

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Dedicated country doctor recognised with AMA Queensland's top honour

A Central Queensland doctor who has served the town of Woorabinda for nearly 30 years has been honoured with the Gold Medal at AMA Queensland's annual *Dinner for the Profession*.

Dr Mary Dunne has been a general practitioner in the Aboriginal community since 1998.

AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim praised Dr Dunne's incredible contribution to the state's medical profession and to regional Queensland.

"Dr Dunne exemplifies the passion, talent and hard work of truly great doctors," he said.

"The Gold Medal is highest honour AMA Queensland can bestow. It is given to a member who has rendered outstanding services to the association, to the practice of medicine, or to the community.

"Dr Dunne has done all three. She is the kind of person who would much rather work quietly in the background than stand in the spotlight. But the difference she has made in people's lives has not gone unnoticed."

After finishing her medical studies in 1982, Dr Dunne worked in Moranbah, then established a private practice in Clermont, where she worked until 1998, when she applied to be the fulltime doctor in Woorabinda.

"For the first 16 years Dr Dunne worked as a solo practitioner, on call seven days a week and up to 22 days at a time.

"She earned the community's trust with her focus, availability and dedication to uncompromising care."

Dr Dunne helped establish visiting services such as cardiology, gynaecology, paediatrics, and ENT clinics, which included yearly surgery for children's ears. In the early days, during ENT surgery week, Mary would host up to 13 doctors and nurses on her own cattle farm to make sure services were delivered.

Dr Dunne is still practicing in Woorabinda, running her farm, and spending as much time as possible with her nine grandchildren.

She was one of four incredible doctors honoured at AMA Queensland's *Dinner for the Profession*, held at The Star Brisbane last night (30 May).

"The AMA Queensland Excellence in Healthcare Award went to breast cancer specialist Dr Sunil Lakhani, the Rural Health Medal to Dr Matt Masel and the Doctor in Training Medal to Dr Elise Witter.

"I congratulate these doctors on their phenomenal achievements throughout their careers so far," Dr Yim said.

"They are an inspiration to the profession, and it was a delight to see them so warmly applauded by their peers."

**Background****Dr Sunil Lakhani**

After surviving a childhood in Uganda – which involved being expelled from the country by then-dictator Idi Amin – Dr Lakhani built an incredible medical career in London before moving to Brisbane in 2003 to head up the pathology department at the University of Queensland's School of Medicine.

He has raised more than \$20 million in grant funding for breast cancer research, written 12 books, and trained more than 100 students in research methodology and integrating research with clinical management.

He is currently the staff specialist in Anatomical Pathology for Pathology Queensland, Group Leader of the Molecular Pathology Breast Cancer at UQ's Centre for Clinical Research, and as of March this year, the Senior Pathologist at Sullivan Nicolaides.

**Dr Matt Masel**

Dr Masel grew up in Brisbane, but he and wife Dr Sue Masel made Goondiwindi their home in 2001 and have since been tireless advocates for the border town community.

As well as being a rural GP, Dr Masel has worked as a Visiting Medical Officer at Goondiwindi hospital providing acute care and obstetric services. He is on the GP Obstetric roster for the Maternity Service, and is interested in Aboriginal Health, Zoonoses and Geriatrics. Matt provides senior input and teaching in the hospital ward rounds and on call assistance for emergencies and advice.

Dr Masel was also a leading participant in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic response, and President of the Rural Doctors' Association of Queensland from 2022 to 2023.

**Dr Elise Witter**

Raised in Cairns, Dr Witter studied psychology before gaining her medical degree at the University of Queensland in 2019.

Returning to the far north, she has worked in Mareeba and around Cape York, including in remote Indigenous communities, all while becoming a strong and unrelenting advocate for doctors in training.

In 2023 she was nominated unopposed to the AMA Queensland Doctors in Training Chair position, and last year she became the Deputy Chair of the National DiT Committee – a testament to her leadership and passion for junior doctor wellbeing.