



## Message from the BLMA President

*Dr Manoj Bhatt*

## Upcoming Events

*in 2026*

**Thurs 23 April** – All member event.

Venue: Sofitel Brisbane  
Time: 6:30pm for 7:00pm start

**Wed 13 May** – DiT Event

**Thurs 11 June** – All member event

**Thurs 20 August** – Avant & BLMA Medico-Legal Symposium / All member event

**Thurs 8 October** – All member event

**Wed 25 November** – End of year celebration / All member event

It is an honour to write to you as the newly elected President of the Brisbane Local Medical Association (BLMA). As a fellow clinician who has also trained in management (MBA) and governance (GAICD), I see this role first and foremost as a **privilege** to serve – to listen carefully, build consensus and help our Association continue to thrive in a rapidly changing health landscape.

Our story is a long one. It is humbling to follow in the footsteps of Dr Bob Brown, who led for 19 years, and Dr Hasthika Ellepola, who has steered BLMA so ably over the last three years. I am also deeply grateful to Dr Dilip Dhupelia for his strategic vision and mentorship, and to our current committee – especially Hasthika and our Vice President, Dr Andrew Cronin – for their trust and support.

Since joining BLMA in 2022, I have had the privilege of serving as Treasurer for the past two years. During this time, we have strengthened our financial position and become a more resilient, viable LMA. This has been achieved through straightforward but important measures such as clear financial policies, diligent oversight and ensuring memberships are current and appropriately recorded, all supported by the hard work of our Management Committee and the loyalty of our sponsors.

Looking ahead, I would like to leave my own mark on the organisation in a way that remains faithful to our history but also looks decisively to the future. My leadership approach will be grounded in service, transparency and collaboration.

**Where do we go from here? I have 3 goals for the coming year.**

**Membership** – There is strength in numbers. A broader and more active membership allows us to sustain high-quality educational meetings, attract strong sponsors and create richer professional networks.

**Education and innovation** – Education will remain at the heart of BLMA, but we must also embrace emerging areas. Alongside our strong clinical program and trainee-focused sessions, I hope to introduce more content on AI in medicine, cybersecurity and ethics –

practical, case-based sessions that help us navigate new technologies, data security and complex decision-making in everyday practice.

**Promoting Indigenous and migrant health** – This is the new area of focus I wish to introduce for this organisation and this group of professionals. I would like BLMA to play a visible role in closing the health gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from migrant background. Our sponsor, Mater already has 'Refugee and multicultural health' program (<https://www.mater.org.au/health-services/our-services/refugee-health>). Avant has similar programs (<https://avant.org.au/foundation/walking-the-healing-path-a-vision-for-mob-and-medicine>).

I hope to work on this important initiative with our sponsors and colleagues.

I welcome every member to be involved in this great organisation of ours. I have 3 requests for our members -

**1. Grow our membership** - I invite each member to participate in a "member-gets-member" effort: commit to introducing at least one new colleague to BLMA this year.

**2. Share Speakers and ideas** – Many of our most successful sessions have come from member suggestions. If you have an educational topic, a potential speaker or a sponsor who shares our values.

**3. Show up and participate** – I know how busy your professional and personal lives are. Yet your presence is what transforms an educational evening into a community. I encourage each of you to make a personal commitment to attend as many BLMA events as you can, to contribute to discussion and to welcome newer members into the fold.

Our predecessors have laid the foundations of a strong and vibrant BLMA. With your support, I am confident we can build on that legacy, deepen our impact in Indigenous and migrant health, and equip our members for the challenges and opportunities ahead. I am humbled by the trust you have placed in me and look forward to serving you in the year to come.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Message from the BLMA President
- 4 Your 2026 Management Committee
- 6 Save the Date: GP Neurosurgery Education Day
- 7 Meet a Committee Member: Dr Dulanthi Tudawe
- 8 Breaking Barriers: How AMA Queensland doctors are working for reforms to veteran health care
- 10 Report on ATAGI discussions
- 12 Free menopause training and support resources for GPs, nurses and midwives
- 13 Introducing the AMA Queensland Education and Training Institute (AMAQETI)
- 14 AMA medical student scholarships
- 15 Medicare mental health phone service
- 16 AMA latest wins, president and CEO update
- 19 Event wrap up

## CONTACTS

**President:**

Dr Manoj Bhatt

**Vice President:**

Dr Hasthika Ellepola

**Treasurer:**

Dr Andrew Cronin

**Deputy Treasurer:**

Dr Dulanthi Tudawe

**Secretary:**

Dr Felicity Jensen

**Committee Member:**

Dr Dilip Dhupelia

**Committee Member:**

Dr Gail Tsang

**Council of Training**

**Doctors Chair/Newsletter**

**Editor:**

Dr Herjot Gill

**Council of Training**

**Doctors Member/**

**Website Editor:**

Dr Holly Dignan

**Council of Training**

**Doctors Member:**

Dr Binuri Attanayke

**Council of Training**

**Doctors Member:**

Dr Alessandra Birbeck

**Council of Training**

**Doctors Member:**

Dr Mira Prashar

For general enquiries and all editorial or advertising contributions and costs, please contact:

**Renee O'Brien**

**Email:** [info@brisbanelma.org](mailto:info@brisbanelma.org)

**Phone:** 07 3872 2248

The Brisbane Local Medical Association welcomes contributions from members, especially "Letters to the Editor".

**Please address all correspondence to:**

**Dr Herjot Gill**

**Email:** [info@brisbanelma.org](mailto:info@brisbanelma.org)

## Issue 21 | 2026 Newsletter

**Content Deadline:**

**24<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

- ▶ Would you like to comment or suggest articles to be published?
- ▶ What would you like to see in the newsletter?

Our circulation via email, online and by post, reaches medical practitioners all over Brisbane!

**Contact:** Dr Herjot Gill

**Email:** [info@brisbanelma.org](mailto:info@brisbanelma.org)



## Are You a Member?

If you are not a member, please complete the application available on our website:



[info@brisbanelma.org](mailto:info@brisbanelma.org)

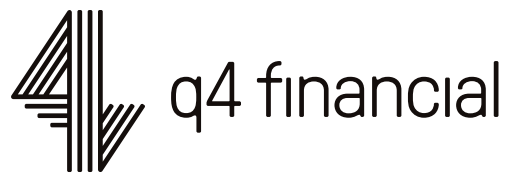
**Enquiries:** Dr Manoj Bhatt  
[drmkbhatt@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:drmkbhatt@yahoo.co.uk)

Are you listed on the Members Only Directory on our website? Are your details correct?

**Directory form is available on the website.**

*Disclaimer: The views expressed by the authors or articles in 'Synapse: Newsletter of the Brisbane Local Medical Association' are not necessarily those of the Brisbane Local Medical Association Inc. The Brisbane Local Medical Association Inc. accepts no responsibility for errors, omissions or inaccuracies contained therein or for the consequences of any action taken by any person as a result of anything contained in this publication.*

BLMA is proudly supported by our partners:



Visit our website

[brisanelma.org](http://brisanelma.org)

Keep up to date with latest news  
and BLMA events at your fingertips!

Follow BLMA on:

Facebook



Instagram



## Your 2026 Management Committee



**President:**  
Dr Manoj Bhatt



**Vice President:**  
Dr Hasthika Ellepola



**Treasurer:**  
Dr Andrew Cronin



**Deputy Treasurer:**  
Dr Dulanthi Tudawe



**Secretary:**  
Dr Felicity Jensen



**Committee Member:**  
Dr Dilip Dhupelia



**Committee Member:**  
Dr Gail Tsang

## 2026 BLMA Council of Doctors in Training



**Council of Training  
Doctors Chair/  
Newsletter Editor:**  
Dr Herjot Gill



**Council of Training  
Doctors Member/  
Website Editor:**  
Dr Holly Dignan



**Council of Training  
Doctors Member:**  
Dr Mira Prashar



**Council of Training  
Doctors Member:**  
Dr Binuri Attanayke



**Council of Training  
Doctors Member:**  
Dr Alessandra Birbeck



## Save the Date: GP Neurosurgery Education Day

Briz Brain & Spine is pleased to announce that our annual GP Education Conference will be held on Saturday 9 May 2026 at the Sofitel Brisbane Central. This full-day meeting is designed specifically for general practitioners, with a

strong focus on practical, real-world cases and meaningful opportunities to connect with colleagues.

The 2026 theme, "Symptoms to Surgery: The GP Guide to Brain and Spine," will guide attendees through the full patient journey – from first presentation in primary care to specialist referral, surgical intervention and post-operative care. Sessions will cover back and neck pain, headaches and seizures, degenerative spine conditions, neurosurgical emergencies, movement disorders, facial pain and peripheral nerve syndromes. Interactive case discussions and

an open panel Q&A will allow GPs to clarify referral pathways and management decisions with confidence.

The conference will provide 6.5 CPD hours and is free to attend, with optional accommodation available. A networking cocktail event will follow the day's program, offering a relaxed setting to engage with fellow GPs and speakers.

Registration opens soon – save the date. Further information can be found at [www.brizbrain.com.au](http://www.brizbrain.com.au)



**Briz Brain & Spine**

**6.5**

CPD HOURS  
(RACGP)

# GP CONFERENCE

**9 MAY 2026, THE SOFTEL, BRISBANE CENTRAL**

**"Symptoms to Surgery - The GP Guide to Brain & Spine"**

Join Briz Brain & Spine specialists and guest speakers for a full-day update on the neurosurgical conditions most relevant to general practice. Through practical presentations and real-world case discussions, you'll gain confidence in recognising red flags, interpreting imaging and knowing when - and how - to refer.

**REGISTRATION OPENS SOON - FREE TO ATTEND**

ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE - \$345 PER NIGHT  
SCAN QR CODE TO BOOK



**SCAN ME**

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

## Meet a Committee Member

### Dr Dulanthi Tudawe



**Dr Dulanthi Tudawe**  
BLMA Committee Member

**Dr Dulanthi Tudawe** is an obstetrician, gynaecologist, and fertility specialist based in Brisbane and a **current committee member and Deputy Treasurer of the Brisbane Local Medical Association.**

She is a Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (FRANZCOG) and works across both the public and private health sectors. Dr Tudawe works part-time as a Staff Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Logan Hospital, and practises privately as a Gynaecologist and Fertility Specialist with City Fertility.

A significant focus of Dr Tudawe's public hospital work involves providing patient-centred antenatal care to culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee women who are new to Australia. She works closely within multidisciplinary teams—collaborating with social workers, interpreters, midwives, and allied health professionals—to support women and families through all aspects of pregnancy, birth, and navigating the Australian healthcare system.

Dr Tudawe has a strong interest in professional collaboration and is passionate about working together to build connected, supportive networks of doctors across Brisbane. Through her role with the BLMA, she is committed to fostering collegiality, strengthening professional relationships, and supporting the wellbeing and sustainability of the local medical workforce.

She also contributes to statewide clinical governance and quality improvement. Dr Tudawe has been involved in working committees developing Queensland-wide Adolescent Gynaecology Guidelines and is currently **Deputy Chair of the Clinical Standards Committee for Heavy Menstrual Bleeding with Clinical Excellence Queensland.**

In addition to her clinical and committee roles, Dr Tudawe is deeply committed to medical education. She has a particular passion for teaching reproductive medicine and mentoring doctors through the selection and examination processes of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, supporting the next generation of specialists through education, coaching, and advocacy.

# Breaking barriers: How AMA Queensland doctors are working for reforms to veteran health care

## **Original publication: Doctor Q – AMA Queensland**

Navigating the labyrinth that veteran health care has become is often more complex than the conditions suffered after years of military service. This inequity and injustice has driven AMA Queensland members dedicated to veteran care to mount their own quiet but determined campaigns in the corridors of power.

Dr Imran Kajani is an AMA Queensland Councillor and GP who has devoted himself to veteran health care and reforming the systems he sees harm his patients far too often.

“What keeps me showing up is seeing the relief veterans feel once they are no longer trying to navigate the system alone,” Dr Kajani said.

“Our doctors, nurses and support staff take the time to listen, explain and advocate. That time matters.”

For Dr Kajani, joining AMA Queensland Council was a natural extension of his clinical work – a way to pursue system level change that could never be achieved from a consulting room. “I have come to see this work through the lens of Kaizen – small, continuous improvements that compound over time and lead to meaningful change,” he reflects. “Effective advocacy in veteran health is rarely loud. It is careful, accurate and persistent.”

This advocacy takes many forms: meeting with local MPs, engaging

politicians with military ties, and collaborating with like minded organisations to press for reform. And every step counts when the stakes are high. AMA Queensland’s 2023 analysis showed Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) rates sitting, on average, at just 49% of WorkCover rates for key GP items – far below parity and a powerful disincentive for doctors to continue providing veteran care.

It is for these reasons that AMA Queensland has, for several years, highlighted that DVA rates have failed to keep pace with comparable schemes. The association has raised the issue repeatedly with the department, the minister and the Queensland Premier in his capacity as Minister for Veterans – advocacy that supported members who described their distress at the impact of low rebates and nonsensical processes on both clinicians and the veterans they care for.

Among those members are Dr Kajani and fellow AMA Queensland member, veteran and rural generalist Dr Andrew Cronin. Dr Cronin first worked as an aeronautical engineer in the RAAF before studying medicine and completing rural generalist training, RACGP fellowship and GP anaesthetist qualifications. Having worked with LifeFlight, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and in aeromedical retrievals, he is now training in occupational medicine to expand the care he can provide to veterans.

“Occupational medicine is forensic in nature, involving diagnosis, causation, linkages to injuries, treatment and return to work,” he explains. “I particularly enjoy the diagnosis and causation aspects. I enjoy the work, patient interactions and human connection with both clinic staff and patients.”

But like many of his colleagues, he sees how invisible the extra labour can be. “The significant amount of extra, after hours work involved in achieving results for patients is often unseen, as are the intricacies and complexities of running a small business in Australia.” In veteran health specifically, he believes wholesale reform of the legal system – particularly medical negligence – is overdue.

Dr Kajani’s path into medicine was similarly shaped by early influences. “I wanted to make a practical contribution to my community from an early stage. I saw the long term impact of my father’s military service and also his role as a GP in a rural South Australian town. General practice felt like a natural fit. Broad scope. Long-term relationships. Direct community impact.” His focus on veteran health sharpened further after partnering with a former serviceman who had navigated the compensation system and recognised how it could be simplified. Since then, he has worked to advocate for meaningful reform.

AMA Queensland's advocacy has complemented these individual efforts. In October last year, following earlier warnings about inadequate DVA rates and the resulting decline in clinician participation, the association condemned blunt compliance changes and generic warning notices issued by DVA that threatened restrictions and even referrals to the Australian Federal Police. These actions caused deep distress among doctors and, in some cases, forced practices to close – outcomes that clearly jeopardised continuity of care for veterans.

DVA's responses during this period reflected the frustration clinicians felt with its systems: pointing to meagre measures such as the tripling of the Veterans' Access Payment in November 2023 and minor indexation, when doctors and veterans know the situation demands

far more than incremental change. This limited approach has persisted despite the government's 2024 response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which committed to implementing the majority of the Commission's recommendations.

As Queensland's peak body for the profession, AMA Queensland knows doctors and patients are overwhelmingly dissatisfied not only with the health system but with the broader frameworks that shape their lives. Clinicians and patients face an impersonal and often retraumatising system that denies essential care and leaves both groups dismayed and powerless.

For frontline doctors, the stakes are deeply personal. "The medical work is rarely the hardest part," Dr Kajani says. "The real challenge

lies in translating clinical reality into legislative and administrative frameworks that were not designed with clinicians or patients in mind." Dr Cronin reports the same frustrations but also highlights the privilege of changing patients' lives and creating employment and opportunities within the health sector.

Alongside dedicated practitioners like Dr Kajani and Dr Cronin, AMA Queensland will continue advocating to the Australian Government for a more human system for veterans and their doctors. By doing so, we can help strengthen the broader health system for everyone.

***Dr Kanajani Imran***  
***AMA Queensland Councillor and GP***

***Dr Andrew Cronin***  
***Veteran and rural generalist***



2026

Australian  
Rheumatology  
Association

Annual Scientific Meeting  
Gold Coast, Queensland  
16 – 19 May 2026





Australian Government

Department of Health,  
Disability and Ageing

## AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON IMMUNISATION (ATAGI)

REPORT ON ATAGI DISCUSSIONS, NOVEMBER 2025  
For General Practitioners

Issue date: 28 November 2025

Prepared by Assoc.Prof. Penny Burns and Dr Alan Leeb

### Key updates:

At the most recent meeting of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) in November 2025, several key issues were discussed:

#### A decline in global and Australian immunisation coverage post COVID was observed, leading to:

- ▶ An increased risk of infectious disease outbreaks locally and exposure related to overseas travel.
- ▶ An increasing risk of measles cases and local outbreaks.
- ▶ The highest rates of pertussis cases since the pandemic.
- ▶ A large number of under-vaccinated Australians.
- ▶ Children being at a high risk of pertussis and measles.

#### 2025 was a notable influenza season:

- ▶ Highest notifications of influenza on record with high inter-seasonal activity.

#### A new influenza product, LAIV (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine) FluMist® will be available in 2026:

- ▶ An intranasal influenza vaccine approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for 2–17-year-olds.
- ▶ Not approved for 18–49 years old due to a lack of studies supporting effectiveness.
- ▶ There will be state based programs for 2026 in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia (also available on the private market in 2026).
- ▶ Used extensively overseas – since 2003 in the United States of America and since 2013 in the United Kingdom in school-based programs.
- ▶ Delivered by one spray in each nostril.
- ▶ No exacerbation of asthma/ wheeze.

### How can GPs assist?

- ▶ Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) catch-up is now funded for all adults born from 1966 onwards who have less than 2 doses on the Australian Immunisation Register.
- ▶ Infants over 6 months who are travelling internationally are now funded to have an additional MMR dose.
- ▶ Ensure timeliness of childhood and maternal vaccinations.
- ▶ Opportunistic review of every patient's vaccination status.

### Where can I get more information?

- ▶ Australian Immunisation Handbook updates on current vaccines  
[www.immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au](http://www.immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au).
- ▶ NCIRS website for immunisation updates including coverage reports  
[www.ncirs.org.au](http://www.ncirs.org.au)
- ▶ LAIV report UK  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/which-flu-vaccine-should-children-have/flu-vaccines-for-children-and-young-people](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/which-flu-vaccine-should-children-have/flu-vaccines-for-children-and-young-people)



# Mater at Home Direct

Mater at Home Direct provides an alternate referral pathway to ED, offering same day visits for acute presentations, delivered by a multidisciplinary team of medical, nursing and allied health professionals.



## Monday to Friday

All referrals seen by a Clinical Nurse with either face to face or telehealth medical consult available for complete comprehensive assessments including:

- ECG's
- Point of care pathology
- Commence/administer furosemide, POAB's IVAB's
- IDC/SPC trouble shooting and changes
- Wound care

## Weekends

Nurse only visits available for:

- Wound care
- IDC/SPC management



Adult patients residing in Metro South & West Moreton Health Services within 35km from Mater Hospital



Call **0435 431 114**  
to refer  
0800 - 1600 hrs



## Sports & Spinal Group

With 25 practices located across the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Gold Coast, and Fraser Coast, Sports & Spinal Group is your trusted allied health provider.

Our multidisciplinary team offers quality services, including;

- ✓ PHYSIOTHERAPY
- ✓ EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY
- ✓ PODIATRY
- ✓ REMEDIAL MASSAGE
- ✓ WOMEN'S HEALTH
- ✓ PSYCHOLOGY
- ✓ DIETETICS
- ✓ PILATES & GYM CLASSES

+ All of our locations utilise VALD Technology

REFERRALS CAN BE MADE VIA MEDICAL OBJECTS, FAX OR PHONE.



Medical Objects



[www.sportsandspinalphysio.com.au/referrers](http://www.sportsandspinalphysio.com.au/referrers)



# Free menopause training and support resources for GPs, nurses and midwives

## Brisbane South PHN

Through funding from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, Jean Hailes for Women's Health in partnership with the Australasian Menopause Society (AMS) are delivering training and resources that assist healthcare practitioners in treating, caring for and managing the health of patients during perimenopause and menopause.

This menopause education program includes free 2 online courses designed to help general practitioners (GPs), nurses and midwives, improve their management and understanding of menopause.



## Free menopause and perimenopause education For general practitioners (GPs):

The online managing menopause in general practice course is designed to help GPs stay up to date with the latest evidence around the management of menopause symptoms, so they can feel confident when providing patient-centred care.

The course is self-paced, online, and takes approximately 2 hours to complete.

At the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- ▶ identify the stages of perimenopause and menopause, the variations of experience and presenting symptoms
- ▶ integrate evidence-based advice on lifestyle and healthy ageing in menopause consultations
- ▶ analyse the up-to-date evidence for non-hormonal therapies for menopause
- ▶ describe the benefits and risks of menopausal hormone therapy (MHT), and the full range of MHT options currently available in Australia.

The 'managing menopause in general practice' course is a RACGP Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and ACRRM Professional Development Program (PDP) accredited activity.

For further CPD information, assessment details, participant testimonials, please visit the Jean Hailes website.

Register for the 'managing menopause in general practice' course.

## More resources for healthcare practitioners

The Australasian Menopause Society resources for healthcare practitioners:

- ▶ Practitioner's Toolkit for the Management of the Menopause
- ▶ Toolkits, clinical guidelines, factsheets, webinars.

## More support for healthcare practitioners

- ▶ For primary care assessment and management of menopause, see Brisbane South HealthPathways
- ▶ See assessment and management advice for menopause hormone therapy (MHT) on Brisbane South HealthPathways.

## Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinic: Symptom management for perimenopause and menopause

Oxley Medical and Dental Centre is an Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinic (EPPC) that works to reduce diagnosis timeframes and provide better care and pain management for patients suffering from menopause, perimenopause, endometriosis, pelvic pain and other chronic pelvic pain conditions.

Oxley Medical and Dental Centre provide menopause services that deliver a holistic assessment of every patient regardless of their stage and phase in the menopause journey.

Patients do not require a diagnosis or referral to be treated at the clinic.

Visit the Oxley Medical and Dental Centre website.



## Introducing the AMA Queensland Education and Training Institute (AMAQETI)



Queensland's health workforce is navigating one of the most challenging periods in recent memory. Rising demand, increasing complexity of care, regional workforce shortages, and ongoing system reform are reshaping the way health services operate. These pressures are not felt by one profession, they are shared across doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, managers, and support teams.

To support the sector through this period of transformation, AMA Queensland has established the AMA Queensland Education and Training Institute (AMAQETI) Registered Training Organisation, an initiative focused on strengthening capability across the health workforce and contributing to a more sustainable, integrated system.

AMAQETI was created with a clear purpose: to build capability that complements clinical training and supports the entire health workforce to adapt, lead, and thrive. While clinical skills remain essential, today's health environment demands broader competencies, including leadership, communication, digital literacy,

resilience, collaboration, and an understanding of how the system functions. AMAQETI's programs are intentionally designed to bridge these gaps and provide training that supports realworld challenges in contemporary healthcare.

A central priority for AMAQETI is supporting workforce sustainability and helping reduce pressure across the sector. This aligns closely with the Queensland Government's system reform priorities, including more integrated care models, stronger community pathways, and improved service coordination. By offering training that strengthens leadership, enhances multidisciplinary collaboration, and improves the ability of teams to work effectively across service boundaries, AMAQETI contributes meaningfully to these reform efforts.

The AMAQETI's education and training offerings focus on several key areas designed to support the entire health workforce, this will include:

- ▶ Developing leadership and non clinical capability programs
- ▶ Expanding education pathways that enhance workforce readiness and retention

- ▶ Strengthening multidisciplinary training to improve service integration
- ▶ Delivering contemporary training aligned with digital health and system modernisation

Central to AMAQETI's philosophy is collaboration. The Institute works closely with health professionals, government and sector partners to ensure its programs respond to real needs that reflect current workforce pressures. This ongoing consultation helps AMAQETI remain agile, contemporary, and aligned to Queensland's longterm reform direction.

Ultimately, AMAQETI represents a shared investment in the future of Queensland's health workforce. By providing accessible, highimpact and relevant education, AMAQETI aims to strengthen capacity across the system and support professionals in delivering safe, highquality, sustainable care.

For more information about programs, partnerships, and opportunities to get involved, please visit our website [www.amaqeti.edu.au](http://www.amaqeti.edu.au) or call 07 5531 3738.

**AMA QUEENSLAND FOUNDATION**

**Medical Student Scholarships**

**Apply now**

Ann Vincent  
2025 IMAQ - AMA Qld  
Foundation SoS Scholarship  
Recipient

Noah Steel  
2025 Scholarship  
recipient

Alexandra Green  
2025 Scholarship  
recipient

Rheannon Griffin  
2025 Scholarship  
recipient

**Applications close  
20 March 2026, 5PM (AEST)**

## Help for medical students experiencing financial difficulties

Do you know a medical student who is struggling financially? The AMA Queensland Foundation’s annual Medical Student Scholarship is currently open for application. The scholarship will be awarded to up to four students in 2026. Chosen recipients will receive \$10,000 paid in two equal instalments to support them to continue their studies and reach their dreams of becoming

doctors. This initiative was made possible through the generosity of donors during our 2025 End of Financial Year tax appeal. If you know someone who may benefit from a \$10,000 scholarship, please share this with them. Applications close 5pm AEST Friday 20 March.

**AMA QUEENSLAND FOUNDATION** | **25 YEARS** 2000-2025

**Sponsor one Student (SoS)**

Partner with us to help a medical student in financial hardship reach their dream of becoming a doctor and serving the Queensland community.

**Find out more**

## Expressions of interest open Sponsor one Student (SoS) program.

Every year, the Foundation receives dozens more deserving scholarship applications than our annual fundraising can provide for. Through the Foundation’s Sponsor one Student (SoS) Program you can demonstrate your corporate responsibility or philanthropy by supporting a medical student who is experiencing financial difficulties. Open to individuals as well as corporations and other organisations, support in your name of \$10,000 in a single year, or a

commitment across multiple years, can make the world of difference to a future doctor who is unsure of how they might continue their studies. Together, we can ensure that Queensland’s future doctors are well supported, regardless of their financial background. If you’d like more information, please reach out to our team for a Prospectus: [amaqfoundation@amaq.com.au](mailto:amaqfoundation@amaq.com.au)

**medicare****Mental Health  
Check In**

## Medicare Mental Health Phone Service

*Article adapted from* <https://www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au/phone-service>

### Supporting Your Patients with Medicare Mental Health

As demand for mental health care continues to grow, timely access to appropriate services remains a key challenge in primary care. **Medicare Mental Health**, funded by the Australian Government, provides a free and confidential national phone service to assist patients – and support clinicians – in navigating the mental health system.

In a system where navigation can be complex and wait times challenging, Medicare Mental Health offers an additional pathway to support continuity of care and timely access for your patients.

### A Practical Resource for General Practice

Medicare Mental Health is available to:

- ▶ Patients seeking advice and support
- ▶ Family members and carers
- ▶ Health professionals requiring assistance with assessment and triage

The service can complement your clinical care by helping guide patients toward appropriate local services, including their nearest Medicare Mental Health centre or other trusted community-based providers.

### What the Service Offers

When patients (or referring clinicians) call **1800 595 212**, they will:

- ▶ Speak with a trained mental health professional and peer worker
- ▶ Receive support to clarify needs and next steps
- ▶ Be connected with services aligned to their clinical and psychosocial requirements

The phone line operates **Monday to Friday, 8:30am–5:00pm (excluding public holidays)** and is free of charge.

### Important Information

Medicare Mental Health is not a crisis service. Patients requiring urgent or emergency intervention should be directed to call **000** or access appropriate acute mental health services.

For further details, visit [medicarementalhealth.gov.au](https://www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au).





Dr Nick Yim  
AMA Queensland President



Dr Brett Dale  
AMA Queensland CEO



[amaq.com.au](http://amaq.com.au)

## AMA Queensland

# Latest wins: President and CEO update

**March 2026**

The days may still be warm, but summer is officially over, and our work to advocate for and deliver incredible services and events to our members is in full swing.

AMA Queensland has had an exciting development to start the year – the acquisition of our own Education and Training Institute. This initiative will combine high quality, industry-aligned education with the strength, credibility and extensive network of AMA Queensland, the state’s peak medical body for more than a century.

We listened with interest to Queensland Health Minister Tim Nicholls’ plan to “build and fill” our public hospitals, and highlighted the real cost to general practice from the federal government’s investment into Urgent Care Clinics.

We also celebrated the state government’s commitment to free influenza vaccines starting this month. This is another satisfying acknowledgement of our advocacy, and we’re calling for it to be made permanent.

## Advocacy

### Health Workforce

We were keen to hear what Health Minister Tim Nicholls had to say when he addressed the Queensland Media Club on Tuesday 17 February.

The Minister outlined the Crisafulli government’s priorities in health, highlighting the \$18.5 billion Hospital Rescue Plan.

He summarised the government’s plans with the phrase “build and fill” – that is, building the hospitals we need, and staffing them appropriately.

We had hoped the Minister would reveal more detail about the government’s plan to grow our health workforce – the key policy area AMA Queensland has been advocating for in recent years.

It wasn’t to be on that day, with the Minister telling those assembled the government’s workforce plan was still due later this year.

We told the media after the speech that we will continue to highlight the need for solid plans to recruit, train and retain the nearly-6000 doctors we need by 2032.

We reiterated that our own Workforce Action Plan – delivered to the government in July 2025 – is a profession-led, practical blueprint that we hope to see incorporated into the government’s workforce strategy.

[https://youtube.com/shorts/HyElyllpDn4?si=9\\_HmEJoIGGeqdmCo](https://youtube.com/shorts/HyElyllpDn4?si=9_HmEJoIGGeqdmCo)

## Urgent Care Clinics

An independent report into the federal government’s Urgent Care Clinics has found they are costly, contribute to workforce shortages and are not reducing pressure on our emergency departments.

We understand patients like these clinics, but we have been vocal in arguing that they are filling a gap that’s been left to widen by years of under-investment in Medicare.

We have been in the media discussing the true cost of UCCs, which is the demoralising and devaluing of our general

practitioners.

Every UCC visit costs the taxpayer \$206 on average, compared to just \$43.90 for the current Medicare rebate for a standard general practice appointment.

Not only are the planned 137 Urgent Care Clinics backed with a 100% government funding guarantee, but they're also competing for doctors and nurses in a constrained workforce environment.

It's little wonder our general practitioners feel undermined and unsupported by Canberra.

We will continue advocating for an increase in Medicare rebates to give all Australians access to the healthcare they deserve, and to back primary care GPs to stay financially viable.

Read more

<https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/Media-releases/2026-Media-Releases/Devalued-and-demoralised-true-cost-of-Urgent-Care-Clinics.aspx>

## E-scooters, e-bikes and e-motorbikes

The Queensland parliamentary inquiry into e-mobility devices has reportedly finished its work early.

We made a submission to this inquiry, highlighting the traumatic injuries our emergency doctors are seeing all too often in riders, including children and teenagers.

An article in The Guardian suggested the inquiry may implement our recommendation of banning 12 to 16-year-olds from riding e-scooters and e-bikes. This would be a welcome move.

The article further suggested riders will be required to have at least a learner's permit.

AMA Queensland's submission did not contain any recommendations around licensing. We did urge the

continued investment into driver and rider education, protective equipment and infrastructure to support safe use of active transport options.

[https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/News\\_articles/2026-News/Under%2016s%20may%20be%20banned%20from%20e-bikes%20and%20e-scooters.aspx](https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/News_articles/2026-News/Under%2016s%20may%20be%20banned%20from%20e-bikes%20and%20e-scooters.aspx)

## Free flu vaccinations

The start of March marked the start of this year's free flu vaccination program.

We applaud the Queensland government for committing to free flu shots for all – as well as the innovative new FluMist nasal spray vaccine for 2 to 5 year olds. This delivery system will give parents another option to protect their children, particularly ones unsure about needles.

Last year saw a jump in flu cases, but a drop in vaccination rates, the biggest since the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

It's imperative we turn this around in 2026. We've already seen a summer flu spike brought on by the Subclade K branch of H3N2 influenza, so we need to roll up our own sleeves, and encourage our patients, co-workers, friends and family to do the same.

We were pleased that new Chief Health Officer Dr Marianne Gale told us boosting vaccination rates was her priority coming into the role.

We look forward to working together to increase take-up of this easy and effective way of keeping the community safe and reducing strain on our emergency departments.

We believe the yearly flu vaccination should be included on the National Immunisation Program for all Australians, and are happy to work with the government to advocate for this. Until that happens, we believe the Queensland government should commit to permanently funding it.

<https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/Media-releases/2026-Media-Releases/Free-flu-vaccines-welcome-time-to-make-permanent.aspx>

## News

### AMA Queensland Education and Training Institute

2026 marks a new era for AMA Queensland, with the introduction of our own Education and Training Institute.

This is an evolution of Grayclay International College – one of Australia's trusted providers of nationally recognised health and business qualifications.

The new Institute will deliver practical, job-ready training designed to uplift the capability of healthcare teams across Queensland.

Our programs are ideally suited to doctors and practice owners, allied health professionals, clinic and practice managers, reception and administrative teams, emerging leaders in health workplaces and more.

Ensuring the sustainability of AMA Queensland for our members is critical, and our Education and Training Institute will allow our unrivalled network to add depth to high-quality, nationally-recognised training for the healthcare ecosystem.

[https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/News\\_articles/2026-News/Introducing-the-AMA-Queensland-Education-and-Training-Institute.aspx](https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/News_articles/2026-News/Introducing-the-AMA-Queensland-Education-and-Training-Institute.aspx)

### Private health insurance premiums

Australia's private health insurance landscape is set to shift again at the start of April, with the federal

government approving an average 4.4% premium increase.

This news is always frustrating for Australians already struggling with the cost of living.

AMA Queensland has long called for an independent pricing authority to ensure accountability and transparency.

Having a robust private health sector is necessary to ensure options for patients and opportunities for doctors.

But confusion over prices and other issues like out-of-pocket expenses, waiting times and gaps in coverage can lead to people altering their plans, or dropping them altogether.

This puts more patients back into the public system and onto waiting lists.

We urge Australians to take some time before 1 April to review their coverage and compare with other providers to ensure they're getting the best possible deal.

[https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/News\\_articles/2026-News/painful-price-hike-for-private-health-premiums.aspx](https://www.amaq.com.au/Web/News/News_articles/2026-News/painful-price-hike-for-private-health-premiums.aspx)

### Upcoming events

#### *Dinner for the Profession*

Our black-tie gala will take place on Friday 5 June, with Blackbird Bar and Grill in Brisbane to be transformed into breathtaking green for our "Enchanted Forest" theme.

Master of Ceremonies Dr Chadden Hunter will immerse guests in the wilds of nature, with stories and images from his 20 years' experience filming documentaries alongside the one and only Sir David Attenborough.

This gala will also honour AMA Queensland members who've contributed so much to our profession. We recommend registering for tickets or a table early to avoid missing out.

#### *Annual Conference*

AMA Queensland remains unique in our yearly offering of an incredible annual conference in a fantastic overseas destination.

In 2026 we're heading to Copenhagen for six days of expert talks, site visits, historical intrigue and plenty of smørrebrød.

Join us from 20-26 September in the remarkable Danish capital.



# AMA QUEENSLAND ROADSHOW

BUILDING YOUR WEALTH

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS



## 2026 AGM & First Education Dinner – Event Wrap-Up

On Wednesday 25th February 2026, members gathered at the Amora Hotel Brisbane for our 2026 Annual General Meeting and First Education Dinner. The evening brought together colleagues for insightful education sessions, and the celebration of leadership within our association.

### Thank You to Our Sponsors

We sincerely thank our valued sponsors, GenesisCare and Mater Health for their generous support of this event. Their partnership enables us to continue delivering high-quality educational programs and meaningful networking opportunities for our members.

### Annual General Meeting Highlights

The AGM included presentation of the 2025 Audited Financial Report, the Presidential Report, and the election of new Committee Members and Office Bearers.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Dr Hasthika Ellepola for his outstanding leadership and guidance over the past several years as President. His commitment and dedication have played a significant role in strengthening our organisation, and we thank him for his service as he steps down from the Presidency.

### 2026 Committee Appointments

We are pleased to announce the newly elected Committee:

President – Dr Manoj Bhatt

Vice President – Dr Hasthika Ellepola

Secretary – Dr Felicity Jensen

Treasurer – Dr Andrew Cronin

Committee Members – Dr Dilip Dhupelia, Dr Gail Tsang, Dr Dulanthi Tudawe

We look forward to their leadership in the year ahead.

### Launch of the Council of Training Doctors (CTD)

With strong interest from our junior members this year, we are proud to introduce the newly established Council of Training Doctors:

Council Chair / Newsletter Editor – Dr Herjot Gill

Council Member / Website Editor – Dr Holly Dignan

Council Members – Dr Binuri Attanayake, Dr Alessandra Birbeck, Dr Mira Prashar

This initiative represents an exciting step toward greater engagement, representation, and professional

development opportunities for our Doctors in Training.

### Committee Farewells

We also farewelled Dr Janet Draper, Dr Jennifer Schafer and Dr Bruce Wang thanking them for their valuable contributions to the BLMA Committee. Their dedication and service have been greatly appreciated.

### Education Session Highlights

Following the AGM, members enjoyed a high-quality educational program featuring expert speakers:

#### Topic 1: “Low Dose Radiotherapy for Osteoarthritis”

Presented by Dr David Schlect (Radiation Oncologist, Genesis Care)

An informative session exploring emerging evidence and practical considerations in the use of low-dose radiotherapy for osteoarthritis management.

#### Topic 2: “PAS: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”

Presented by Dr Sam Davies (Urologist, Mater Health)

A thought-provoking and engaging discussion highlighting clinical realities, challenges, and lessons learned in regard to PSA use.



**Topic 3: “Introducing the AMA Queensland Education and Training Institute RTO 45101 – GPTQ/AMAQ RTO”**

Presented by Dr Paul Kulpa, AMAQ

An overview of new education and training opportunities available through the institute.

**Topic 4: “AMAQ President Candidate”**

Presented by Dr Erica Gannon, AMAQ Director and BLMA member

An introduction and address outlining her vision and priorities if she is successful in the forthcoming AMAQ elections.

**An Evening of Connection**

Beyond the formal proceedings, the evening provided valuable opportunities for networking, collegiality, and collaboration. It was wonderful to see members reconnecting, welcoming new colleagues, and engaging in lively professional discussions.

**Looking Ahead**

Our next Dinner Education Event will be held on 23rd April 2026. Further details will be shared soon – we look forward to seeing you there!

Thank you to all members who attended and contributed to making the evening such a success. We are excited for the year ahead and the continued growth of our association.

