know that in a couple of weeks the pain will be gone is the best feeling. It's such a relief to have been dealt with as quickly as I have."

Mr Phillips had visited his GP about six weeks earlier and placed on a surgery waiting list. Less than a fortnight later, he was back at the GP.

"I was in constant pain – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It just wouldn't go away and I told the doctor 'you've got to do something'," he said.

"He rang three days later to say I had an interview at the hospital and now I'm here. You expect to have to wait but it's just been great, sensational. I couldn't fault the care I've received."

## Robina lung lab accredited

The lung function laboratory at Robina Hospital has been the second laboratory to receive accreditation status on the Gold Coast.

The lung function laboratory opened in September 2011 and sees 800 patients each year with most patients needing four different tests. These can include evaluation of shortness of breath or cough; measuring the effect of diseases such as emphysema or asthma; screening patients at risk of lung disease; high altitude simulation testing; respiratory muscle strength testing; and assessing risks prior to operation.

Scientific Director, Debbie Zagami said achieving accreditation status is formal recognition that the service is meeting national and international standards for medical care and practice.

"The actual process of preparing for accreditation is enormously beneficial for the scientific staff and the laboratory as all policies and procedures have to be formally documented, researched, referenced and evidence-based," Ms Zagami said.

"What these means for patients is that they can rest assured that they are receiving a quality and standard level of care.

"Being accredited also means Robina Hospital can be a training site for advanced trainees in respiratory medicine."

Gold Coast Hospital was the first lung lab laboratory on the Gold Coast to receive accreditation in 2011.



Rowena Cejas undergoing one of the tests in the newly accredited lung lab at Robina Hospital.

## Schoolies well educated on Chlamydia

With the annual Schoolies done and dusted for another year, parents can rest assured that their daughters have a sound understanding of their sexual health, particularly of the sexually transmitted disease, Chlamydia.

A Gold Coast Health study conducted at last years' Schoolies of 948 females found that more than 70 per cent know what Chlamydia is and how it can affect a women's fertility. Reassuringly, there was also excellent awareness of prevention strategies.

One in 20 women in Australia under the age of 25 has Chlamydia, and this rate has been steadily increasing over the past 15 years.

The research, the first of its kind for the demographic, was awarded this year's Crown Street Medal for best research presentation in New South Wales and Queensland.

Obstetrics and Gynaecology Registrar, Dr Bridget Gilsenan said the findings from this research will serve as a benchmark for the future.

"This is unique research in that there are no previous studies of the same age group on the Gold Coast which provides us with a great benchmarking opportunity," Dr Gilsenan said.

"Of interest in this age of rapid electronic information, this research also showed that nearly 70 per cent preferred to receive sexual health education by a doctor.

"These results are a reassuring indication that the safe sex message is being received and understood."

The research will recommence at Schoolies in 2015.

## Where do you see the future of healthcare?

The Gold Coast Health strategic plan outlines the vision, purpose and broadly defined objectives for the health service. As part of the annual review process, feedback is sought to ensure the plan continues to meet community and stakeholder expectations.

Furthermore, the strategic plan articulates a vision for world class healthcare and a consultation paper has been developed to help define what this means to the community. The agreed definition and supporting strategies will guide planning for the health service over the next decade.

Both the draft strategic plan and World Class Healthcare consultation paper will be distributed to stakeholders and made available to the public for comment.

Gold Coast Health is committed to ensuring the views of the community are heard and considered as part of the strategic planning. Consultation will commence next month and details will be available at: [www.goldcoast.health.qld.gov.au](http://www.goldcoast.health.qld.gov.au)



## One stop health precinct opens

**Gold Coast Health has officially returned to its old stomping ground, with Community Child Health the first service to open its doors at the all-new Southport Health Precinct.**

As part of a \$12.5 million plan to establish a one-stop health precinct in the former Griffith University Medical and Oral Health School next to the old Gold Coast Hospital site, more than 50 staff set up home in the refurbished building in October. Best of all, the move means child health nurses and developmental professionals are now housed at one site after previously being located across Bundall and Southport.

“To be under the one roof in a purpose-built environment is a great opportunity,” Director of Children’s Health Dr Doug Shelton said.

When completed mid-2015, the Precinct will be home to more than 300 staff across multiple services including oral health, renal dialysis, children’s health, child mental health, alcohol and drug services, sexual health, public health, and transition care.



*Five year old Hamish Brown is one of the first to use the Children’s Clinic facilities at the Southport Health Precinct. Photo courtesy Gold Coast Bulletin.*



*Sonia Caldaroni has been a Gold Coast Health volunteer for 11 years and currently supports patients in the emergency department at GCUH.*

## In focus with Sonia Caldaroni Volunteer, Gold Coast University Hospital emergency department

**I began volunteering in August 2003 at Robina Hospital. I completed a palliative care course in 2004 and then came across to Gold Coast Hospital in 2005 to commence as a volunteer in the emergency department.**

When my aunt was in palliative care at Robina Hospital I saw the role that volunteers performed and that’s when I decided that I really wanted to do that too.

I currently volunteer in the emergency department at Gold Coast University Hospital (GCUH). My role is to support patients who are anxious and to reassure them about the care they are receiving. I also support family when they arrive anxious about their loved ones. This is a very rewarding role in a department where staff are often very busy.

I love giving back to my community and helping people. I have always enjoyed being around hospitals and the feeling of helping people when they are most at need. I really find this a rewarding role and thoroughly enjoy working for the Volunteer Services department.

I’ve always had a fascination with hospitals from a very young age. I studied to become an assistant in nursing years ago and since then have worked for an agency performing many shifts for Gold Coast Health. However, when I’m not working I am still volunteering at GCUH. I enjoy seeing how everyone works together as a team in emergency. If I ever needed emergency admission I would definitely want to come to GCUH.

## Small comforts make a big difference

**Sometimes it's the small things that help to make a big difference – something Cancer Council Queensland doesn't overlook.**

Gold Coast University Hospital was one of the local recipients of Cancer Council Queensland's 2014 Community Grants Program, launched earlier this year.

The service benefited from a \$2,220 grant which has been used to purchase exercise mats, cycle ergometers, aerobic steps, exercise balls, foam balance pads and dumb-bells to benefit cancer patients going through treatment.

Director of Allied Health, Professional Head of Physiotherapy, Dean Blond said the new equipment would greatly assist patients' health and wellbeing.

"This grant means that we can provide exercise equipment for cancer patients that allow them to exercise safely which is an important aspect of their cancer care," Mr Blond said.

"We like to encourage patients to continue to exercise as it can help with the management of pain, weakness, restriction of movement, improve quality of life and reduce fatigue."

Patient Elisa Guzzo said she feels a lot safer now that someone can demonstrate what exercises she can do.

"Exercise is just as important as all the other parts of treatment and when you finish you don't know what to do with your body and how far you should push it so it's great I can get a little bit of help after treatment," Ms Guzzo said.

Cancer Council Queensland spokesperson Katie Clift said the Community Grants Program has had a positive impact on cancer patients across the region.

"The Community Grants Program supports the funding of items that make a difference to locals affected by cancer, their families and friends," she said.

Queensland community health providers like Gold Coast University Hospital have benefited from a share in \$100,000 worth of grants from Cancer Council Queensland this year.

For more information about Cancer Council Queensland and support, please visit [www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au) or Cancer Council 13 11 20.



*Cancer Care Services Senior Physiotherapist Tara Redemski with patient Elisa Guzzo testing out the new equipment provided through a Cancer Council Queensland grant.*

## Nurses help ease ED congestion



*Leahanna Stevens and Emma Stoddart along with six other Nurse Practitioners are trained to independently diagnose and treat patients in the emergency department.*

**An innovative approach to nursing is helping ensure more patients are seen and treated faster at Gold Coast Health's emergency departments.**

Nurse Practitioners are highly trained, skilled and experienced nurses who can independently treat, diagnose and discharge patients, allowing senior doctors to focus on more complex cases.

Gold Coast Health has invested heavily in the ground-breaking approach to health care, with six nurse practitioners employed in its emergency departments and a further eight across other areas including medicine, paediatrics and mental health.

Gold Coast Health Medical Director Emergency Department Dr David Green said at a time of rising patient demand, nurse practitioners were essential to easing congestion in ED waiting rooms.

"With at least six years of advanced clinical experience and six years of tertiary education, nurse practitioners have many of the abilities of a doctor but with the holistic focus of a nurse," he said.

"While liaising with senior doctors and specialists as needed, they are able to manage minor injuries and illness on their own and prescribe medications, order tests and make referrals as required."

Gold Coast Health's Emergency Nurse Practitioners are highly regarded on the national stage, as evidenced with Chris Raftery recently being appointed national president of the Australian College of Nurse Practitioners.

"Our extensive training means the role is equivalent to a medical specialist and provides us with expertise in areas such as child health, orthopaedics, wound care and eyes," Mr Raftery said.



## Give this Christmas

As the year draws to an end and you make plans to spend time with loved ones, consider the patients, their families, and staff who will spend Christmas in hospital.

More than 400 patients will be treated in our emergency departments on Christmas Day.

Gold Coast Hospital Foundation 2014 Christmas Appeal is raising funds for vital medical equipment and programs for your local emergency departments to deliver the best health care when you need it the most.

It is the busiest time of year for our dedicated doctors and nurses, who will care for over 15,000 patients during the holiday season. Access to local emergency treatment is often the difference between life and death – a reality felt all too well by Gold Coast parents Scott and Renee Whitehead.

Their four-week old son Charles was rushed to the emergency department limp, struggling for breath and unresponsive. His tiny veins would not take an intravenous line, so a cannula was put into his fragile head and a Foundation-funded neopuff and an oxygen blender used to help him breathe until he could do so by himself.



Parents Renee and Scott Whitehead were by Charles' bedside for six days, while he was treated in the Children's Critical Care Unit at Gold Coast University Hospital.

Where patients would have previously been referred to Brisbane hospitals, your local public hospitals now provide specialised treatment for critically-ill patients like Charles closer to home.

Together as a community, we can do more. Please help us reach our goal of raising \$60,000 to deliver the best care to Gold Coast patients, this Christmas and in to the future.

## Creativity gets crafty



The Child and Youth Mental Health Unit at Robina Hospital have a wonderful new resource to enable staff and patients to show off their creative skills.

The team's first project was thank you cards for the generous funder of the trolley, Mudgeeraba Uniting Church Opportunity Shop.

A special thanks to Katie and Sue from the Shop, who joined hospital staff for morning tea - we are so grateful for your support.

## Support your sport

Did you know you can also support the Foundation every time you shop at Rebel Sport? Five per cent of your purchase price will be donated as part of Rebel Active – Support Your Sport. All you need to do is remember to let them know when you next make a purchase that you support Gold Coast Hospital Foundation.

## Patient positives

### Patient 1

7 November 2014

Just like to thank the Nurse Practitioner on call in the minor injuries unit on Tuesday 5 November. The doctor was too busy to see my husband; however she gave us excellent service and information and escalated his bad knee condition to be seen sooner at the orthopaedic outpatient area where he is on the waiting list. Within two days we had a letter for an appointment.

### Patient 2

6 November 2014

When I presented at the Robina Hospital emergency department there were approximately 10 other patients waiting to be seen. Every single staff member I dealt with during my stay at Robina was amazing! I have never had such a positive experience at a hospital before and I just wanted to write today so that someone can convey my appreciation to the staff at Robina.

Thank you for making everything so smooth and pain free, being a patient in a hospital is not something you want to be, but if you happen to have to be then it's always nice if it's a good experience. I felt cared for, looked after, and in safe hands the whole time I was there. The doctors, nurses, orderlies and general staff were all amazing and did such a fantastic job.

### Patient 3

7 October 2014

Thanks to Simon Howe and all the team in ward C1 at Robina Hospital. The care and understanding I received while there means I am well on the way to recovery. So a very big thank you to all.

## Avoid the 'Danger Zone' this summer

**Gold Coasters are being warned to avoid the 'Danger Zone' when it comes to food storage this summer.**

With the warmer months upon us, Gold Coast Public Health Unit is highlighting how quickly food poisoning bacteria can grow when perishable items are left out of the fridge or cooked food is not refrigerated or frozen promptly after cooking.

Gold Coast Public Health Unit Public Health Medical Officer Dr Paul Van Buynder said leaving food in the Temperature Danger Zone of 5C to 60C could allow food poisoning bacteria to grow quickly and potentially produce toxins that were not destroyed by further cooking.

"With another hot summer approaching, we can't stress enough the importance of taking an extra few seconds to ensure food has been adequately stored," Dr Van Buynder said.

"Anyone who has suffered food poisoning knows how painful it is and doing something as simple as keeping your fridge at or below 5C or serving hot foods at 60C or hotter can help avoid unnecessary illness."

For more information on food safety, visit:  
[www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety/)

## How to avoid the "Danger Zone"

- Use a thermometer to check the fridge stays at 4-5C
- Make room in the fridge – cold air can't circulate when it's overloaded or packed too tight
- Make space by removing items that don't need to be kept refrigerated
- Cool and divide leftovers in small portions and store in the fridge or freezer when it stops steaming
- Keep and serve hot food at 60C or hotter
- Keep food on the move cool with cooler bags and frozen blocks
- If in doubt, throw it out

## Consumer Advisory Group role to expand

**As a local health service, Gold Coast Health needs to ensure that broad input and expectations are heard from a range of people in the community on health related issues. This includes people already involved in supplying health services and most importantly the patients, their family and carers in our community.**

Gold Coast Health has a well-developed consumer engagement program where members of the community who have joined our Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) participate in a range of service level committees across patient safety and quality.

We now want to expand this reach into a broader community engagement strategy that will supply new and easy to use online information and feedback opportunities.

We also want to raise the level of engagement with the CAG to include a dedicated advocacy role to offer issues up to senior management and Board for advice and consideration of local needs and community expectations.

Gold Coast Health needs people to provide feedback and input on their experience at Gold Coast Health. If you would like to join our CAG, contact the Community Engagement Officer on **5687 0281** to discuss your options.

CAG representative Janet Cross was a founding member and is a prime example of a health consumer who is passionate about health reform and local action on mental health issues on the Gold Coast. Janet attends many associated state and local government committees and working days to present the patient and carer needs and brings this information to the CAG.

This expanded engagement program will give these issues and the Gold Coast community a voice and increasing ownership in their local health service.

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