



Update

July 2024

Hi everybody, there has been a long period of not much going on followed by a flurry of activity. This somewhat lengthy update should get you up to speed – settle in and catch up with the Health Hub going-ons. And (spoiler alert) if you know either a potential secretary or doctor who could visit the island, please let us know. Then renew your membership 😊

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Searching for a doctor...



web: <https://coochie-health-hub.org>

email: info@coochie-health-hub.org

President: Russell 0467 174 800

Secretary: PLEASE APPLY 😊



Update

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Committee changes

Elizabeth Rankin has stepped down as president, with Russell Austerberry accepting the role of president effective immediately. **We are now in need of a new Secretary**, so please let us know if you can help, or know someone we can approach.

Russell will continue with promotions, website updates and networking while the incoming secretary will be able to focus mainly on the members register, minutes and correspondence. Someone with a knack for summarising complex discussions would be ideal 😊.

Elizabeth will stay on as Vice-President which means we retain her invaluable expertise. Julie Vegter with a long nursing and management background has bolstered the committee as a general member, which means our committee is now:

- Russell Austerberry (President)
- Elizabeth Rankin (Vice-President)
- Andrew Syme (treasurer)
- Roxanne Algeo (general member)
- Julie Vegter (general member)

If you feel you could help in some way on the committee, please let us know.

Membership

If you took out an annual membership last year and would like to renew your support, please see attached a membership form. You can print it out and return to

[Coochie Health Hub, 1 Orange Grove St](#)

And if you haven't already become a member – please do! The more people we have on our list the better our case when arguing for more and better services on the island. Also, the more people we can ask for help or support as the need arises 😊

If you prefer you can fill out a membership online here: <https://coochie-health-hub.org/join>

AGM

It's that time of year – please come along to our AGM (short) followed by general meeting (also short) starting 10am Sunday 8th September at the Rec Club. Everyone will have left the building by noon.

Aged Care info day

We had some excellent input from a variety of speakers and organisations regarding My Aged Care on Coochie; that information is now mostly captured in our 'services' page on the website:

<https://coochie-health-hub.org/services>



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Bringing in a doctor

The story so far:

- Bruce Willett had a go at being an island doctor for about six months operating out of the SLSC room. The setup was not ideal – too hot, too cramped, spotty reception for internet, toilets a fair hike away, and waiting area not the best. But that wasn't the biggest issue (more on that later).
- Enter the Health Hub, identifying a couple of potential 'quick' solutions as downstairs room in Community Hall, or the store room at the Rec Club – which was the early favourite. But 'quick' turned to 'drawn out' with an ominous silence from council since late last year.
- Recently we connected with a senior leasing officer in council, got some traction and the application for using the store room in the Rec Club was 'back on'... but now it turns out the Rec Club actually needs that room after all. Sigh.
- Don't be mistaken - Rec Club is in fact very supportive of Health Hub. Their constitution now mentions medical services, they have offered us a place to set up transportable medical rooms, and if long-held desires of expanding the Rec Club facility itself come to pass the Health Hub will be in line for permanent rooms inside.
- SO.... Given we still need a doctor we are now re-examining the space downstairs in the Community Hall as a potential venue. The 'waiting room' is likely be a few chairs outside under the awning, there's a toilet nearby, a sink, and plenty of room inside for a consultation – and all we need to do is book and hire it from council, and pass those modest costs on to a visiting doctor.
- NOT SO FAST... Dr Bruce Willett has sold his share of the Good Doctors practice and while he remains supportive, he is no longer the actual doctor, nor the decision maker regarding who may come over – and is not sure it is in fact financially viable for a doctor to do so. His biggest problem when he was practising on the island...? No shows. People booking but not turning up. Combine that with the cost of a GP getting over and back, and the hours spent travelling rather than billing clients, and you can understand his concern.
- **THERE'S STILL HOPE.** we are currently working on our 'pitch' to potential doctors to make it as viable as possible to get someone over (**and if you know any doctors who may be interested please let us know**).
- Some factors which may help attract a doctor: (summarised here, more detail next page)
 - Coochie is 'remote' meaning more bulk bill incentives, and possibility of doctor under training/supervision being able to come here instead of beyond the black stump
 - John Buckley can help train/supervise if required
 - Health Hub may be able to help with secretarial or admin tasks
 - Health Hub can organise simple cheap venue hire



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- Coochie is remote enough to attract a higher level of the bulk billing incentive which means increased government funding if **doctors** choose to bulk-bill eligible patients. This means the doctor would receive an additional \$35.80 per bulk-billed visit for under-16s and concession card holders (about \$15 more than on the mainland), which is an *incentive* to bulk bill. It remains a doctor's choice whether to bulk bill or not – just good to note that a doctor on Coochie will receive more incentive to do so.

Bulk billing clarity from John Buckley:

Bulk billing has a correct name which is direct billing. This means accepting the government payment as full and only payment for the service. Pretty well the only exception is that if the visit contains a vaccine that is not available free the practice can charge for that. Charges cannot be raised for bandages or plaster or anything else if the service is bulk-billed.

What almost no-one in the general public knows (or cares about) is that when they ask or expect to be bulk-billed that they are expecting the doctor to be satisfied with about half of their fee. Most people seem to think it means the government pays the doctor their full fee or close to it and don't realise how much income the doctor and practice lose.

Very few of the same people would stand at a supermarket checkout or talk with a tradie or receive a bill from a solicitor or dentist and ask for a 50% discount

- The remote factor also means doctors under supervision can come here instead of woop-woop for their 'rural' work experience – with John Buckley able to offer help with supervision/training should that be needed.
- And that's before Bruce or John approach the PHN (Public Health Network, southside) for some kind of support – which may be in the form of a research project with staff, facilities & equipment attached, or funding, or... something.
- From Health Hub perspective, we may be able to offer some kind of volunteer secretarial help on visiting days, and can help potential doctor with promotion and having facilities organised – and maybe chasing up the no-shows. My personal suggestion is that Coochie clients pay \$15 just to book an appointment as an incentive to turn up.



Update

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RFDS medical chest saga

- Again... a good idea that seems to have stalled. An application was made in November to access RFDS medical chest, which is operated by trained personnel under guidance of a remote doctor in case of emergency or need.
- Several months ago we basically had a 'decision denied' phone call, with the stated reason being that a large medical emergency on Coochie would deplete the medical supplies in the chest too much.
- We (Health Hub) don't understand that argument: in an emergency EVERY avenue of help would be brought into play – RFDS, QAS, Fire Services, medical chopper, and so on. Having a RFDS chest on island still makes a lot of sense as an alternative or adjunct to the first responder/ambulance/ferry/chopper routine. We now have Julie Vegter who can follow up and challenge that ruling and hopefully find a way to bring the RFDS chest in.

Upcoming:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| • Invitation from Heritage (see below) | Saturday 24 th August 10am - noon |
| • AGM/general meeting | Sunday 8 th September 10am – noon |
| • Medical expo – hosted by Mens Shed | Friday 18th October (tentative) |
| • Public Meeting | Sunday 3 rd November 10am – noon |

Invitation from Heritage Society to Health Hub:

On behalf of the Coochiemudlo Island Heritage Society, I am delighted to extend an invitation to you and your members to join us in commemorating the 5th anniversary of the heritage listing of the Emerald Fringe. This special event will take place on Saturday, 24th August, from 10 am to midday, on the foreshore of Coochiemudlo Island, near the barge ramp, and will include our Annual General Meeting (AGM).

We are confident that the Coochiemudlo Health Hub values and respects the heritage listed Emerald Fringe that provides Coochiemudlo with a unique landscape not found in any other island off the coast of Queensland.

Thank you again for whatever support you have contributed. **Please let us know anyone who may be interested in more information on being a secretary, or a doctor to the island.** That's it for the moment, and we would appreciate anyone who decides to renew or take out a membership with us (see attached, or visit website).

Best regards, Russell Austerberry (President, Coochie Health Hub)



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