Social Health news

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Workforce Development Support Unit

ISSUE 12 | JUNE 2026

Welcome to the June 2026 edition of Social Health News! We're all about supporting and maintaining effective communication between the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Workforce Development Support Unit and the deadly SEWB/MH/AOD workforce in Queensland's ACCHO sector. In that spirit, we hope you find this edition user-friendly and informative, and we look forward to your feedback so we can improve future editions. You can contact the team at sewb@qaihc.com.au

Good NEWS STORY

A new beginning: Herbi's journey of healing and hope

For many years, Herbi found himself pushing down his emotional pain with drugs and alcohol. Life was nothing but a struggle, and the path to a brighter tomorrow seemed impossible to find. But everything changed when he made the decision to walk through the gates of Gumbi-Gumbi Withdrawal and Rehabilitation in Rockhampton.

Today, Herbi is over six months clean and completely free from substance misuse. He has a job, has his own vehicle, and is proudly living in his own unit. Most importantly, Herbi' has changed his way of thinking and is excited about the future.

Herbi completed the residential program at Gumbi-Gumbi, committing to six months in a program that is typically 12 weeks. His stay was extended to meet his individual needs, ensuring he received the right level of support at the right time.

First up, Herbi completed the two-week medically supported Withdrawal Program. Gumbi-Gumbi's program is the only service of its kind in Queensland offering withdrawal, detox, and rehabilitation all on the same site.

From there, Herbi transitioned into the Residential Rehabilitation Program, where he participated in:

- AOD Breakthrough Our Way Program
- Stages of Change Program (adapted to be culturally appropriate — taking it out of the "white way" and delivering it the "mob way")
- Individual counselling and case management
- Skills development and wellbeing activities
- Intensive wraparound support.

At Gumbi-Gumbi, everything is provided to support participants so they can fully focus on healing. The program is delivered in a home-style environment and backed by over 30 years of community experience.

Herbi said he's "very thankful to all the staff" and encouraged others to take that first step:

"Leave the past at the gate and start a new beginning because they really help." he said.

"Just like the tree itself, Gumbi-Gumbi, it's a healing place."

Herbi also discovered new strengths during his time in the program. He crafted artefacts alongside a staff member skilled in woodwork, contributing to the creation of the inaugural Indigenous Organisations Golf Winning Trophy, a perpetual award which is engraved each year with the winner's name. This hands-on cultural and creative engagement became part of his healing journey.

One of the most important aspects of Herbi's success has been the genuine connections he built during his time at Gumbi-Gumbi. Through ongoing aftercare support, those relationships continue to provide encouragement and accountability, a vital part of maintaining long-term recovery.

Herbi's story is a powerful reminder that change, and a brighter tomorrow, is possible with the right support, culturally strong programs, and a safe place to heal.



Spotlight

INTERNATIONAL Family Drug Support Day

February 24, 2026 — Premier's and Speaker's Hall, Queensland Parliament House, Brisbane

QAIHC team members Tiana Lea (Manager, Social Health Programs) and Natasha Nguyen (Social and Emotional Wellbeing Coordinator) attended the IFDSD 2026 QLD which brought together families, policymakers, mental health representatives, and industry professionals for meaningful conversations about the challenges faced by families impacted by a loved one's drug use.

The theme, "See the Person, Not the Drug," encouraged reflection on the stereotyping of people who use drugs and highlighted the ongoing impact of shame, stigma, and discrimination on individuals and their families.

A strong and consistent message from guest speakers was the need to approach problematic drug use through a public health lens, rather than through punitive measures. Punitive responses were described as isolating, reinforcing negative perceptions, and creating barriers that prevent people from seeking support and treatment.

Emeritus Professor Robyn Jorgensen shared her lived experience as a mother who lost her son to alcohol addiction. She spoke about the need for political and societal change in how addiction is understood, calling for a shift away from harmful labels towards more compassionate, person-centred approaches. As one speaker reflected, "We shouldn't be defined by our hardest chapter."

Ben Ikin, CEO of the Queensland Rugby League, also addressed the audience, speaking candidly about the pressures within professional sport and his experience supporting individuals facing drug-related challenges. He highlighted the broader impact on families and the importance of understanding and support.

The event saw strong family representation, including attendees across four generations. Many expressed appreciation for the honest insights shared, as well as the focus on compassion, empathy, and reform. Grieving families, in particular, shared their gratitude for the understanding shown throughout the day and emphasised the importance of keeping people safe while addressing the complex realities of drug use.



QAIHC New staff

Natasha Nguyen



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING COORDINATOR

Natasha Nguyen is a proud Mandandanji woman, born in Roma, Queensland and raised in regional NSW.

She brings to the role extensive experience across the Aboriginal health sector having worked as an Aboriginal Health Worker, a social and emotional wellbeing caseworker, and a drug and alcohol caseworker.

Her work experience spans healing and recovery, program design and group facilitation, with a strong focus on culturally safe, trauma-informed practice.

She is passionate about strengthening community-led approaches and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In her new role with QAIHC, she is committed to driving meaningful change and advancing the social and emotional wellbeing of mob through culturally grounded, community-controlled care.

Member Support

QAIHC TRAVEL AND visits

Mt Isa Trip

QAIHC team members Tiana Lea and Natasha Nguyen travelled to Mt Isa to take part in important conversations with Gidgee Healing Aboriginal Corporation focused on strengthening suicide prevention network efforts in First Nations communities.

During the visit, Tiana and Natasha assisted in the development of a Suicide Prevention Plan for Gidgee Healing and supported conversations centred on social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB).

They also connected with the Gidgee Healing SEWB team, further strengthening relationships and a shared commitment to community-led approaches.

These discussions aimed to create stronger relationships, share Queensland and regional context, highlight the importance of cultural strengths, and promote community-led prevention and response strategies.

Key points of discussion highlighted that suicide prevention must be community-led, that culture and identity are powerful protective factors, that supporting young people is essential, and that strong partnerships are critical to saving lives.



Palm Island

QAIHC's Tiana Lea and Natasha Nguyen recently travelled to Palm Island to deliver Eyez on Ice program sessions.

The sessions focused on building confidence and capability among service providers and community members to recognise the signs of methamphetamine use, and how to respond in a caring, safe, and culturally appropriate way.

Eyez on Ice is a culturally safe resource package supporting health professionals and families working with people impacted by problematic substance use, particularly crystal methamphetamine (ice). The training empowers communities to have tough but important conversations with confidence and compassion.



Member Support

QAIHC TRAVEL AND visits (CONTINUED)

Cooktown

Tiana Lea was grateful to spend a day in Cooktown at the Pinangba Cape York Family Centre, witnessing firsthand how the much-needed service supports families across Far North Queensland impacted by problem substance use.

The space, activities, and the way the service is run is truly unique and deadly. The centre provides the family unit (adults and their kids) — not just individual — accommodation for those receiving support and recovery services. By keeping families together, the Center creates an environment that is welcoming, safe, and grounded in connection and care.

The thoughtfully designed and spacious setting allows families to heal, grow, and support one another in a culturally safe space. Tiana appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the important work being done and the positive impact this service continues to have across FNQ.

Tiana extends a big thank you to Renee and the Pinangba team, the centre is a lovely place to be on country.



Mapoon and Napranum

Tiana Lea also appreciated the time she spent in Mapoon and Napranum working with Annie and Colin from Apunipima Cape York Health Council to help independent facilitator Tegan Schefe conduct Safe Yarn sessions in Community.

These sessions were incredibly well received and offered a valuable — and grounding — opportunity to sit with mob, listen deeply, and gain a greater understanding of the realities, strengths, and challenges experienced by communities across the Cape.

The visit highlighted the ongoing need for culturally safe, locally informed supports for communities with limited access to services and resources. Importantly, it also created space to build stronger relationships and strengthen connections on the ground. Tiana said it reinforced the importance of showing up, being present, and learning directly from community voices.

The warmth and generosity shown by Community made the experience especially meaningful. For her and Tegan to be welcomed so openly was a privilege. The time spent travelling, listening, and yarning together truly made the week a journey remember.



Safe Yarns – Mapoon



Safe Yarns – Napranum





SEWB News

HEARING *Health*

Hearing health plays a critical role in the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly for children and young people. Strong hearing supports connection to culture, community, language, and learning. When hearing issues go undetected or untreated, it can impact communication, confidence, school engagement, and overall wellbeing.

At QAIHC, we are continuing to strengthen our focus on prevention, early identification, and culturally appropriate care so we can ensure our communities are supported to stay connected and thrive.

This year, we're building strong momentum in hearing health through a number of key initiatives. We're proud to be working alongside NRL player Jamal Fogarty as a champion for hearing health, helping us raise awareness in a way that resonates with community, reinforcing the message that "Good hearing keeps you in the game."

In addition, we are developing a Queensland-specific hearing health storybook, which will be ready for launch to Members in June/July. This resource will feature characters inspired by real children from Community (with names changed, of course), creating a relatable and authentic narrative that reflects lived experiences and strengthens engagement with families.

The storybook is designed not just as a health resource, but as a tool to support social and emotional wellbeing, helping children see themselves, their stories, and their strengths reflected in a positive way. By grounding hearing health in real community voices and everyday experiences, we aim to break down stigma, encourage early yarns about ear health, and empower families to seek care when needed. Together, these initiatives are about more than hearing, they're about strengthening identity, confidence, and connection across our communities.

For more information or to access our suite of hearing health resources, please contact hearing@qaihc.com.au.



SEWB WORKFORCE *Training*

Central Queensland SEWB Staff complete Mental Health First Aid training

Building skills to provide culturally safe mental health support across the region

In early May, seven Central Queensland social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) staff from CQID Woorabinda and Gumbi-Gumbi Rockhampton took part in Mental Health First Aid training at the Centre for Rural and Regional Indigenous Health in Gladstone.

The two-day training, facilitated by the Jaydon Adams Foundation, created a safe and supportive environment for participants to learn, reflect, and share their experiences. The sessions incorporated culturally safe practices and encouraged participants to discuss lived experience while exploring practical ways to support clients experiencing mental health challenges. The training built staff confidence and strengthened capability to respond with care, empathy, and culturally informed support.



Upcoming Events

UPCOMING CONFERENCES AROUND Queensland

23-25 June	**QAIHC SEWB State Gathering** Emporium Southbank, Brisbane
23-25 June	**International Mental Health Conference 2026 (IMHC26)** JW Marriott Hotel, Surfers Paradise
3-5 Aug	**2026 National First Nations Elders Wellbeing Conference** Hilton Hotel, Gold Coast
5-7 Aug	**2026 National First Nations NDIS: One People, One Voice Disability Care Conference** Hilton Hotel, Gold Coast
20-21 Aug	**2026 Australian Winter School AOD Conference** Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre
26-28 Aug	**2026 National Indigenous Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Conference** Brisbane
2-4 Sept	**2026 International Indigenous Strong Women's Health, Wellbeing & Leadership Conference** Brisbane
2-4 Dec	**2026 National Indigenous Community-Driven Changes in Tackling Family and Domestic Violence Conference** Gold Coast
8-10 Dec	**2026 National Indigenous Closing the Gap Health Conference** Hilton Hotel, Gold Coast
8-10 Dec	**2026 National Indigenous Chronic Diseases Conference** Hilton Hotel, Gold Coast



SAVE THE DATE!

SEWB State Gathering

QAIHC Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council

HISTORY • PEOPLE • CULTURE

BRISBANE, 23-25 JUNE

TRAINING Journey



Jack Day, Integrated Health Co-Facilitator at CRAICCHS, has been part of the organisation for 14 years, beginning his journey as a Transport Driver and working his way through different roles over time.

In 2025, Jack completed his Certificate IV in Leadership and Management through TAFE, undertaking 12 months of training which included travelling to Cairns for on-site theory sessions. After previously completing a Diploma in Counselling, Jack found the course himself and took the opportunity to continue building his leadership skills.

For Jack, the training has come at the perfect time as he steps into his coordinator role within the organisation.

"It's a step up for me. A lot of the things we learned during the course are things I'm now putting into practice in my role."

He shared that the training helped strengthen his professionalism and leadership approach, including how meetings are run and documented.

The course also provided a supportive learning environment, with around 20 participants in the class and strong support from TAFE teachers and staff at the Cherbourg TAFE campus.

"There was a lot of support there. Teachers in the classroom and others around the campus helping out. It made you feel comfortable learning as a team."

Training & support

TRAINING opportunities

QAIHC is excited to offer support for strengthening social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) workforce capacity through training opportunities with Gallang Education & Training (GET), a community-controlled registered training organisation.

These nationally recognised courses are available to your staff:

- Certificate IV in Mental Health (CHC43315)
- Diploma in Counselling (CHC51015)

To assist Member services, QAIHC will coordinate enrolments and facilitate funding support through **NIAA Workforce Support** programs, where eligible.

What we need from you

QAIHC invites you to complete an **Expression of Interest (EOI)** for any staff member you would like to support through these training opportunities. The EOI is designed to gather interest and ensure QAIHC can facilitate enrolments and financial support effectively. EOIs will also assist GET in ensuring their training resources meet demands.

How to Submit Your EOI

1. Fill out the attached **EOI form** (one form per staff member).
2. Return the completed form to:
   - **Tiana Lea, Social Health Programs Manager** Tiana.Lea@qaihc.com.au
   - **Adam Stephen, Workforce Development Manager** Adam.Stephen@qaihc.com.au

Please note: This is not an official enrolment form. Do not contact Gallang Education & Training directly. QAIHC will manage all coordination and communication with GET to ensure a smooth process.

Thank you for your commitment to workforce development and improving SEWB outcomes in your community.

CRISIS CARE Contact List

The *National & Queensland Support Services for Crisis Help* resource was created as a quick reference guide for people seeking immediate support during difficult or distressing situations. Copies of the contact list can be accessed here or via the QR code.



CALENDAR OF Events

JUNE –DEC 2026

3 June
Mabo Day

23-25 June
QAIHC SEWB State Gathering

1 July
Coming of the Light
(Torres Strait Islands)

5-12 July
NAIDOC Week 2026

12 July
Aboriginal flag first flown (1971)

4 August
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

9 August
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

2 September
Indigenous Literacy Day

13 September
Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

25 September
Cathy Freeman's 800m Olympic Gold Medal (2000)

10 December
Human Rights Day