

Strategy for ensuring equal care



Minister for Health Yvette D'Ath in Townsville to announce the launch of Townsville University Hospital's equity strategy; (below left) Taylar Kay, 12, Braxton Oth, 10, and Harper Robson, 10, performing; (below right) The Cathedral School student Carriage Nallajar, 18. Pictures: Shae Beplate.

DANIEL SHIRKIE

TOWNSVILLE Hospital and Health Service has officially launched its First Nations Health Equity Strategy.

The document is designed to serve as a 'living' blueprint for achieving equal health outcomes for First Nations patients, as well as eliminating institutional racism that persists throughout the healthcare system.

Townsville Hospital and Health Services Chief Executive Kieran Keyes, board chair Tony Mooney and Executive Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health Wendy Ah Chin delivered the document during an address at the NRL Cowboys House alongside Queensland health Minister Yvette D'Ath.

Ms Ah Chin said the strategy would provide an element of self-determination for First Nations people who turn to the health service for help.

"The voices, insights and expertise of First Nations people have historically been left out of health service planning, but this strategy allows us to place our people and voices at the centre of health care service and delivery," Ms Ah Chin said.

"As well as addressing the disproportionately high rates of hospitalisations and chronic diseases among First Nations people, this strategy aims to develop links with

other sectors to improve outcomes in education, housing, employment and child safety.

"The strategy will complement, build on and strengthen existing health service initiatives such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Advisory Council. The group of community representatives engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and communities on the provision of quality healthcare to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."

The document outlines a time frame for 'closing the gap' by 2031, and also aims to ensure that First Nations people are well represented in the health-sector's workforce.

Cathedral School student and Townsville Hospital and Health Service paediatric cardiology patient Carcia Nallajar described herself as an 'advocate' for the goals outlined in the document, saying she had seen the impact disparities in the health sector could have while growing up with a rheumatic heart disease on Palm Island.

"I have to have an injection every 28 days to prevent my heart from attacking itself, essentially," Carcia said.

"This could unite all of us under one umbrella. We want to eliminate racism and inequality and make sure everyone has the best chance possible in health."

