

primary focus

Putting Women First

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- + Robotic-assisted surgery for Mackay women
- + sMater podcast features Central and North Queensland clinicians
- + eConsultant program expands for regional GPs

Image on cover (left to right): General Manager, Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg Catherine Hackney, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist Dr Sally Rodrigues, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist Dr Naguesh Gaunekar, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist Dr Ritu Rana and General Manager, Mater Private Hospital Townsville, Stephanie Barwick

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putting
women
first

Women's Health

This issue coincides with Mater's public education drive, **Putting Women First**, to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of breast and gynaecological cancers. Mater has a long history of caring for women, beginning when the Sisters of Mercy arrived in Queensland in the 1860s and continues with the cutting-edge research and treatments delivered today. **Putting Women First** is designed to drive all Queensland women to prioritise their health and seek medical attention at the first warning sign.

Reconciliation

In the spirit of reconciliation, Mater acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Learn more about our Reconciliation Action Plan at mater.org.au/rap

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Welcome to a new edition of Mater's magazine *for the medical community*

We have started 2024 with a public awareness campaign on women's health and wellbeing, highlighting signs and symptoms of gynaecological and breast cancers and encouraging female patients to seek medical advice early.

For more than a century Mater has been caring for Queensland women.

This tradition started in 1861 when the Sisters of Mercy arrived from Ireland to bring healing and compassion to young women and the broader community of the fledgling colony.

It was on this foundation that Mater was built, and our commitment to caring for women has never wavered.

Today, our collective expertise spans health, education and research, contributing to Mater delivering Australia's largest maternity service, and being a leading provider of gynaecology, gynae-oncology and breast cancer services in Queensland.

This issue of Primary Focus showcases the clinicians and services being delivered at Mater's regional hospitals in Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville. From surgical robots that enhance accuracy and improve patient outcomes to the expansion of Mater's eConsultant program that improves GP access to specialist advice, Mater is leading ground-breaking research, treatments, technologies and services for women's healthcare.

You can find out more about the latest treatments and research in breast, ovarian and endometrial cancers as well as the range of women's healthcare services across Central and North Queensland on sMater—a podcast created by clinicians for clinicians.

We know there is always more to do, and Mater remains committed to continuing to prioritise healthcare and patient outcomes for women in the communities we serve.

In the pages ahead, you will find information on new digital healthcare tools, such as a cutting-edge mindfulness app

for new mums as well as information on an upcoming survivorship program for cancer patients.

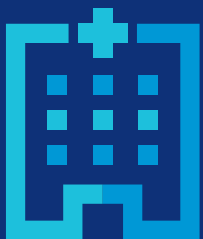
There is also the chance to register for Mater's annual International Women's Day Fun Run, presented by Queensland X-Ray to be held in March. Last year, more than 3,300 regional Queenslanders donned hot pink T-shirts and hit the streets to raise funds for equipment, research and services for people with breast cancer and their families.

I encourage you to participate, and to learn more about Mater's healthcare services for women, as well as the exceptional health professionals who provide them.



Mike Beckmann

A/Prof Mike Beckmann
Chief Medical Officer



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a week

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Emergency
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seven days
a week



Putting Women First

Mackay's first robotic hysterectomy at Mater

Mater Private Hospital Mackay Obstetrician and Gynaecologist Dr Ritu Rana has conducted the first robotic-assisted hysterectomy in Mackay, using the state-of-the-art da Vinci X robotic system.



Dr Rana was the first obstetrician and gynaecologist in Mackay credentialled to use the da Vinci X, meaning local women need no longer travel to Townsville or further afield to access the high-tech surgery.

She said the advantages of using the robot for surgery would make a real difference to the lives of Central Queensland women.

"The da Vinci X provides more precision, less post-operative pain, faster recovery and less blood loss than traditional or laparoscopic surgery," Dr Rana said.

"For surgeons, robotic surgery gives greater satisfaction as far as patient outcomes are concerned, which is our primary goal with any operation."

Local woman Jodie Gilbert was the first person in Mackay operated on using the da Vinci X for gynaecological surgery.

"Jodie has a history of fibroids and endometriosis, so she was dealing with a lot of pain and excessive bleeding for most of her adult life," Dr Rana said.

"Also, her left ovary had attached to the bowel, adding to the case's complexity.

"Working with the robot, and the surgical team at Mater Private Hospital Mackay, delivered a great result for Jodie.

"The incredible surgical precision of the technology allowed us to navigate the bowel issue while leaving her right ovary intact, avoiding early menopause."

Ms Gilbert said beyond the normal problems associated with fibroids and endometriosis, she also suffered with chronic back pain for years, not knowing it was due to her ovary and bowel fusing.

"With Dr Rana using the robot, I came out of surgery, the back pain was gone, and I left hospital the next day," she said.

Dr Rana said the Mackay community was incredibly fortunate to have the da Vinci X technology.

"Thanks to Mater Private Hospital Mackay Perioperative Services, and generous donations from the community through fundraising by the Mater Foundation, we now have this fantastic system right here in Mackay," she said.

? How to refer

Dr Ritu Rana

Specialty: Obstetrics and Gynaecology

📍 Mater Mothers' Private Mackay

☎ 07 4965 6565

➔ [Referral information](#)

Signs a patient may need a hysterectomy:

- ✔ Uterine fibroids.
- ✔ Cancer of the uterus, ovary, cervix or endometrium.
- ✔ Endometriosis.
- ✔ Uterine prolapse.

Image Mater Private Hospital Mackay Obstetrician and Gynaecologist Ritu Rana is now conducting robotic-assisted hysterectomies in Mackay.

Backpacking trip became a cancer journey for Tora

When 24-year-old Tora Murphy fell ill in Colombia halfway through a round-the-world trip, she thought she might have food poisoning or a parasitic infection.

Ovarian cancer never crossed her mind. But today she is halfway through treatment for stage 3 ovarian cancer after flying back to Australia from the UK.

The average age of an ovarian cancer patient is 64 and Ms Murphy is currently one of the youngest patients being treated for the disease at Mater hospitals.

"I'd felt bloated for about a month, but I put it down to travelling, drinking and eating new foods," Ms Murphy said.

"I thought I might have a parasite, but I held off seeing a doctor until we reached London.

"As soon as we arrived I went to a hospital. I was expecting to get a pill and be on my way—but they told me they had found cancer.

"I was in shock for a long time and sometimes it still doesn't feel real."

Doctors considered all options for preserving Ms Murphy's fertility before she underwent surgery for a rare mucinous ovarian cancer, but ultimately decided a full hysterectomy and removal of both her ovaries was unavoidable.

None of Ms Murphy's eggs could be extracted or frozen because of the advanced stage of the disease.



Ms Murphy has responded well to surgery and chemotherapy, but knows the chance of recurrence is high.

Dr Catherine Shannon, a Senior Medical Oncologist at Mater, said Tora's cancer was unusual.

"Ovarian cancer is largely a disease of older women, but Tora has a mucinous subtype that we sometimes see in young women, although it is extremely uncommon," Dr Shannon said.

"Her case illustrates how vague the symptoms of ovarian cancer can be.

"It's important for all women, of any age, to know the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer—including bloating, pelvic pain and abdominal distention.

"If they experience these symptoms persistently it is important to see a doctor and have them investigated."

Signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer

- ✓ Commonly diagnosed over the age of 50 but can occur at any age.
- ✓ No available screening test so cases are usually advanced when detected.
- ✓ Symptoms include persistent bloating, abdominal distension, constipation, diarrhoea, frequent urination, menstrual irregularities and pelvic, back and abdominal pain.

Image Tora Murphy was in shock when she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, a disease she thought only affected older women.

Program gets women *well after cancer*

Surviving cancer is always a huge relief for patients—but it often marks the start of a new series of health challenges.

That's why Mater is set to launch the RECENTRE e-health program later this year for women who have survived breast and gynaecological cancers.

The program will be available free for more than 800 patients across the state, including those treated at Mater hospitals in South East Queensland, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton and Bundaberg.

The health and lifestyle intervention will aim to address the most common health problems experienced after active cancer treatment ends.

"We're great at focusing on women's cancer treatment, but once this ends survivors face many problems which stem from treatment," said Mater Breast Care Nurse Ash Mondolo.

"Patients can gain weight from inactivity, experience chemo-induced menopause and suffer depression and anxiety linked to body image issues and fears of their own mortality."

The Enhancing Women's Recovery after Cancer Treatment Program (RECENTRE) is being launched with support from Mater Foundation and \$1.3 million funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The e-health program will guide participants through selected modules covering issues such as nutrition, sleep, stress and menopause over 12 weeks.

The program will flag serious or emerging concerns to health professionals and will also link cancer survivors to one another through a peer support connection space.

Get sMater with Mater's clinical podcast series

Mater's Central and North Queensland clinicians are hitting the airwaves on sMater—a podcast by clinicians for clinicians.



Image sMater podcast host and North Queensland radio personality Glenn "Minty" Mintern with Mater Private Hospital Townsville Obstetrician and Gynaecologist Dr Sally Aubrey.

North Queensland radio personality Glenn "Minty" Mintern joins the sMater team as host, leading guests through a new specialty every episode, from cardiology to urology, and paediatrics to palliative care.

Mater Private Hospital Townsville Cardiologist Dr Soniah Bigie Moloi featured in the first North Queensland episode, sharing his insights on advances in new imaging technologies as well as the innovative treatments now available for the 'epidemic' of atrial fibrillation amongst Queenslanders.

"It used to be a disease of old age, but now because of lifestyle issues permeating our society, we see this problem in very, very, very young people," Dr Moloi said.

"When I say young people, I mean people in their 20s and their 30s.

"It is a disease and a symptom—and atrial fibrillation causes mortality and morbidity, it causes death, it causes disability. That's why we've become so, so, so pedantic about looking for it, treating it and preventing it."

Upcoming sMater episodes will feature obstetricians and gynaecologists including Dr Naguesh Gaunekar, Dr Ritu Rana and Dr Sally Aubrey who discuss the latest research, treatments and services for women with endometriosis, ovarian cancer and more.

Following the success of sMater's initial episodes on preterm births, Mater Chief Medical Officer Dr Mike Beckmann said the constructive and collaborative format is proving to be a benefit to clinicians.

"We hope that by sharing information and experiences—like we have in sMater's preterm birth series—we can create a community where we can connect and work together to improve healthcare across Australia, regardless of whether listeners are based at a tertiary or rural facility," Dr Beckmann said.

Join us, connect with us and learn with us, with sMater. Subscribe to sMater on your favourite platform:



Mater's eConsultant *expansion*

Mater's eConsultant Request for Advice (RFA) service is expanding from three to eight medical specialties in March.

eConsultant gives Queensland GPs access to timely online specialist advice on diagnostic and treatment options for patients, via a secure messaging platform.

Endocrinologist and eConsultant clinical lead Emeritus Professor David McIntyre said the expansion of specialties improves Queenslanders' access to quality specialist advice, regardless of where patients live.

"As demand for timely, better-coordinated complex care continues to rise, Mater's eConsultant program provides an innovative and efficient way to enhance health outcomes for Queenslanders, particularly those in rural and remote areas," Prof McIntyre said.

"Since its launch as a pilot study in 2018 the platform has helped GPs receive specialist input within a mean response time of 2.1 days, avoiding the need for face-to-face visits in 87% of cases."

Mater Director of Obstetric Medicine Dr Jo Laurie is one of the specialists who will deliver the expanded service.

"I'm excited to be part of the program for a number of reasons," Dr Laurie said.

"Pregnancy-specific health is quite a narrow specialty and it lends itself well to an online forum.

"We do a fair bit of telehealth and digital health already, so we know we can provide very high-level care without seeing the patient in person.

"From a fairness and health equity point of view this is really important to ensuring people who live in regional and rural Queensland receive specialty care."



Roma-based GP Shireen Kumar, who uses eConsultant, said increased access to specialists was incredibly important for her rural community.

"Our access to specialist consultants is limited and our patients, especially those who are older, can struggle to attend appointments in the city," she said.

Charleville GP Kasandra Kuhler said having a direct link to the specialist has changed how quickly she can provide care to her rural patients.

Mater continues to work closely with the Queensland Government to ensure the future of the service, which is a partnership between Queensland Health, Mater, The University of Queensland, the Western Queensland, North Queensland and Brisbane South primary health networks, the Ontario eConsult/Champlain Base, the Royal Australian College of General Practice and the Australian Digital Health Agency.

eConsultant specialists and specialties available from March 2024:

| Medical Director Contact | Specialty |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Dr Jim Muir | Dermatology |
| Dr Liza Phillips | Endocrinology |
| Assoc. Prof. Karam Kostner | Cardiology |
| Assoc. Prof. Lucy Burr | Respiratory/Sleep |
| Dr Michael Burke | Renal |
| Dr Andrew Swayne | Neurology |
| Assoc. Prof. Paul Griffin | Infectious Diseases |
| Dr Jo Laurie | Obstetric Medicine |



1. GP completes a Request for Advice (RFA)
2. GP sends RFA to eConsultant
3. eConsultant reviews RFA
4. eConsultant responds to RFA
5. GP and patient make the final treatment decision

Image The process (pictured) for GPs using Mater's eConsultant service is fast and simple.

Image Mater Director of Obstetric Medicine Dr Jo Laurie will help deliver the expanded specialties via Mater's eConsultant Request for Advice service.

Putting Women First

Fun Run your way this International Women's Day

Image The Sea of Pink in Townsville in 2023.

Mater's International Women's Day Fun Run, presented by Queensland X-Ray is returning in 2024—and a record number of participants are expected to take part across Queensland this March.

While more than 20,000 people pounded the pavement in Brisbane's CBD for the official Fun Run in 2023, there were thousands more who took part with their own runs in Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Mackay and Townsville.

Last year's event raised more than \$2 million for vital breast cancer research, equipment, treatments and services.

In Townsville last year, Mater partnered with local running club Craft Run to form a sea of pink with 500 participants in hot pink Fun Run t-shirts taking to the 5km course with stops at pubs for pink beers.

This year, the event is expected to be even bigger.

Mater Private Hospital Townsville General Manager Stephanie Barwick said community fundraising by Mater Foundation had contributed millions of dollars to facilities to improve patient services and care.

"Mater Foundation has invested more than \$3 million in Townsville alone since 2019, with funds going towards surgical-assist robots, innovative equipment, and more," Ms Barwick said.

"Similar investments have been made at all Mater sites across the state and would not have been possible without events such as the International Women's Day Fun Run."

Virtual events are being organised in other parts of the state, including a run at Bargara for those in Bundaberg and the Wide Bay.

Queensland X-Ray will present the International Women's Day Fun Run for the next five years, providing an opportunity to work with Mater to improve health outcomes for the community.

Queensland X-Ray clinical support worker Mel Just was one of the first to register for the 2024 event after successfully completing breast cancer treatment last year.

The 38-year-old mum-of-two has spent her working life caring for breast cancer patients, but said her diagnosis still hit her 'like a tonne of bricks'.

"I remember it so clearly," she said. "It felt for a little while like the bottom fell out of my world."

Ms Just underwent chemotherapy, surgery and 25 rounds of radiotherapy.

She said the IWD Fun Run not only raises awareness and much-needed funds for people with breast cancer but also offers a sense of camaraderie to those touched by the disease.

"In a lot of ways, I'm stronger than before I had breast cancer," Ms Just said.

"That's why this event is so special. It helps you to know that no woman has to go through breast cancer alone."

Registrations for the International Women's Day Fun Run presented by Queensland X-Ray are now open.

Looking to run as part of a group? Here is a list of the 2023 top spots:

- Bundaberg participants met at Bargara for a morning run along the beach, with a large number of doctors and staff in attendance.
- Rockhampton participants made the most of Yeppoon's flat landscape, going for a 5km jog or walk along the esplanade before enjoying a team breakfast.
- Some Mackay participants met in the foyer of Mater Private Hospital Mackay and enjoyed a jog along the riverside. Other groups ran near the marina.
- Townsville participants could either join the Thursday night Craft Run through the CBD, or kickstart their weekend with a Saturday morning Family Fun Run followed by complimentary breakfast cooked by Lamberts Fresh Produce.
- 2024 community events are still being planned—keep an eye out on the International Women's Day Fun Run website to learn more about opportunities to get involved in your region.



Image Mater Private Hospital Townsville staff Shaun Whiley, Elisabeth Johnson, Eleni Constantine and Hayley Jones preparing for the 2024 virtual Fun Run.

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Geriatrician answers Wide Bay call for services

Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg has welcomed the region's only geriatrician, addressing an important healthcare gap in a community with an ageing population.

Prior to his move to Queensland, Dr Leo (Shengyang) Liao was the Clinical Director of Older Persons and Rehabilitation Services at the Waikato Hospital in Hamilton, New Zealand.

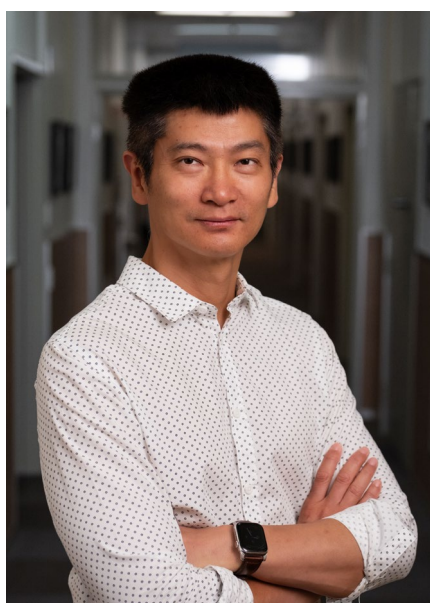


Image Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg's Dr Leo Liao is the region's only geriatrician.

He said his reason for moving to Bundaberg is two-fold.

"In Hamilton, the winter is a bit cold—so, we thought we'd try a warmer place—and I like the climate here," he said.

"The other thing is that there is no geriatrician in the area, and I think I can do a lot for the community."

More than a quarter of Wide Bay's population is aged 65 or over, which is substantially higher than the state (17%) and national (17.2%) average, according to the 2021 Census.

Dr Liao said the health needs of those aged over 65 are unique, and often complex.

"The core feature of geriatric patients is disability, and one of the major causes of disability in older people is dementia," Dr Liao said.

"Then there are other conditions such as falls, incontinence, multimorbidity—which is when there are two or more chronic medical conditions presenting in one person at a time—and polypharmacy, which is when people are using multiple medicines at once.

"If I can identify one or two issues to focus on, we can improve patients' quality of life and that can make such a difference."

Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg General Manager Catherine Hackney said Dr Liao's arrival addresses an unmet need in the region.

"There is increased demand on the health system to support our older community as they age and our aim is to enhance the quality of life they enjoy," Ms Hackney said.

"Dr Liao's expertise in this space will go a long way to ensuring our patients—and their families—have another layer of support as they enter their later years.

In addition to his specialty area of geriatrics, Dr Liao is also qualified in adult General Medicine, and will be able to help younger patients.

How to refer

Dr Shengyang Liao "Dr Leo"
Specialty: Geriatric Medicine

 Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg

 07 4167 0890

 [Referral information](#)

Frail scale tool helps ageing Queenslanders live longer

A new online tool aims to help older Queenslanders to lead happy, healthy lives in their own homes for longer.

Called the Frail Scale, the tool is part of a ground-breaking project by Mater Research and The University of Queensland, through the Centre for Health System Reform and Integration.

Frailty Project Research Director Dr Jenny Job said despite public awareness that people become more fragile with age, frailty was complex and difficult to identify.

"Frailty is a problem for many of those aged 75 or older and often increases time in hospital as well as the need for residential care and the risk of death," Dr Job said.

"The Frail Scale is a five-point scale that helps people understand their risk of frailty and if necessary, seek advice from their doctor."

According to Dr Job, up to 25% of Queenslanders aged 75 or older are considered at risk and might not know it.

"If you're constantly tired or have difficulty walking more than a block, you could be at risk," she said.

"If you have also been diagnosed with various chronic illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, asthma and arthritis you are likely to be at a higher level of risk."

Dr Job said frailty could be managed and, in some cases, reversed for many people, if properly identified.

Mater expands paediatric services in Mackay

Mater Private Hospital Mackay has welcomed new paediatrician Dr Clara Menezes, expanding services in the region.



Image Mater Private Hospital Mackay paediatrician Dr Clara Menezes.

Dr Menezes is a general paediatrician with 25 years of experience and offers comprehensive medical care for children from birth to 16 years of age.

"Sometimes parents just need the extra support to access the services available around them to get through challenges and help with their child's development," she said.

"Offering support to improve the overall wellbeing of a parent and their child is fulfilling."

Dr Menezes has a special interest in young children with growth and

development issues, allergies and genetic and epigenetic factors contributing to chronic conditions.

She is also experienced in forensic and child protection paediatrics, indigenous health and providing holistic care that considers the social and cultural aspects of health.

Dr Menezes sees patients in Mackay as well as Brisbane, including the Mater Mothers' Hospital Neonatal Critical Care Unit in South Brisbane.

"There's something special knowing we can do something for these pre-term babies, and make their lives much easier," she said.

"I have worked in regional hospitals for a long time, and it's nice to have the best of both worlds because I enjoy the city life too."

Dr Menezes shares rooms with fellow paediatrician Dr Sung Ju Min and is accepting new referrals at Mater Private Hospital Mackay, with clinics run for one week each month.

? How to refer

✉ For referrals, email DrMin.Reception@mercyqcq.com

New GM for Mater Private Hospital Mackay

For Karen Wade, stepping into her new role as General Manager of Mater Private Hospital Mackay is like "coming home".

Ms Wade said she started her career as a registered nurse with the hospital in 1993 and is looking forward to bringing her decades of clinical experience back to the team.

"I'm excited by the advances Mater has brought to this community, especially in the areas of robotically-assisted surgery and other technologies," Ms Wade said.

"It gives GPs, clinicians and patients confidence we are evolving as healthcare

evolves and I'm committed to us staying ahead of the curve."

Over the course of her career, Ms Wade has worked in a variety of roles for Mater in Mackay from maternity to management.

"I did my maternity and neonatal intensive care training with Mater and moved through various management roles before becoming the Director of Nursing here in Mackay.

"Outside of Mater I've worked for Queensland Health as the Executive Director of Nursing and the Director of Safety and Quality, and in the private sector as the Director of Clinical and Care Services for Bolton Clarke. I'm happy to be back at the Mater and am really motivated to making a difference for the community."



Image Mater Private Hospital Mackay General Manager Karen Wade.

Mater Mothers launches Parent Lounge mindfulness app

Mater Mothers is helping mums find a moment of calm in their day, with the launch of the new Parent Lounge mindfulness app.

Mater Service Development and Research Team Leader Dr Grace Branjerdporn said the need for the app was identified during the COVID pandemic.

The free, pocket relaxation tool utilises evidence-based, mindfulness techniques and resources that can be accessed from anywhere, any time.

The app was co-created by experts in perinatal mental healthcare and psychology, with mums who had lived experience of perinatal mental illness.

"It's great that women can access the latest evidence-based calming techniques in the palm of their hand," Dr Branjerdporn said.

The app features a library of short "Relax Trax" tailored to different stages of pregnancy and post pregnancy, targeting mindfulness, mother-infant bonding, relaxation and meditation.

Additionally, the app provides information for national support hotlines and services as well as self-managed mood-tracking.

"This will help mums be mentally resilient and stay well in the community," Dr Branjerdporn said.

Developing mindfulness strategies in pregnant women is one of the many support systems they can access during and after pregnancy.

Parent Lounge packages this support into one easy to access app for all mums.

The app is available via the Apple App Store and the Android Store.

Mater Mothers' Parenting Support Centre offers early parenting support and guidance for new parents up to six months after the birth of their baby.

The service is free for all mothers for six months after discharge from Mater Mothers'.

Central Queensland leads the way in Australian-first

Twins born at Mater Mothers' Private Rockhampton were the first to benefit from an Australian-first virtual care program now available for expecting families in Central Queensland.

The neonatal virtual care program—developed by international technology leader Philips and virtual healthcare provider Teladoc—provides patients, parents, and clinicians in Central Queensland 24/7 access to neonatologist support if neonatal resuscitation is required soon after birth.

Mater's Chief Medical Officer Dr Mike Beckmann said the service was an extension of Mater's nation-leading maternity care services for Queensland families.

"Regional maternity patients already have access to experienced and highly skilled clinicians at Mater Mothers' Hospitals in Townsville, Rockhampton and Mackay," Dr Beckmann said.

"This new technology enhances those services by enabling Mater's network of regional hospitals to access the world-class expertise in our tertiary hospital in Brisbane.

"With the press of a button, neonatal nurses and neonatologists in Brisbane can be virtually in the room, supporting our clinicians and families wherever they are.

"It really helps to ensure we're delivering the best care possible for our smallest patients."

Rockhampton mother-to-be Kloe Lewis was 32 weeks pregnant when a routine ultrasound detected one of her babies had a slow heart rate.

"It was amazing to have a bunch of doctors and nurses both in the room and virtually in Brisbane looking after our girls," she said.

"It was a weight lifted off our shoulders knowing they were in the best hands."

Mater's Director of Neonatology Dr Pita Birch was among the team in Brisbane virtually assessing Kloe and her twins.

"We identified and diagnosed a heart condition that affected the baby's heart rate," Dr Birch said.

"This allowed us to guide the team in Rockhampton and also to provide real-time clinical updates to the Queensland Neonatal Retrieval Service prior to their arrival.

"I'm glad to report mother and babies are happy and healthy."



Image Parents Khloe and Matthew Lewis with their babies and Mater Private Hospital Rockhampton midwife Bev Freeman.

Health partnership pays off for Bundaberg patients

A record number of public patients have undergone procedures at Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg as part of its partnership with Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service.



Image Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg Surgery Connect patient Craig Schussler.

In the last financial year, 255 procedures were performed at Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg through the Surgery Connect initiative—which helps to ensure public patients are seen within recommended time frames.

Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg General Manager Catherine Hackney said the arrangement was helping to ensure Wide Bay residents receive timely access to the healthcare they need.

The hospital provides orthopaedic, general surgery and gynaecology services through the Surgery Connect program, and also has a long-term agreement to support Queensland Health with paediatric ear, nose and throat (ENT) services.



Image Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg General Manager Catherine Hackney.

“Mater actively seeks to support those who need urgent healthcare and we are committed to working in partnership with the community to make this possible,” Ms Hackney said.

“We are making a significant difference to the health, wellbeing and quality of life of patients, which is of the utmost importance to our team.”

Surgery Connect procedures at Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg are performed by its private physicians, as well as specialists usually based at Bundaberg Hospital.

Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service Chief Operating Officer Debbie Carroll said: “Our partnership with Mater is important for the Bundaberg community.

“It supports the work of Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service and ensures that patients can receive timely elective surgery closer to home.”

“During the July to September quarter last year at Bundaberg Hospital 100% of our most urgent Category 1 patients were treated within 30 days.”

Craig Schussler, 59, is one of the patients to have benefited from the partnership, having undergone bilateral knee replacement surgery in late July.

“My right leg was bowed, my left leg was starting to bow and I was in a fair bit of pain,” Mr Schussler said.



Image Surgery Connect patient Craig Schussler with Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg Allied Health Manager Julie McGuinness.

“I went through the public system and they gave me the option of having the surgery at Mater.

“I have a pretty high pain threshold so I may have been able to wait a little longer, but getting it sooner has made a big difference. I’ve been really impressed by the care at Mater.

“I had to stop playing sport eight years ago because of my knees, so I hope to start playing sport again.”

Ms Hackney said Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg was committed to working with Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service to provide Surgery Connect services and was always looking for alternative partnership opportunities to help meet the community’s needs.

Investing in the future of *regional Queensland*

From new chiller plants and sterilisation departments to additional operating theatres, Mater has a multi-million dollar program of works rolling out across Central and North Queensland hospitals.

The upgrades, extensions and improvements ensure Mater continues to meet its commitment of providing access to high quality healthcare services to all Queenslanders, regardless of where they live in the state



Bundaberg

More than \$4 million is being invested in a new chiller plant at Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg to ensure optimal operating conditions for surgeons and patients. Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg General Manager Catherine Hackney said the significant investment reflected Mater's ongoing commitment to delivering high quality healthcare to the Wide Bay community.

"We've been caring for the people in this region since the hospital first opened in 1946," Ms Hackney said.

"This new infrastructure means we can continue to deliver the best quality care to our patients across all of our services, from orthopaedics to geriatrics and beyond."

Ms Hackney said the chiller plant would be operational in the first half of 2024.

"It is exciting to see Mater's ongoing commitment to the community ensuring our services are reliable and contemporary," she said.

Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg Engineering Services Manager Leo Mulkearns said the new plant would replace the current chilled water plant, built in the 1980s.

"The new chiller gives us up-to-date technology with 100% redundancy, meaning that once construction is complete, there will actually be two plants on site," he said.

Mr Mulkearns said the new chilled water plant ensured the "backbone" of the hospital's infrastructure was secure.

Mackay

A \$7.3 million expansion and refurbishment project at Mater Private Hospital Mackay is upgrading perioperative theatres and enhancing facilities for doctors and patients.

The investment will allow a sixth perioperative theatre to be added to the hospital's suite of theatres and is projected to significantly increase the already more than 12,000 procedures performed at the hospital each year.

The project also includes refurbishment of the existing theatre shell to support the expansion, a redesign of the pre-operative, recovery and patient amenity zones and the creation of new sterile storage areas.

Work is scheduled for completion early March 2024.

Townsville

An extensive upgrade of the Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) at Mater Private Hospital Townsville (Pimlico campus) has commenced.

The work includes the installation of four state-of-the-art sterilisers which will be delivered in phases with the project expected to be completed by March 2025.

Mater Private Hospital Townsville will remain operational during the upgrade.

Rockhampton

A year-long roof replacement project over a total of 8,000m² of hail damaged roofing was recently completed at Mater Private Hospital Rockhampton.

Works were undertaken across the hospital's six main buildings, including the Heritage Listed Kenmore House that was built in 1894.

Image Left Site Manager David Patterson in front of Rockhampton's 2023 roof restoration works.

Image Below The \$4 million chiller plant at Mater Private Hospital Bundaberg will ensure optimal operating conditions. Staff pictured (L-R) Arlyn Klinstrom, Matthew Stockwell and Gayle Veivers.



Our Mater Network

Operating the largest not-for-profit network of public and private hospital and healthcare services in the state, Mater brings together collective expertise across health, education, and research, with a shared vision of empowering people to live better lives through improved health and wellbeing.

Mater Health comprises all our hospitals and healthcare services across Queensland. These services combine to help Mater offer comprehensive healthcare which meets identified community need.

Mater Education is a nationally accredited, hospital-based independent Registered Training Organisation—the only one of its kind in Queensland. It offers a range of courses for students, through to highly experienced practising clinicians.

Mater Research is an internationally recognised leader in medical research, which connects its findings from bench to bedside—translating medical research into clinical practice to deliver better outcomes for our patients and the wider community.

Mater Foundation raises funds by engaging people and businesses to partner with Mater to improve health through a wide range of fundraising and philanthropy.



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