

# Annual Report 2006 / 07

**Townsville Division of  
General Practice Limited**

## Mrs Jean McCubben

This report refers to the period 1st July 2006 to 30th June 2007. It has been an extremely rewarding and positive year for the Division with regard to its financial position. The year has seen significant milestones reached that raise the profile of the Division locally, across the state and within the Australian Network. These milestones impact on the financial position of the Division in a very positive and substantial way.

Each month the Finance and Audit Sub-Committee continue to review the financial position of the organisation which includes analysis of the balance sheet, income and expenditure against budget and cash flow. The interaction between this Sub-Committee and Senior Management is a mechanism to report on the financial integrity of the data presented and of any significant variances in financial position to the board has been very useful. Risk management issues associated with the Division's activities continue to receive appropriate attention.

### Points to be noted:

The Division's commitment to quality improvement is evidenced by successfully achieving recertification under the ISO 9001:2000 quality standards and undergoing external financial audit that returned comments commending the organisation for its accurate and timely financial recording keeping and management. These external reviews of the organisations systems are an important part of the Division's growth and development and give Board and Staff reason to celebrate and motivation to continue to excel. Compliance was a major focus for the Finance and Audit Committee and again there were no issues of concern highlighted in the report.

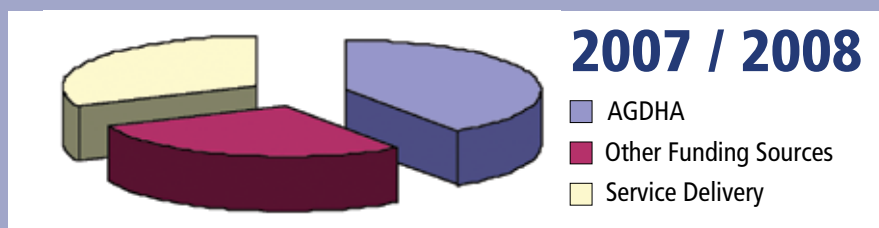
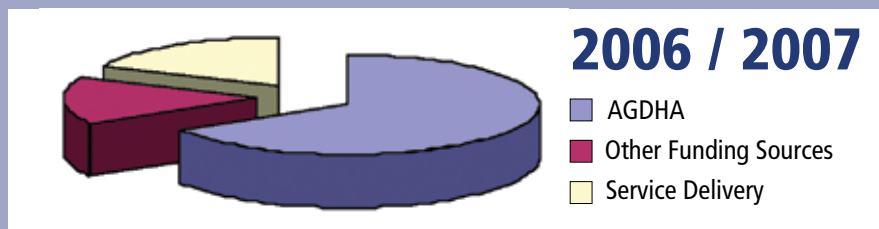
The annual comprehensive Board evaluation was completed and its recommendations are underway that

includes closer attention to succession planning and skills development for Directors and Senior Staff. These strategies have been undertaken to improve the skills of the Directors and Senior Staff to ensure performance meets the needs of the organisation.

The successful launch of the Centralised Information Management System (CIMS) was the most significant milestone of this financial year. This was a major project undertaken by TGNP to build a private managed health network under the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing Managed Health Networks Grant. This project is one of few IT related projects that have come in on time and within budget. All involved should be commended for their commitment.

The Finance and Audit Committee receive reports from the CIMS Steering Group to ensure that the TGNP Board is kept fully informed of progress. Additional staff have been recruited to backfill key TGNP staff who have been seconded to work on the CIMS project.

For the 2006 / 2007 financial year, TGNP had an operating budget of \$3,236,858. Funding received from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing represented 64% of the total 2006 / 2007 budget, as depicted in the graph below. The 2007 / 2008 financial year will see a change in proportion of funding received from AGDHA, 40%, compared to other funding bodies, this however will likely change by the end of the financial year with other funding opportunities presenting through out the year. TGNP is broadening their partnerships largely due to the increase in expertise and capabilities brought about by the Managed Private Network so it will prove interesting to see the new financial year unfold.



## GPLO

Dr Lesley Stainkey

This position is jointly funded by Townsville Health Service District (THSD) and TGNP. Communication between the two organisations is via a monthly Focus group meeting attended by senior representatives of both organisations.

The GPLO engages in monthly meetings with Mental Health, Emergency Department, Health Connect and the Emergency Medical Unit. Quarterly meetings are conducted with Child Health Integration. Regular communication occurs with the Integrated Health Care Partnership, Pain Clinic, Antenatal Share Care and any other THSD department who request discussion on relevant issues e.g. pharmacy, physiotherapy, etc.

The GPLO attends the National GPLO conference for information and ideas. Efforts to increase GP involvement in the progression of general practice solutions continues.

I wish to thank GPs who have attended practice meetings as representatives of TGNP over the last twelve months and look forward to increased GP participation in conducting TGNP activities in 2008.

It is the role of all general practice staff (doctors, nurses, receptionists) and other primary health providers to contribute to general practice liaison across the community.

## Townsville/Thuringowa Counter Disaster

### Committee Medical Group

Our representative on this committee is Dr Lesley Stainkey. Our database has been updated with current details of the medical workforce who have indicated their preparedness to be involved in providing medical service on a rostered basis during a disaster, be it a cyclone or influenza pandemic. Going forward a funding application has been submitted to conduct a role play educational experience for practices in 2008.

## New Achievement for 2007

The first of a series of discharge summary audit documents have been produced. This is a new concept which involves senior hospital consultants reviewing discharge summaries which will result in feedback being available for junior doctors education and assessment purposes.

# From the Chair *Dr Kevin Arlett*



The 2006 / 2007 financial year has been a time of change at the Townsville Division of General Practice. This culminated in a name change to Townsville General Practice Network.

We managed to secure funding to maintain the services of Afterhours+GP General Practice for another year, but this service is still not economically viable with the current funding structures within Medicare, unless ongoing supplementary funding is obtained. At the moment this is proving to be difficult as we are having to negotiate on a year to year basis with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. We will be seeking some surety of ongoing funding, but this doesn't seem to be forthcoming at the moment. However the facility is running well and provides a valuable service to the community for which it was formed. The feedback from all involved including the community is always positive and it is running like a 'well-oiled machine'. Thanks to all the staff who are assisting with this service.

Another large program that commenced in 2006-7 is that of CIMS. CIMS stands for 'Centralised Information Management System' and provides a secure private network for the private health sector in North Queensland (although there has been much interest from other areas in Queensland as well). This service will enable the future expansion of data flow in a secure fashion as well as offering many other advantages to subscribers as more services are rolled out. One of the first services being offered is that of Off-Site Data Backup, which will enable the rapid restoration of records if a disaster strikes a practice. We are hoping to enable better communication with Queensland Health as well through the CIMS framework, with the very real possibility of 2 way secure electronic communication happening in the near future. This can only be of benefit for all, but mostly for our patients.

Other programs are continuing well. Our Practice Nurse and Practice Manager Networks are hugely successful with lots

of 'cross-fertilisation' of ideas happening and upskilling. We have also run a successful Practice Nurse Program, with many practices having seen benefits with their nursing staff. Practice Nurses are taking a much more active role in practices, especially around chronic disease management, preventative care and health promotion.

We have been active in the realm of Mental Health Integration with a number of programs targeting this area. This has always been a difficult area to manage, but we think that some great strides have been taken here, obviously assisting those who are often at greatest need in our community.

Education continues across all areas and has been well received again. We still provide our monthly meetings, which have been held at the Mater and these are a great opportunity to meet the newer specialists in town and catch up on advances in all areas of medicine in the North. All our programs have involvement in education as well using different formats to provide this.

Other programs are covered in other segments of the report, but my thanks goes to all the hard working staff, who make TGNP the strong and vibrant organisation that it is.

Our Board has been active again this year in monitoring and guiding the organization. I thank my fellow Board Members for their tireless efforts again this year. We have had some staff changes over the last year, but Julie Scheuber, our very capable CEO, has managed this aspect well.

The Division is going from strength to strength and on the back bone of the CIMS framework, we are looking forward to further enhancements and improvements in Primary Health Care for the future. We intend to maintain our strong focus on integration and plan to build on the many successes of the past in this area. We are probably entering a phase of 'bedding down' after so many changes, but will be looking to provide the high quality services and programs that we are known for, whilst always keeping an eye open for other needs or opportunities as they arise, and being proactive in driving the agenda on behalf of Primary Health Care and General Practice into the future.

## Chief Executive Officer's Report *Julie Scheuber*



I would like to start my report this year with a big thank you to the Board and Staff of TGNP for all the support and effort that has gone into this last 12 months. It has been one of the most challenging, yet most rewarding of my years at the Division. Of particular note I thank Dr Lyndel Cahill for the time she spent in the role of GPLO and welcome Dr Lesley Stainkey to the role as

Lyndel's replacement. Lesley is intent on involving as many GPs as possible to solve at least some of the many issues that affect the interface between GPs and Townsville Health Service District services.

When I read the Chair's, Treasurer's and Programs Reports presented within this Report to members, I am reminded of the vast changes that TGNP has made over the past year and that it is difficult to cover everything that has happened. TGNP has not weathered these challenges by chance. We have been building our expertise and our capacity to manage increasingly complex projects (designed to strengthen general practices' ability to respond to the changing health care needs of the Community) for some time. It has been our ability to closely engage with members through providing support and services that we have built the knowledge base required to respond to the needs of general practice and the wider health service provider community.

While I cannot accurately predict the scope of works the Division will be involved with over the next few years, I do

know that what ever we do achieve will be through closer collaboration within and across a wide variety of service provider organisations both within health and other sectors to achieve better health outcomes for the Community. The successful completion of the CIMS project has given the Division a new standing in relation to our ability to partner with other organisations to achieve common goals. Examples of proposals in the pipeline for the next 2 years include:

'HeadSpace' - a consortia of five organisations with TGNP as lead, to set up a Community of Youth Services to better provide for the mental health needs of the youth in our community;

Funding to work more closely with Townsville Integrated Mental Health Services;

'Clever Networks' - partnering with JCU and Australian Academic Research Network (JCU as Lead) to further develop the managed private health network;

Development of a 'Brokerage Model' to better support access to allied health services for people with chronic disease and complex care needs in partnership with TDHS.

I take this opportunity to thank TGNP members and practice staff for their support throughout the year, and assure you all that the Division will continue to work hard to support general practice achieve better health outcomes for the Townsville / Thuringowa Community.

## Aged Care Panel

The Aged Care Panel commenced in 2004 and has achieved acceptance as a monthly meeting where information on the processes and procedures around Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) and other aged care issues are shared by the various attendees. These include Directors of Nursing from RACF, GPs, Aged Care Assessment Team representatives, Pharmacists and Older Persons Mental Health staff. The panel approved the engagement of After Hours General Practice as an alternate service provider for medical treatment after hours. The delivery of support in the data collection area for increased Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) uptake continues. The Division has made Laptops available to perform EPC items at RACFs.

## After Hours General Practice

The service supports high quality primary health care to the Townsville/Thuringowa community through the provision of after hour's consultations. The doctors and staff offer an efficient service that has been sustained through the challenges of the flu outbreak and the difficulty faced by patients in accessing a GP in normal practice times. This service is dependent on the participation of the local general practitioners in rosters. Funding from the Australian Government must continue for this valuable service to exist.

Running a medical practice from 11pm to 8am is not a financially viable proposition but it is a vital community service. Therefore, such a service cannot be expected to be made available without funding support.

## Immunisation and Vaccine Management

The area covered by Townsville General Practice Network ranked number one in Queensland with 91.1% overall immunization. This ranked the Townsville/Thuringowa area at twenty-two out of the one hundred and eighteen Division areas in Australia.

We have been active in updating Practice Staff on immunisations such as Rotateq and Gardasil. Vaccine Management Support tools were also distributed to practices to assist with Cold Chain Maintenance and Practice Nurse orientation to vaccine management.

## 7 Natural Physicians Program

*Trish Thomas*

The 7 Natural Physicians features 7 colourful, humorous physicians who are responsible for teaching children about the 7 cost free aids that help to achieve good health. **Attitude is the ANSWER** is their slogan and it summarises the seven health physician aids: ATTITUDE, AIR, NUTRITION, SUNSHINE, WATER, EXERCISE and REST. Dr Think Right (Attitude) reminds children to 'be kind to yourself and be kind to others'. Dr Zizz (Rest) likes to play with pets and listen to soothing music. Dr UV Ray (Sunshine) encourages children to look at their SunSmart checklist before they leave the classroom when they are going out in the midday sun. Children love these quirky characters and sense of humour.

The 7NP's program makes it easy for children to welcome these simple health giving practices into their lives. The program is currently running in Kelso and Rasmussen State Primary Schools and has been funded by Queensland Government's Community Renewal Program, coordinated by the Department of Housing and Townsville General Practice Network.

## General Practice Support

Nursing in General Practice Program funding enabled us to offer practice nurses a variety of continuing professional development activities. These included Mental Health First Aid, Pap Smear and Diabetes Resource Nurse courses.

To assist those nurses enrolled in the external Graduate Certificate in Nursing (General Practice) through the University of the Sunshine Coast, the Division recruited a tutor. This brings together the nurses enrolled in the course while providing guidance in their studies.

We facilitate the Practice Nurse Network and the Practice Managers Network which meet on alternate months. These are an opportunity for practice staff to network with their peers while learning relevant information to support their roles in general practice.

## Beat the Bladder Blues

Thanks to Maxine Allcroft and Audrey Corstians for providing education sessions, with Audrey continuing on her own to provide these excellent monthly talks. The project is looking for new premises in 2008 and perhaps a change of name to "Women's Health Talks" to reduce the stigma of attendance and increase numbers at these very beneficial talks.

## Mental Health

### Better Access

Better Access items are being well utilised across Townsville General Practice Network (TGPN). Figures for the last quarter (April – June 2007) indicated 80% of our GPs are using the GP Mental Health Care Plan item number and seven hundred and three services were claimed against item 2710.

TGPN in cooperation with local psychologists, have produced a list of psychologists registered with the "Better Access" program and their approximate gap payment. This allows informed referral decisions to be made. It is now an accepted responsibility of the referral process that the GP needs to inform patients of possible costs involved in service provision by other health care providers.

### Better Outcomes

With the introduction of new Mental Health item numbers, all GPs can now refer patients under the Access to Allied Psychological Services Program (ATAPS). ATAPS continues to provide access to affordable mental health services for the financially disadvantaged.

### Integrated Mental Health Meetings

Monthly meetings with members of the THSD mental health team continue. This team meeting is the point of discussion of new initiatives, developing new initiatives and maintaining current integration practices.

### Some examples are:

1. A new initiative recently brought to the table is GP share/care involvement of depression patients requiring outpatient ECT.
2. A developed initiative soon to be rolled out is the Mental Health Liaison Officer.
3. An integration process which is being maintained is the Clozapine share care clinic.

Other new mental health services on the horizon for 2008 are mental health nurses, referral to personal helpers and a mentor program delivered by Oz Care and our recent application for HeadSpace funding for Youth Mental Health.

## Quality Use of Medicines

Robin Warren

A major focus of our Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) initiatives for the year was the delivery of local National Prescribing Service (NPS) activities. It is a privilege to provide evidence-based prescribing information to GP practices, GP registrar training sessions, pharmacists, practice nurses and be involved in other CPD sessions.

Medication management MBS item numbers (HMRs and RMMRs) encourage the collaboration of GPs and pharmacists, a professional relationship necessary to optimum patient outcomes and QUM. Promotion of these services through GP practices, pharmacies, hospital staff and consumers also forms an important area of our focus.

We endeavour to integrate QUM principles into other activities of the Division. QUM indicators are included in the "Enhancing Diabetes Management" activity and we work alongside other programs such as Aged Care and Nursing in general practice.

Patient behaviour and perceptions are an important aspect that impacts on medication use. We cooperate with some Townsville Region Council of the Ageing QUM Peer Educators to be involved with their sessions and we received a small Active Ageing grant to continue this cooperation in "Moving Right Along" consumer sessions.

We had a great response to a call for GPs and pharmacists to volunteer to deliver NPS "Common colds need common sense: not antibiotics" talks to childcare centre staff. Six sessions were conducted in the Townsville/Thuringowa area.

## Continuing Professional Development

Townsville General Practice Network (TGPN) is an RACGP Endorsed and Accredited Provider for CPD activities and has delivered quality accredited education to GPs in an effective and efficient manner. TGPN is also an Authorised Provider of Endorsed Conferences/Courses for the Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA) and has provided workshops approved by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA).

## ICT Service Delivery

The team consists of Barry Lollo, Graham Pilcher, Leon Payne, Stefan Gut and Isaac Gardner together with trainee Matthew O'Brien.

### Our services now include:

- System Housekeeping - (Monitoring and analysis of system security and performance.)
- System Enhancements - (Application of essential updates, enhancements and upgrades. Network and system administration.)
- Professional Consultation, advice and documentation - (Strategic planning, recommendations and guidance. Health ICT systems experience and IM/IT Program advice, service reports and network documentation.)
- Hardware Sales and Installation - (Provision of computer hardware needs from sales to installation, support and warranty.)
- User Support - (Responding to day-to-day computing needs and critical faults.)

### Achievements over the year include:

- Establishment of a direct line to IT Support together with the installation of a Helpdesk Call Management System.
- Significant increase in the turnover of hardware sales.
- Continuing development of systems to assist in the delivery of services to clients.
- Four major new server roll outs.
- Increasing ICT awareness and profile. Assisting on projects such as Aged Care.
- Working with CIMS Project team on the transition of CIMS into the IT Services Business area.

## Centralised Information Management System (CIMS)

The private network, known as CIMS, has been built and is fully operational with businesses from General Practice, specialists, allied health and pharmacies subscribing to the service. With the hardware now in place we are looking to broaden the range of services offered through the network such as VOIP, video conferencing, hosted services and other enhancements.

There are a number of projects or initiatives that are currently in the proposal phase that will utilise the CIMS infrastructure. Without this infrastructure, sustainability of some proposed projects would be potentially cost prohibitive and restrictive.

Secure Messaging means a lot of things to a lot of people. At the end of the day, being able to distribute health data by referring electronically, and receiving information electronically directly into the GP software packages from a number of sources, not just pathology, has been the holy grail, in the health sectors for a very long time. There are significant pieces of the puzzle in place now, but each place is not aware or not working with the other to build a solution. The time is near however, that a strategy is looking very close. This will be an extremely good opportunity for Queensland to stand out from the crowd and show the country that it can be done.

## Maintaining the Network

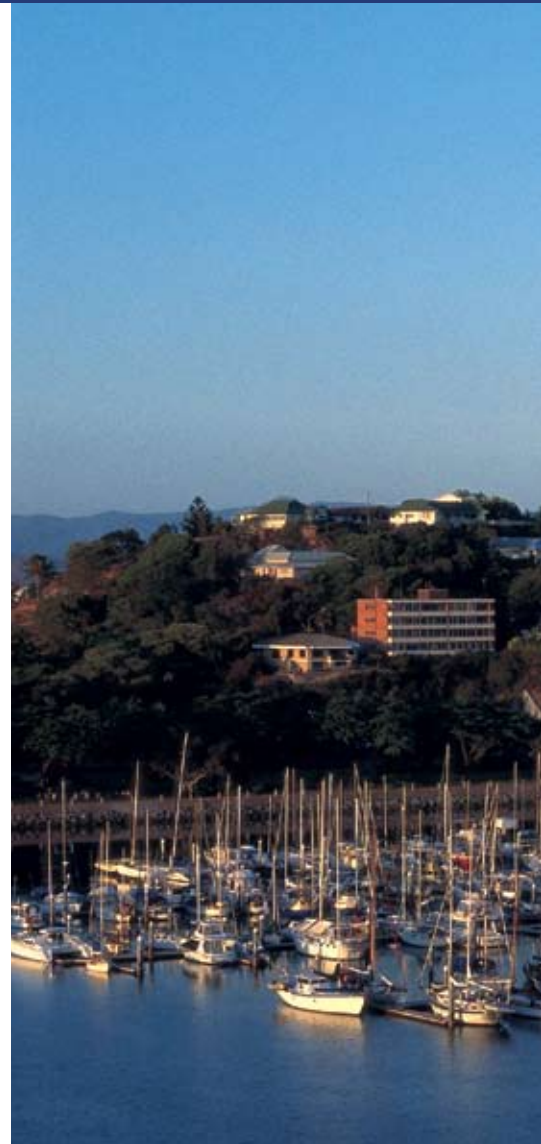
Keeping our members, primary health providers and the community in touch with news and events is an important part of our operations.

Every month Tropical Ear, our monthly magazine, goes out to over four hundred people and organisations. Our weekly newsletter, Bits 'n' Pieces, is distributed to a variety of primary health care providers in the community. PiNfo is a fortnightly newsletter specifically targeting practice nurses.

Regular releases are sent to media in an effort to inform and create awareness of health issues within the Townsville/Thuringowa community.

A need was identified through the After Hours General Practice for information on treating sporting injuries to children. As a result a booklet entitled *Sports Injuries and How to Treat Them* has been produced and distributed to local sporting clubs. There was a great deal of positive feedback from sporting clubs about the booklets.

Staff representatives engage with the community through *Seniors in the Park*, an initiative of the Townsville City Council, to let attendees know about the After Hours General Practice, Beat the Bladder Blues, Quality Use of Medicines and promoting general awareness of health issues.



## Directors



*Dr Kevin Arlett*



*Dr Mary Emeleus*



*Dr Charles Horsfall*



*Dr Barbara Dignam*



*Dr Paolo Morisco*



*Mrs Jean McCubben*



ACN: 063 397 231

Unit 3/106 Dalrymple Road  
Currajong QLD 4812

PO Box 7780  
Garbutt BC Qld 4814

Phone: 4725 8915

Fax: 4725 8921

Email: [contact@tgpn.com.au](mailto:contact@tgpn.com.au)

[www.tgpn.com.au](http://www.tgpn.com.au)