



RDAQ 2026

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MEDICINE IN THE HEART OF QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

27 June 2026

Trauma on the frontline: confronting the reality behind the statistics at RDAQ2026

The realities of trauma care in rural and remote Queensland will take centre stage on the third and final day of the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (RDAQ) 2026 Conference in Cairns today.

The morning plenary, *“Trauma – the numbers and the people”*, brings together clinical and lived experience perspectives to examine the full trauma journey, from incident and emergency response through to recovery and return to community.

Delivered by the North Queensland Trauma Connect Team, the session will present the latest regional trauma data and highlight emerging trends and system challenges, before exploring the human stories behind the statistics.

It will be followed by a concurrent session by experienced rural generalist Briana Van Beekhuizen (Atherton) entitled *Vicarious Trauma – exploring the emotional and psychological toll repeated exposure to trauma has on rural clinicians*.

RDAQ President Dr David Walker said the sessions collectively represent the complexity of trauma care outside metropolitan centres.

“Trauma medicine in rural Queensland is different; distance, access, workforce and response time all shape patient outcomes,” Dr Walker said.

“Rural generalists are highly skilled clinicians with a broad scope of practice, delivering care across emergency medicine, primary care and inpatient services, often with advanced procedural skills.

“However, our doctors and emergency teams are often working in high pressure environments with limited resources and greater clinical autonomy, sometimes hundreds of kilometres from a major hospital.

“That’s why trauma care is both one of the greatest challenges and one of the most rewarding aspects of rural medicine.”

Session presenters:

- Dr Helen Fraser, Townsville Hospital and Health Service
- Dr Phoebe Lepper, Trauma Fellow, Townsville Hospital and Health Service
- Mrs Anna Grant, Clinical Nurse Consultant | Trauma Program Manager | Trauma Connect Project, Townsville Hospital and Health Service

- Dr Sandi Dawson, Queensland Health
- Dr Adam Holyoak, Townsville Hospital and Health Service
- Former trauma patient Luke O’Sullivan

Dr Walker said the plenary would highlight the long road beyond the initial event, including hearing directly from rural trauma survivor Luke O’Sullivan.

“Trauma doesn’t end once a patient leaves the emergency department. Recovery, rehabilitation and returning to life in a rural community can be incredibly challenging,” he said.

“Luke was just out of school when an accident in late 2022 left him with a traumatic spinal injury resulting in quadriplegia, completely changing the course of his life.

“Despite that, he’s shown incredible resilience, finding new ways to stay involved in his family’s cattle property and continue contributing to his rural community.

“Hearing directly from Luke brings a powerful human perspective and reminds us that behind every trauma case is a person working to rebuild their life.”

RDAQ2026 is being held at the Pullman Cairns International from 25 to 27 June, with the program concluding today ahead of the David Horn Memorial Gala Ball and RDAQ Awards tonight.

Saturday, 27 June 2026 – Program Highlights

Morning sessions:

- 7.30am Rural Workforce Forum
- 9.50am Plenary panel: *Trauma – the numbers and the people*
- 9.45am Spotlight: Knock Knock? Who’s there? – Concussion, the invisible injury – Dr Kira James

Midday sessions:

- 11.20pm Vicarious Trauma – Dr Briana Van Beekhuizen
- 11.20pm Allergy Park: A Jurassic guide to paediatric food allergy

Afternoon sessions:

- 2.50pm RDAQ Annual General Meeting
- 2.50pm Weight loss management and integration of GLP1RA’s into your practice

Evening session:

- 6.30pm RDAQ David Horn Memorial Gala Ball & Awards

Photo – Luke O’Sullivan [HERE](#)

View full program [HERE](#)

Media Contact

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Media – register your attendance media@rdaq.com.au

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