

A NEW APPROACH TO NON-URGENT DERMATOLOGY REFERRALS: CLINICAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND THEIR ROLE WITHIN GP SMARTREFERRALS

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INTRODUCTION

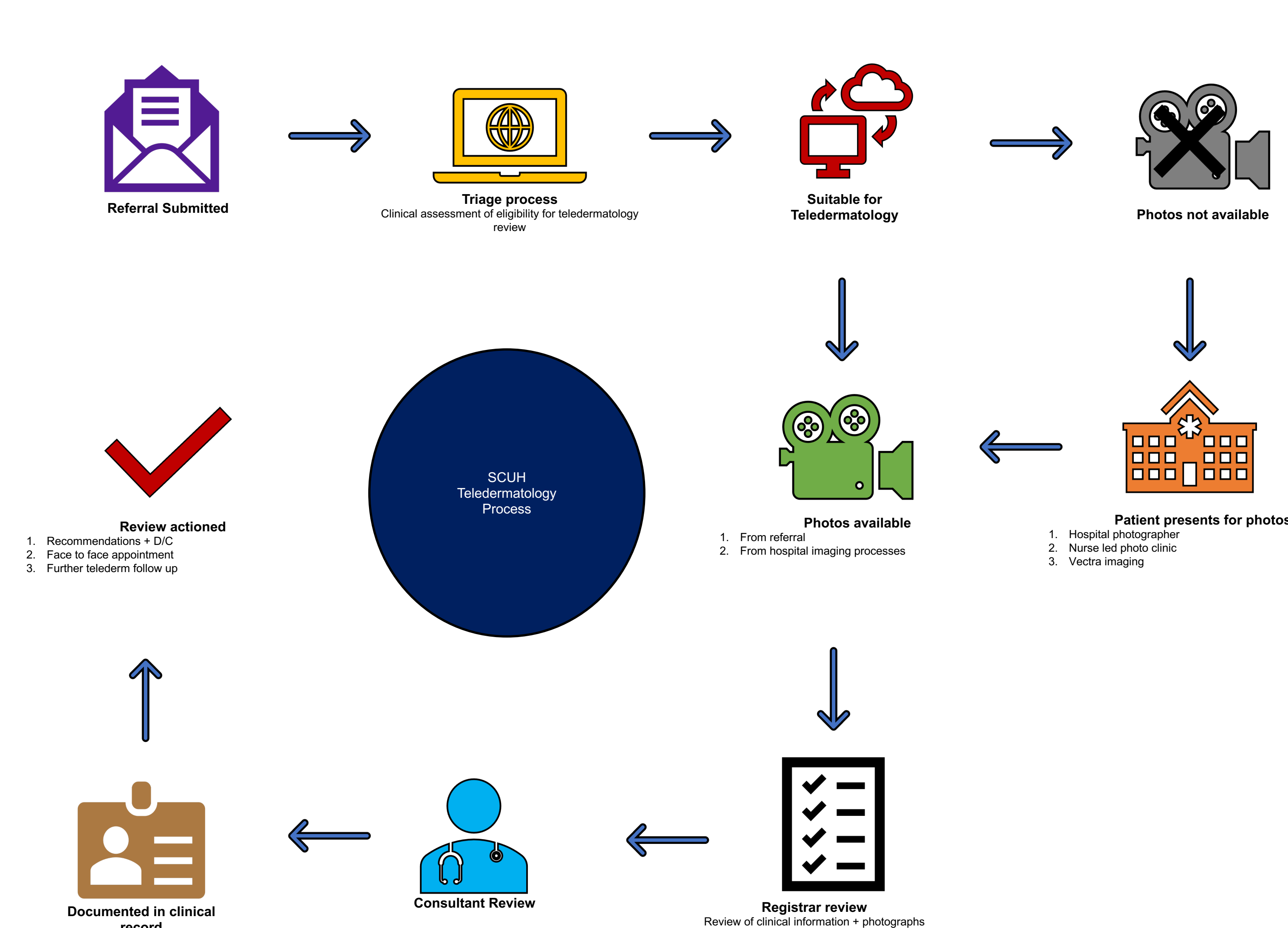
The dermatology department within the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) receives high volumes of referrals for inflammatory skin conditions, the majority of which are non-urgent in nature. On average, each week the department receives 60-70 new referrals¹. Consequently, patients with non-urgent dermatological conditions face prolonged wait times. Traditionally, up to 25% of non-urgent (category two and three) patients have waited greater than two years for an appointment.

The year 2019 saw the establishment of a new teledermatology service within the SCHHS, which features a novel approach to triage and first-line review of non-urgent teledermatology referrals. The system utilizes the GP SmartReferrals pathway, implemented in May 2019, to facilitate the transmission of patient images from referrer to dermatologist. The system prompts images to be included for referrals of rashes and inflammatory skin conditions.

TELEDERMATOLOGY WITHIN THE SCCHS

The teledermatology model designed and implemented by the SCHHS dermatology department features a new approach to triage and first-line review of non-urgent teledermatology referrals.

- Triage
 - Information provided through GP SmartReferrals is used to determine whether or not patients are appropriate for teledermatology care.
 - ✓ Clinical images
 - ✓ Adequate background
- Patient booked for teledermatology clinic appointment OR
- If required, hospital photography appointment
 - Sunshine Coast University Hospital outpatients
 - Nambour General Hospital outpatients
- Registrar review
 - ✓ Referral information
 - ✓ Clinical photographs
 - ✓ +/- phone call to patient
- Consultant review of registrar plan
- Outcome actioned
 - ✓ Recommendations made and discharge to GP
 - ✓ Face-to-face appointment
 - ✓ Further teledermatology follow up

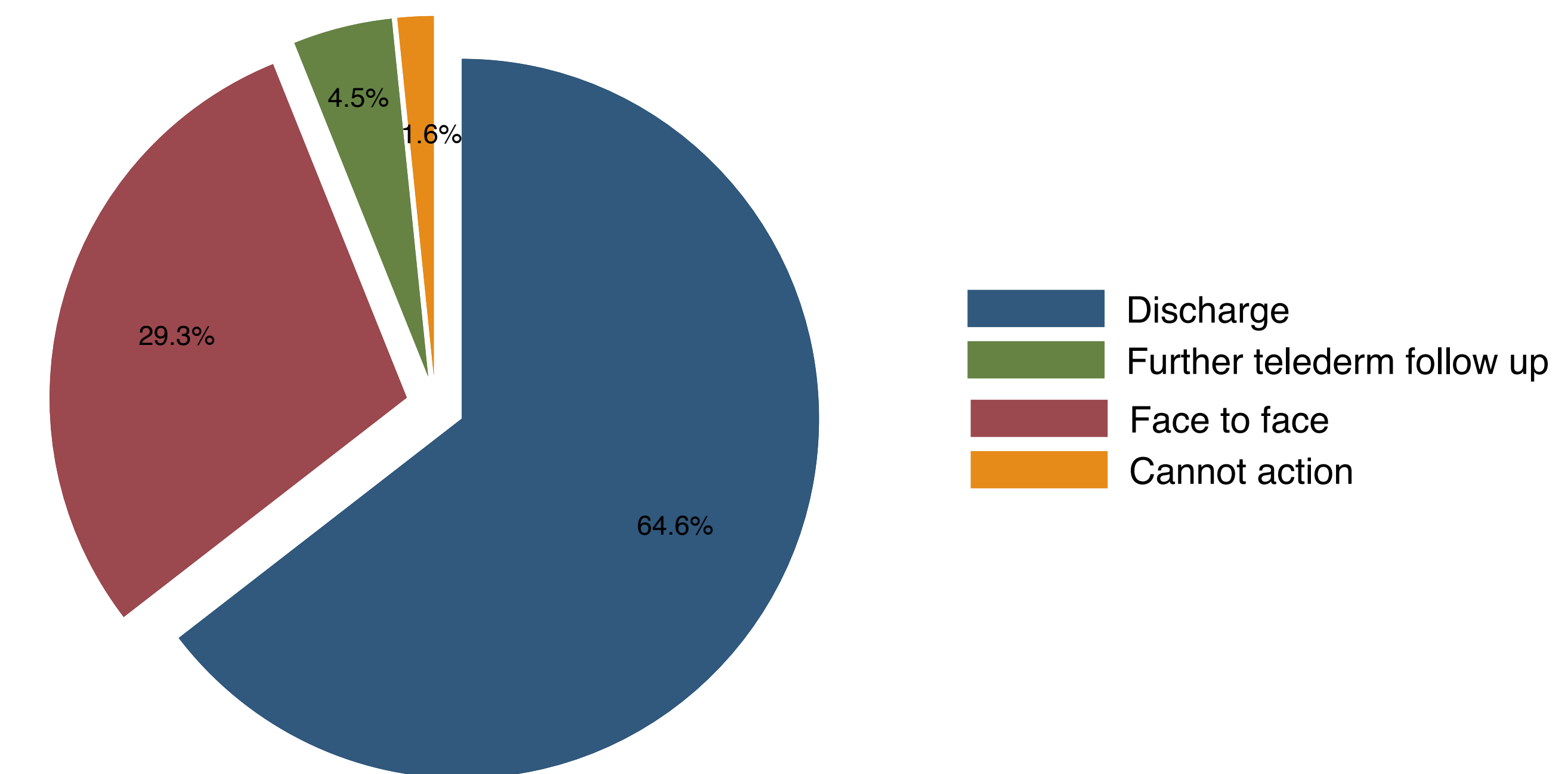


TELEDERMATOLOGY CLINIC OUTCOMES

Since June 2019, 495 patients have received specialist dermatologist care through the SCHHS teledermatology service.

- Discharge post initial teledermatology review (64.6%)
- Face-to-face review in dermatology outpatient clinics (29.3%)
- Further teledermatology input (4.5%).

A small subset of patients (1.6%) had referrals that were unable to be actioned using the new triaging system. This was due to inability to obtain appropriate clinical photos, or inadequate information provided in the referral.



CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Major challenge: Procurement of high quality clinical images.

- Low image resolution
- Photos angles that misrepresent the body area portrayed
- Lack of detailed close-up photographs of dermatoses/lesions

Possible solutions

- Ongoing communication with referring doctors
- Continuation of the photography clinics at SCUH and NGH outpatient departments.
- 3D total body photography
- Vectra imaging system will soon be established at SCUH

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

With the advent of 3D total body photography and rollout out of Vectra imaging systems across Queensland, the SCHHS teledermatology service may serve as a model for other health services. In the near future, we hope to see improved access to high quality public dermatology care to all Queenslanders.