



2025 South East Queensland First Nations Health Equity Conference

Partnering to improve health outcomes for First Nations people in prison

Workshop summary

The Expanding Shared Workforce Opportunities workshop was held on 23 October 2025: day 1 of the SEQ First Nations Health Equity In Action Conference, 2025.

The workshop was facilitated by Shea Spierings, Director, Knowledge and Research Centre, IUIH.



Workshop purpose

The workshop encouraged participants to reflect on healthcare provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in or on release from prison or Youth Detention in SEQ, and to explore what more can we do, collectively, to improve health and wellbeing, ensure continuity of care, and help reduce the likelihood of future involvement with the criminal justice system.

Workshop attendees

Approximately 40 people attended with representatives from the SEQ First Nations Health Equity Partners, Queensland Health Office for Prisoner Health and Wellbeing, Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support, and West Moreton Hospital and Health Service.

What we heard

Participants workshoped barriers and opportunities to support better access for First Nations people to health and other services before, during and after time in youth detention or adult prison – one group even mapped an ideal patient journey! A panel also shared their experiences and observations working within or supporting those in contact with the youth and adult justice systems.

A small selection of the insights, feedback and innovative thinking from the yarns is captured here.

Barriers and challenges

Cultural safety	Systemic Issues	Other
- Limited understanding of culture, connection, language. - Shame and trust impacting engagement. - No remuneration for cultural expertise.	- Lack of information and clear processes. - Risk adverse policies - Inconsistent governance. - Funding/funding model	- Generational incarceration. - Staff burnout. - Staff not supported to connect systems.

Aspirations and opportunities

Short term	Medium term	Long term
• Cultural Safety: Engage Elders, those with lived experience, respect cultural protocols, and reduce stigma. • Visibility of referral pathways and discharge summaries. • Upskilling for prison health staff e.g., spirometry, mobile CT. • Accelerate, scale and spread roll out of culturally appropriate Health / Mental Health assessments.	• Programs/services start earlier (at watchhouse). • Virtual care into custodial settings. • Holistic models of care across settings. • A culturally capable workforce. • Linked systems and shared platforms for continuity of care.	• Universal digital system. • Adequate and consistent funding across prisons. • Flexible modes of service delivery. • Specialised and remunerated training for health staff working in prisons. • A health care quality and safety lens is applied to how care is provided.

What we'll do next

Establish projects, based on opportunities discussed at the workshop, to improve care and care transition in youth detention and in Men's facilities and women's facilities.

Thank you

We thank the following people for presenting and for participating in panel discussions at this workshop:

- Dawn Schofield, Executive Director, Strategy and Partnerships, IUIH
- Jarryd Stanley, Senior Mental Health Clinician, Forensic Child & Youth Mental Health Services, Children's Health Queensland
- Kristie Hayes, Executive Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services, Gold Coast HHS
- Luke Duffill - A/Assistant Director of Nursing, Prison and Youth Detention Health Services, West Moreton Health.
- Wayne Ah Boo, CEO, IUIH

On behalf of the SEQ First Nations Health Equity Governance Committee, we thank all participants in this workshop. Your contribution has invaluable as we move forward together, with energy, optimism, and intent to achieve health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in South East Queensland.

