

## **Experiences In Starting And Running A School-Based GP Clinic – Learnings From 2.5 Years On The Ground**

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### **Background:**

In 2021 Townsville Suburban Medical Practice was approached by Heatley Secondary College to take part in the Education Queensland GPs in Schools pilot programme. Our clinic was started entirely from scratch, and as this was a pilot programme there was no previous local experience to draw upon. In this presentation we aim to discuss the successes achieved and challenges faced during this process, and suggest approaches that other school-based clinics may take when first being established. This will be particularly focussed on clinics in regional to rural areas.

### **Approach:**

Each Wednesday through the school term a GP and a nurse are available at Heatley Secondary College for consultation by students. The clinic has been established in a purpose-built room at the school according to Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL) guidelines and with a similar setup to the main clinic. Funding for the establishment and maintenance of the clinic is provided by Education Queensland.

### **Outcome:**

From July 2022 to May 2024, 170 different students were seen at the school clinic for over 340 appointments. Approximately one-third of the students were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, and over three-quarters of the students were part of the lowest two socio-economic quintiles. These students are likely to have been unable to access healthcare without access to this programme, and there has been strong support from the whole school community to continue the weekly clinics.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

Youth health is a significant area of clinical need across Australia, but is particularly important in under-served and lower socio-economic status communities, where the young people may otherwise not be able to access appropriate healthcare. The school-based clinic model has provided an opportunity for young people to engage in both their own healthcare and self-advocacy while remaining engaged in schooling. Our clinic aims to empower young people to be ready to navigate the health system as an adult after leaving school.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

Funding for the establishment and maintenance of the Heatley Secondary College GP clinic was provided as part of the Education Queensland GPs in Schools pilot programme.

The Rotary Club of Mundingburra has provided a grant for students to access prescription medication through a local pharmacy.