

MEDIA RELEASE

16/11/20

SANDY GILLIES ANNOUNCED AS THE NEW CEO OF THE WESTERN QLD PRIMARY HEALTH NETWORK

ON THE GROUND: Gunggari woman and Winton local to lead a health network covering almost a million square kilometres of Queensland ([CLICK HERE for drobox image of Sandy Gillies](#))

Strengthening primary care providers and harnessing the capacity of locals to improve the health of their own communities will be key priorities of the new CEO of the Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN), the commissioning body that funds primary health care services across Western Queensland.

Born and bred in outback Queensland, Sandy Gillies will lead the WQPHN from January 2021, making her the first Indigenous person to be appointed CEO to the 31 Primary Health Networks across Australia.

“There is a deep willingness in the West for people to work together and make things happen, regardless of their titles or their job description,” Ms Gillies said.

“What we can tap into as the WQPHN are the strengths of the region and willingness of Western Queenslanders to stay engaged, and adapt to changing and challenging circumstances, in order to achieve the health outcomes everyone wants for their communities.”

Schooled in Winton and Charleville, Sandy completed her enrolled nurses’ qualification which ignited her passion for primary health care and fostered a hands-on approach to her work.

“Outback nursing back then was a great introduction to the challenge of getting the most out of yourself as a clinician, and doing your best with the resources around you, which were often limited,” Sandy recalls.

“I think that experience, and my journey through the health system since, has helped me understand how to get the best out of local communities by empowering them to care for their own, through collaboration, co-design and a place-based approach to primary health care, because each community is unique.”

An Executive Manager with the WQPHN for the past 3 years, Sandy has over 25 years’ experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, starting as an Aboriginal Health Worker through to senior management roles in Indigenous health.

“Twenty per cent of the people in our patch are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, a population that experiences a disproportionate rate of poor health,” said WQPHN Chairperson Dallas Leon, a proud Kalkadoon and Wannyi man.

“Sandy already has a legacy of connecting with all communities across our region, but her track record of building relationships with our Indigenous cohort is outstanding, and we look forward to these relationships going from strength to strength under Sandy’s stewardship.”

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“I’d also like to acknowledge the work of outgoing CEO Stuart Gordon, whom we sincerely thank for his vision, commitment and passion for rural and remote health, expertly leading the implementation of our primary health care strategy since the organisation’s inception 5 years ago,” Mr Leon said.

REACTION FROM KEY STAKEHOLERS IN THE WEST

Andrew Martin
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council Mayor ([dropbox image](#))

“I welcome the appointment of Sandy to the CEO role. As a local, Sandy understands the demographic she works with and she’ll bring a great deal of energy to the marvellous work of the WQPHN in our region. She was instrumental in a recent pilot program that’s been very successful in supporting at-risk adolescent girls in my Shire. In short, she knows what to do and she knows how to do it.”

Renee Blackman
Gidgee Healing CEO ([dropbox image](#))

“It’s a great thing having a PHN that works with a region so genuinely. While we will miss Stuart, the appointment of Sandy Gillies will bring new engagement opportunities with our Indigenous communities and continues to demonstrate that steadfast commitment to our region.”

Dr Rosie Geraghty
Roma GP and WQPHN Clinical Council Chair ([dropbox image](#))

“It’s very pleasing to hear about the appointment of Sandy as the new CEO of the WQPHN. Having been involved with the PHN and being a long term resident of the West, Sandy understands the unique health challenges of our region and is in a great position to shape a much-needed and relevant response to those issues.”

Western Qld Primary Health Network (WQPHN) quick facts:

- commissions (or funds) health services in Western Queensland
- covers almost one million square kilometres of Queensland, 55% of the state’s total land area
- aligns health investment with demonstrated population health needs
- uses health intelligence data to orientate health services efficiently and effectively
- ensures the right primary health care is delivered, at the right time by the right provider
- advised by GPs and other health professionals and consumers
- one of 31 PHNs across Australia established and funded by the Commonwealth Government

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