

Quilpie Community – Medical Services

Dear Community Member

Further to our correspondence dated 14 April 2023 I write to you about the medical officer position at Quilpie. I fully appreciate the ongoing community interest and concern regarding the provision of medical services to the Quilpie community.

As mentioned previously, Australia is currently facing one of, if not the most significant health workforce shortages we have seen. The health workforce, and in particular medical workforce, shortage is impacting on rural and remote areas significantly making it incredibly difficult for us to recruit staff to work in many of our communities. Until recently, we have managed to overcome the problem by employing agency/locum doctors (doctors who are employed from a recruitment agency), but as the national GP crisis continues to worsen, we have struggled to secure agency.

Currently the Quilpie General Practice has a locum rostered onsite. Dr Max Higgs has just finished his contract and Dr Christian Blank commences his contract on 11 May 2023 and will be onsite until Saturday 22 May. Dr Higgs will return on Saturday 22 May and will be rostered on until 5 June. Dr Geoff Cox will then be onsite until 19 June 2023 before Dr Ben Vogelzang starts his onsite contract for two weeks. Dr Ben has made a commitment to be a regular doctor to Quilpie on a rotational basis until the end of the year.

It is pleasing to see the locums committed for the next few months with Quilpie General Practice having a doctor onsite for the next few months.

As you know our medical recruitment team work tirelessly to secure locums and there are times when locums who have indicated their intention to provide clinical services in Quilpie may cancel their assignment at short notice. Rosters will be communicated to the community via Facebook and the Quilpie Medical Practice.

Please be assured Quilpie continues to be included in the frequently advertised vacancies. Quilpie is also included in the GP virtual clinic roster by the general practice team when there is no onsite doctor.

The recruitment process for a Nurse Practitioner has not yet been finalised for Quilpie however, advice will be provided as soon as possible. Within the scope of practice for an NP they can diagnose and treat a variety of acute or chronic health conditions as well as prescribe some prescriptions, refer patients to hospitals and specialists and order x-rays and diagnostic tests. This model is in place in Mungindi and is working well with the community happy with the service.

Securing rural and remote doctors for our communities across the South West is of utmost importance for us. As always, providing the best care and access to services is our highest

priority as we all know access to healthcare is a fundamental human right. We continue to work hard to ensure Quilpie residents receive the best care and access to services and maintain plans in place to ensure this occurs, even when we do not have a doctor physically in town.

For after-hours/emergency presentations, our nurses at Quilpie Multipurpose Health Service (MPHS) are trained to assess your needs and can consult with a doctor where required. They are able to consult with Telehealth Emergency Management Support Unit (TEMSU) and RSQ (Retrieval Services Queensland) who provide expert services dedicated to nursing, medical and retrieval through videoconference support to rural and remote areas, as well as provision of aeromedical retrievals.

We are also assisted by our Hub Facility, Charleville Hospital, where there is a doctor on-call to support our nursing staff in Quilpie. Our Quilpie MPHS staff also run the hospital-based ambulance, which means they do their own transfers and handle the 000 calls for stabilisation and transfer. If you require a doctor's review, we can facilitate this either by phone or videoconference in the absence of an on-site doctor.

While we acknowledge that this is a challenging time for all I reiterate that we are doing everything we can to ensure our communities are always provided with safe and high-quality health care. Our focus is of the highest priority, and we will continue to do our best to ensure your community receives the best possible care.

I would like to sincerely thank the Quilpie community for its patience and understanding. Securing rural and remote doctors requires a collaborative effort between government, healthcare providers and communities. By working together, we can help ensure that Quilpie residents have access to the medical care they need to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Director of Nursing Jenna Nunn at the Quilpie Multipurpose Health Service if you would like to provide any feedback or please feel free to send any feedback through to our SWHHS-Consumer_Feedback@health.qld.gov.au.



Dr Anthony Brown
Health Service Chief Executive
10 May 2023