
Partnering with Palm Island First Nations community to deliver COVID-19 care on country

Initiative Type

Service Improvement

Status

Deliver

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Summary

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Townsville Hospital and Health Service (HHS) and its partners' aim was to keep the remote indigenous community of Palm Island safe while also keeping

connection to country strong. The challenge was to prepare and enact an effective COVID-19 response which considered the limited access to the Island, transience of the community, varying levels of health literacy and overcrowding. We had to ensure a strong focus on the First Nations people's connection to culture, country, family, and community, whilst maintaining the community's safety during a COVID surge. The first COVID-19 case on Palm Island was identified on December 31. Since then, we have worked with all the agencies on Palm Island, both public and private organisations and local, grassroots businesses to ensure effective communication and delivery of services. Partnership with the Palm Island Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), Mayor and CEO have been key to understanding their community and delivering effectively.

Key dates

Jan 2021

Dec 2021

Implementation sites

Palm Island

Partnerships

Palm Island Mayor, Palm Island Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service, Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council, Palm Island Community Company (PICC), Local Disaster Management Group, Commonwealth Agencies, Public Health

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Aim

To keep the remote indigenous community of Palm Island safe from COVID-19 while also keeping connection to country strong.

Benefits

To date, it has been a successful COVID-19 response. Vaccination rates monitored locally due to the transient nature of the community indicates 85 per cent of Palm Island residents aged 16 and over have received one vaccination, and 76 per cent have received two and are fully vaccinated. 29 per cent have had their booster. In the most vulnerable group (66 and over) 93 per cent have had one dose and 89% have had two. 63 per cent have been boosted.

Background

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Townsville HHS decided early on that everything would be easier if you partner early, listen intently, and fit the health service delivery to the community you are serving.

Solutions Implemented

We tailored the Queensland Health virtual-ward model to enable extensive home support to families isolating. This was a statewide first, providing a local community-based health worker and a specialty trained nurse navigator to monitor COVID-19 positive patients and their family at homes. This allowed us to keep the community safe plus meet the community wishes of remaining in their homes on Palm Island by:

- shifting the position of isolate alone to isolate in your home with family or isolate in your community
- genuine engagement with community, 'start from what the community wants not what we are here to deliver'

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- providing the easiest possible access to testing and vaccination
 - arranging community led messaging from community leaders/elders

Evaluation and Results

Analysis is ongoing. Daily monitoring of data, trends, state directives as well as ongoing audit and debrief as part of the disaster management framework.

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