

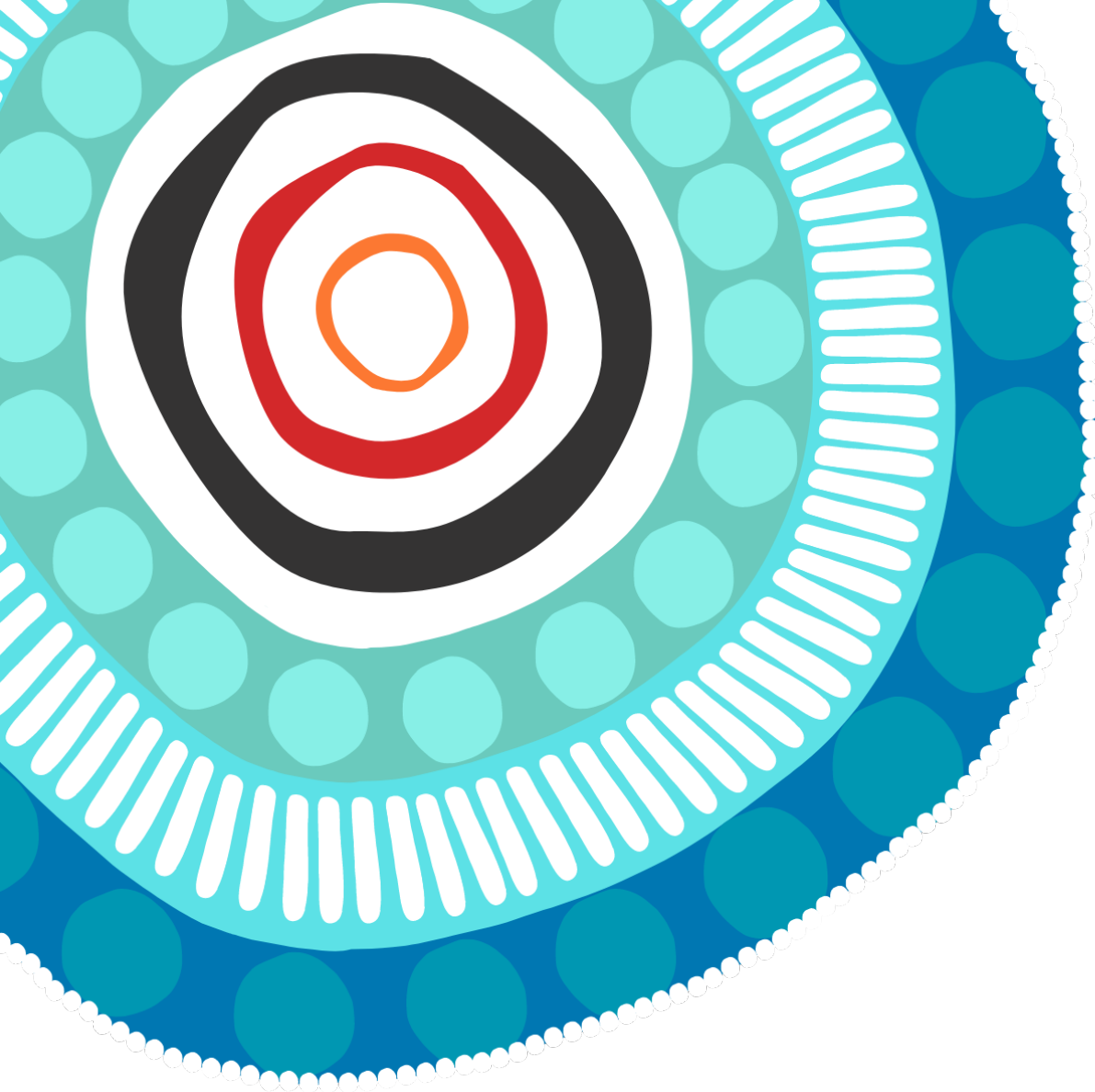
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a study of the structure or
internal workings of something

UCRH Year in Review 2023



UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR
RURAL HEALTH
NORTHERN RIVERS



Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge the local custodians of the land on which UCRH is based, the Widjabul Wyabul people of the Bundjalung nation. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this region.

Across the Northern Rivers, we also work on the lands of the Gumbayngirr, Arakwal and Yaegl nations and acknowledge their custodianship.

We are committed to ensuring that we walk lightly on this country and that we provide a strong education and cultural grounding for future health practitioners.

Our cover artwork features a seed pod from the Australian teak tree, a large native tree that is indigenous to NSW and Queensland. This pod was beautifully and intricately painted by Tracey Piccoli as part of the Christmas decorating competition held among UCRH staff at the end of 2023. As Anatomy takes a deep dive into the inner workings of UCRH, this stunning creative piece is an ideal metaphor for the beauty we see in the work our staff, allies, partners and stakeholders enable us to do.

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By the numbers



85 medical students
on placement



Over 600 Allied Health
students on placement



1265 Multidisciplinary
Education Program
participants



67 Simulation Centre
workshops



240,334 WellMob
website page views



56 active research
projects



53 student projects
supervised



71 peer-reviewed
publications authored

Highlighting our key successes in 2023

Some of our achievements covered in these pages:

- **Medicine, Allied Health and Interprofessional education programs** that embodied our commitment to developing the next generation of health care workers.
- **Simulation Centre and Regional Training Hub efforts** to support rural health workforce and provide exceptional continuing professional development.
- **Expansive Aboriginal Health education initiatives** including the return of the Baribunmani Wanyi Ngay high school program.
- **A broad ranging research program** which had a significant impact, was disseminated broadly to community and in peer reviewed publications, and will continue to expand with major new grants..
- **Important operational projects** including the opening of a new student accommodation house, upgrades to IT systems, and reductions to our carbon footprint.

From the Executive Dean and the Head of Rural Clinical School

At first glance, *Anatomy* may be an obvious name for a publication from an organisation which has at its core, science and human health. We see this title as something more subtle, as we celebrate the full breadth of what the University Centre for Rural Health Northern Rivers (UCRH) does and share with you a study of our structure and inner workings. At heart we believe in health equity for rural communities and hope these pages demonstrate how we work collaboratively to promote health and wellbeing for all people across rural and regional Australia.

With that in mind, we are proud to present *Anatomy*, a summation and celebration of the work and achievements of UCRH in 2023.

This is the first time we have published a review of UCRH's outputs over the course of a year. In doing so, we acknowledge the dedication of the many people who work here across academic, professional, public-facing and behind the scenes roles. Their collective efforts ensure that UCRH genuinely promotes health and wellbeing for all people across rural and regional Australia. After navigating the challenges and disruptions caused by a global pandemic and then the 2022 Northern Rivers flood disasters, for UCRH and all those who are part of it, 2023 was a year of consolidation.

Building our future rural health workforce remained a focus. The Medical, Allied Health, Interprofessional and Aboriginal Health Education teams continued to deliver high quality education programs designed to build an effective health workforce committed to the needs of rural communities throughout Australia. Important initiatives in these areas, outlined in these pages, enabled us to further strengthen our efforts to provide the best possible experience in rural health for our students.

In research, our projects and programs achieved major progress and impact as they canvassed the health needs of Australian rural communities. Our focus on the intersections of climate change and health; and the many issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health were particularly impactful and continue to build the strong reputation and ability of UCRH to engage with policy

makers, health professionals and others to pursue the application of our work in community settings.

Rural workforce development was also a strong focus for UCRH in 2023. Our Simulation Centre was a leading provider of simulation education in our region throughout the year, while the WellMob project, based within the UCRH, continued their exemplary work to develop a digital library of social, emotional and cultural wellbeing resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our collaboration with the Northern NSW Local Health District to operate the Northern NSW Regional Training Hub was maintained and strengthened.

UCRH is a crucial part of the University of Sydney as one of three rural clinical schools within the Faculty of Medicine and Health and this rural alliance forms the Faculty's Rural Precinct. This year we were proud to adopt the Rural Health Strategy 2023-2027, an important document which will help to shape and guide the work and priorities of UCRH in coming years. It is an exciting time for the organisation, and we commend this first edition of *Anatomy* to readers as testament to the impact a vibrant, collaborative research and education hub can make in rural health development.

Professor Robyn Ward
**Executive Dean and
Pro Vice Chancellor**
*Faculty of Medicine
and Health*

Professor Vicki Flood
**Head of Rural
Clinical School**
*University Centre
for Rural Health*

Focus on *Medical Education*

In 2023 we welcomed 85 medical students on placement with us, predominantly through our role as host of the North Coast Medical Education Collaboration (NCMEC).

University of Sydney success

With Year Three and Year Four medical degree students with us from the University of Sydney, 2023 was once again a busy year at UCRH. Year three students joined us for a 46 week placement featuring critical care; child and adolescent health; perinatal and women's health; psychiatry and addiction medicine; and a project term.

Year Four students spent 35 weeks with us, with this cohort being the first group to complete the University's new Doctor of Medicine (MD) program. The MD curriculum and course structure was launched in 2020 to enhance learning opportunities through earlier clinical exposure,

added personalisation options, new research opportunities, and immersive clinical placements in the last year of the program. These final year students had eight-week terms focused on general practice, medicine and surgery. We were embedded placements in dermatology and ophthalmology, and added two specialisations which were not previously offered on an ongoing basis.

University of Wollongong

Kicking off their year, our Phase Three Wollongong students took part in a two-day Cultural Immersion Program with our Aboriginal Health Education team. To deepen this immersion, many of the students went on to participate in our Goori Book Club throughout the year, and we secured an additional Aboriginal health placement at Rekindling the Spirit.

We recommenced student placements at Meadows Mullumbimby, expanding our placements to four students for the year. Students continued their





presentations at Ballina Hospital Journal Club and Clinical Case Discussions. In collaboration with UCRH, Lismore Base Hospital provided important education including integrated simulation, facilitated by Dr Roland Tee, as well as various simulation workshops including paediatric skills and emergency medicine. With a strong emphasis on objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), multiple OSCE practices were held throughout the year at Ballina, Lismore and Grafton. Some of our Grafton based students also had opportunity to nurture the next generation of doctors, when they spoke about their journeys into medicine, experiences of university life, and ran clinical skills sessions for local primary school students.

We progressed our clinical supervision program with Wollongong students, as one of the hubs to pilot this program. Importantly, with the continued growth of the Wollongong program and much valued investment of local clinicians, we are seeing students return to the region to continue their medical careers, showing the value and benefit of their time with us at UCRH.

Western Sydney University

In 2023 our Western Sydney University (WSU) program was delivered to an unusually large cohort of students across nine specialty disciplines. WSU has previously operated on a July-June rotation for rural placements, however is now transitioning to January-December which created some overlap. Among the highlights for the year was the local

delivery of final fifth year case based discussion exams and prescribing skills assessments, with examiners across medicine and emergency departments assisting. A new initiative in 2023 was the weekly *Grey patient scenarios* skills facilitated by Dr Martin Duffy, Critical Care Academic Lead. This training was vital for our year five students and was aimed at the next generation of doctors learning how to sift out the noise - literal and figurative - so they can see the real patient and better understand their symptoms and needs. This medical training helps the student be guided, rather than taught, to achieve the right outcome for the patient, by learning together about clinical reasoning.

What is NCMEC?

The North Coast Medical Education Collaboration is a joint initiative of the Western Sydney University, the University of Wollongong and the University of Sydney and is delivered by UCRH. Students from the three universities are offered rotations here in the Northern Rivers. Importantly, NCMEC operates as a leader in medical education and builds local capacity by supporting education initiatives of local stakeholders.

Focus on

Allied Health Education

Our Allied Health team supports over 600 student placements each year across a breadth of Allied Health disciplines (including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, speech pathology, nutrition and dietetics and pharmacy), nursing and midwifery, dentistry and oral health in settings across the region.

Major aged care grant

In 2022 UCRH was awarded a major expansion grant through the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program in Aged Care Services, with the work it funded kicking off in 2023. The project is focused on evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of student placements in residential aged care homes and multi-purpose service clinics. We are leading a project consortium which includes Whiddon Aged Care and the Northern New South Wales Local Health District. Southern Cross University partners with us in the research component of the project, while a number of other universities are also part of the project via their students who are going on placement. In addition to these partners, we have also convened an Advisory Committee to support the project, and benefit from the involvement of TAFE NSW, Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health and the North Coast Allied Health Association. The Committee has supported us with governance input and evaluation. See story on page 28 for more information.

Extended placement trial

In 2023 we were part of a trial within the University of Sydney to offer extended clinical placements. Extended rural placements for health students have been found to offer greater benefits for rural health services and the communities they serve. Students from medical and health disciplines who have

undertaken extended placements have reported high satisfaction with their experience and have shown a greater likelihood of considering practicing as rural health professionals after graduation.

This pilot initiative presented an opportunity for teams across the School of Health Sciences, UCRH and elsewhere in the Faculty of Medicine and Health to create extended placement offerings, build student placement capacity and enhance program planning. There was also opportunity to test allied health students' interest in extended placements as well as identifying the enabling and limiting factors for extended placements, and their potential impact on health service provision and future rural health workforce.

In addition to the standard five-week (physiotherapy) and six-week (exercise physiology) placements, we offered four 15-week and six 10-week extended placement blocks for physiotherapy students, and four 12-week extended placement blocks for exercise physiology students. Students in these placement streams still undertook their standard placements in a clinical area and then changed to another setting for subsequent placement blocks. Physiotherapy students, for example, on a 15-week extended placement may have had five weeks in aged care, then in a hospital, followed by a private practice setting.

Throughout the trial evaluation data was collected through an online survey for students and focus groups. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with understanding of rural and regional communities and health issues enhanced. Due to its success, the initiative has been extended for an additional year.

Growth of allied health

UCRH is known for the strength of our multidisciplinary training program, and over time this has increased in scale and complexity. In 2023

we took the time to review the structure of our professional and academic leadership to reflect changing needs of the program area. We adopted a new structure aimed at allowing us to further develop our allied health education and research. The new role of Academic Lead, Associate Professor of Allied Health provides enhanced academic leadership, while a rejuvenated professional structure allows a dedicated focus on operational systems, strategic improvements and building professional staff capabilities. These changes will ensure we can continue delivering excellence in teaching and learning and promote innovative models of health care.

New placement system

2023 also saw the culmination of another major behind-the-scenes project within the Allied Health program. The final implementation of a clinical placement management system (CPMS) platform means we can better manage our student placements, and the myriad detailed logistics they entail. The solution we implemented, working with DVE Solutions, provides a centralised platform for managing everything from communication to reporting. While it may sound like the territory of boffins, this was an exciting development for us!

Breakfast for lunch

One of the most rewarding aspects of allied health placements is seeing students make practical impacts. This was exemplified by Griffith University Nutrition and Dietetics students, Samantha Palmer and Simon Batley, through their Community and Public Health Placement at Mummulgum Public School. They immersed themselves within the school community and learned that the school had a goal of ensuring all their students start their day with breakfast. They designed and executed a three-week nutrition program with education sessions, nutrition activities, games, fruit and vegetable tasting and cooking workshops. The program culminated in a fun Breakfast for Lunch event where the kids showed off their new cooking skills, boasting four new recipes that the primary school students knew how to prepare.



Interprofessional *learning*



Our interprofessional learning initiatives offer a variety of opportunities for students, clinicians, and community service providers to learn with and from each other.

Two of the main features of the program are the weekly Multidisciplinary Education Program, affectionately known as the Wednesday Program, and Student Led Case Discussions. In 2023 these went from strength to strength.

The Wednesday Program enables students across a broad range of disciplines and universities to understand each other's roles, to manage health and care (rather than disease and cure) and to focus on early intervention and prevention working across health and social care service providers.

This perspective, known as integrated care, is something we embed in our teaching. We focus on providing students with a number of opportunities for interdisciplinary training.

Growing evidence reinforces this connection, emphasising a person-centred, preventative, and community-based approach and a move away from disease-based and institution-focused care. The focus is on primary care and complements our student placements within these settings.

Each week we invite presentations from local, state-

wide, and national health and social care providers and agencies. For example, we regularly hear from organisations such as the National Digital Health Agency, My Aged Care, NDIS and the NSW Cancer Council.

Students participate in these programs from a broad range of disciplines including medicine, nursing, allied health, social work, pharmacy, oral health and dentistry. The students are mostly in their final years so active learning strategies are utilised, including interactive problem-solving, case studies, reflective practice, and problem-based learning in groups, aiming to accommodate the students' different learning styles, maintain their interest and simulate a real working environment.

In 2023, the Wednesday Program was conducted over 44 weeks, with 1265 participating students from 13 universities and TAFE NSW. Participants also included clinicians, service providers from non-government organisations, community organisations, the local health district and university academics.

In 2023 we also hosted 23 Student Led Case Discussions with 806 participants including students and health and social care providers. A highlight for the year was the inclusion of dentistry students in the program for the first time.

Local high schools *come to UCRH*

University students were not the only students on our mind last year. We were pleased to once again run our High School Careers Day to provide hands-on health experience for local school students.

The UCRH High School Careers Day is organised in partnership with Connect Northern Rivers. It is aimed at local high school students who have an interest in a career in health. In 2023 we welcomed around 60 Year 11 students and their careers advisors from Summerland Christian College, St Johns Woodlawn, Kadina High School, Alstonville High School, Trinity Catholic College, Emmanuel Anglican College, Ballina Coast High School, St Josephs College, Byron Bay High School, Grafton High School, Kingscliff High School and Murwillumbah High School.

The day included a panel discussion with current university students studying health degrees. It also included hands-on skills stations giving students a chance to learn everything from suturing to basic life support to dentistry skills.

“Supporting and nurturing the health workforce of the future is a big part of what we do,” Professor Vicki Flood, Director of UCRH said.

“We know that young people from rural areas are more likely to return to regional areas after their university studies, so if we want more health care professionals in our communities, days like this are critical,” she added.

“If we can plant a seed in the minds of these bright young students, hopefully we’ll see them inspired to study a health profession and then one day return to be our next generation of doctors, dentists, physios, nurses and more.”



Focus on *Simulation Centre*

The Simulation Education Centre had a very productive and eventful 2023. Across the year, we delivered 67 workshops to a total of 329 participants.

All workshops were evaluated with high levels of satisfaction from the participants. Results included:

- Content/course structure 86% highly satisfied
- Educators 96% highly satisfied
- Applicability to clinical practice 88% highly satisfied

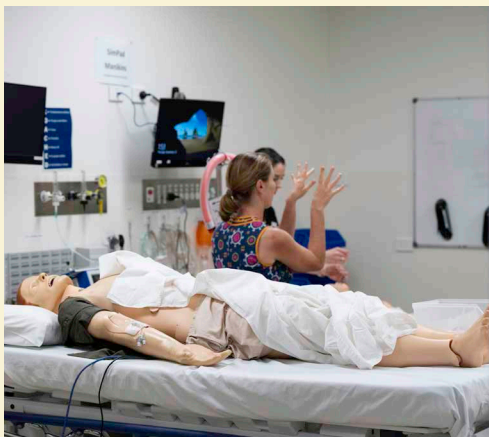
Comments were also positive, for example:

- Great mix of theory and practical experience... Educators supportive and encouraging.

- Clinical experience and knowledge is very comprehensive.
- Excellent instructor. I liked the practice of suturing... Very positive experience... Useful tips for suturing and have learnt new suturing types.

Team expands

Throughout the year the team expanded to include a new highly skilled Registered Nurse Clinical Skills Educator. The team now includes an Emergency and Critical Care Clinical Nurse Consultant, Simulation Educator and Clinical Co-director and Manager Health Workforce Training, as well as a number of casual nurse educators. Together the team designed and delivered a varied program of education and



clinical skills training to a broad range of health professionals and students.

Equipment

Most of our education program takes place in our state-of-the-art simulation rooms and clinical skills space. Through the year we were able to upgrade some ageing simulation equipment, and this included an upgrade to Sim Man 3G Plus Light Manikin. This new Sim Man was created for high-quality simulation training in a multitude of medical procedures and patient cases. Improvements such as more lifelike skin and articulating joints make Sim Man extremely realistic. This means we can create even more high-fidelity scenarios in our teaching and learning environment.

We also replaced ageing beds with lighter and more ergonomically friendly beds.

Workshops

Our 2023 workshop program included a range of standard courses as well as new additions: Aboriginal Health Workforce Training and Retrieval Medicine.

Aboriginal health workers from a range of local services attended a series of workshops focusing on patient assessment, common patient conditions and medications as well as hands on clinical skills training.

The Retrieval Medicine workshop was attended by new retrieval doctors at Lismore Base Hospital. They practiced dealing with critical care emergencies the doctor/critical care paramedic team faces every day. With the resources in our Simulation Centre, the doctors were fully immersed in intensive scenarios, giving them the opportunity to refine their skills and get hands-on experience with the latest equipment using the Sim Man.

We also responded to the bespoke needs of various stakeholders; providing tailored training sessions and delivered offsite Basic Life Support training to a local GP clinic; and ran blood sampling skills workshops for the Local Health District's Liver Clinic.

Course	2023 Workshops
Advanced Life Support	11 workshops
Advanced Life Support Instructors	3 workshops
Advanced Life Support Paeds	4 workshops
Anaesthetics	11 workshops
Aged care	1 workshop
Aboriginal Health	3 workshops
Blood Sampling	1 workshop
EMET	6 workshops
ELITE	11 workshops
FEAST	1 workshop
ED JMO Training	3 workshops
GP-Emergencies	1 workshop
Intern Skills day	1 workshop
IVC and Venepuncture	4 workshops
Paediatric Skills	2 workshops
Plastering and Suturing	1 workshop
Retrieval Medicine	1 workshop
Ultra Sound IVC	2 workshops
TOTAL	67 workshops



Regional Training Hub *working in collaboration*

The Northern NSW Regional Training Hub (NNSWRTH) is a partnership between the Northern NSW Local Health District and UCRH.

It is one of 26 regional training hubs across the country funded through the Australian Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program, each working to build medical training pathways within a region and guide students and trainees. Founded in 2018, the last year delivered many highlights in the Hub's efforts to help students find their path to a rural medical career.

Throughout 2023, the NNSWRTH provided support for interns, medical students and doctors in training from Intern to Provisional Fellowship across 22 disciplines. In 2023, the NNSWRTH also participated in the International Medical Graduates Clinical Readiness Program. This resulted in five employees for the area for 2024.

The Training Hub is also a founding member of the Destination Medicine Podcast, a collaborative project with the University of Sydney Western RTH, Far West RTH and the University of Notre Dame

Riverina RTH. Throughout 2023, the NNSWRTH continued to develop this project, showcasing rural clinicians and pathways. The podcast series, featuring local clinicians, can be accessed at www.destinationmedicine.com.au.

Clarence collaboration

We also work closely with our neighbouring Clarence Valley Regional Training Hub in Grafton. This hub is operated by the University of Wollongong, which means Wollongong students on placement with us have easy access to, and involvement in the Hub's programs and initiatives. In 2023 this included delivery of multiple university careers events and procedural clinical skills workshops in skills such as implanon insertion, skin biopsy, perinatal suturing.

WellMob

Healing our way

We are a key member of the collaboration behind the WellMob project which focuses on workforce development using culturally embedded online health promotion resources and low intensity digital mental health and wellbeing interventions.

Our team manage WellMob's collection of social, emotional and cultural wellbeing resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and 2023 was a big year for the digital library.

2023 site analytics

Total page views: 240,334

Total user sessions: 88,209

Total views for Training Resources section: 27,827

Most popular topics:

1. Mind (27,521 visits to pages under topic)
2. Culture (10,259 visits to pages under topic)
3. Our Mob (10,188 visits to pages under topic)

Most popular sub-topics:

1. Strong Minds (4335 visits to pages under subtopic)
2. Suicide and Self-harm (2926 visits to pages under subtopic)
3. Trauma (2940 visits to pages under subtopic)

Key resources

The WellMob site provides an array of resources for the health and wellbeing workforce that can enhance the skills and understanding of those who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Over 2023, the most viewed were about:

1. Healthy sleep habits for all our mob
2. Uncle Jack Charles guided meditation
3. Social and emotional wellbeing: a welcome guide for the Aboriginal workforce
4. Wellbeing topic tip sheets

5. Trauma toolkit

Summary sheets put together by the team provide shortcuts to the best resources WellMob has on particular topics. They are updated annually and in 2023 the most popular ones covered Referendum self-care (see breakout box), cultural identity resources and understanding social and emotional wellbeing.

Referendum self-care

The Voice to Parliament referendum was a particularly relevant and sensitive issue for WellMob in 2023. The team compiled a popular resource sheet for community that had practical tips for self-care before and after the referendum. It had links to online resources relevant to each tip including useful webpages on the WellMob website for online safety, strong minds and culture and identity. It proved to be the most viewed and most clicked resource sheet over the year.



The WellMob website provides more than 350 mental health and wellbeing resources developed by and for First Nations Australians including websites, apps, videos, fact sheets, podcasts, PDFs, and social media.

Focus on

Aboriginal Health Education

Our Aboriginal Health Education program allows us to support students learning about the culture, historical experiences and health of Aboriginal people, as well as providing leadership for the organisation on matters related to Aboriginal health.

Throughout 2023, the program rolled out a diverse offering, taking students from the classroom to Country, and much more.

Teaching programs

While on placement all students were provided with Aboriginal health education in some form. The sessions were not limited to lectures, and in 2023 we incorporated informal options including the Goori Book Club and Movie Night. The team also contributed to the Multidisciplinary Education Program regularly, presenting lectures on the historical perspectives and current realities in relation to Aboriginal health, as well as lectures about Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and Services nationally, regionally

and locally. Another important component of the teaching program included the one to two-day cultural immersions for medicine students from all three NCMEC universities. These immersions included on Country activities where students meet with and learn from local community members about Bundjalung Country, its spirit and cultural significance so they can feel grounded here. Other sessions covered:

- Sessions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives of Australian colonial history and the ongoing impacts including health disparities and intergenerational trauma.
- Sessions on developing a better understanding of the complex nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues.
- Sessions on best practice for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities when working in healthcare.

Graduate diploma support

Our team also supported the Faculty's delivery



Who would have known that prepping pharmacy Webster packs was the kind of lead-up work required for a Baribunmani Wanyi Ngay Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth program! In the days leading up to the 2023 event, we were counting, counting, counting and looking forward to welcoming another round of local high school students to UCRH for an interactive day.

of the Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion. Designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, the Graduate Diploma aims to improve Indigenous health at a community level. We supported the program by hosting two face-to-face sessions for those completing the Diploma in 2023, with Aboriginal members of the UCRH staff presenting guest lectures showcasing our work.

Baribunmani Wanyi Ngay

Our Baribunmani Wanyi Ngay youth program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students returned in 2023. It was a pleasure having a fantastic group of high school students from across the Northern Rivers join us for a day of interactive activities to inspire them to think about career options in any number of health fields.

Baribunmani Wanyi Ngay is a Bundjalung phrase that means 'I dreamed about you' and reflects the key message of the program: careers in health are attainable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Like the High School Careers Day, students are given the opportunity to undertake hands-on simulation and virtual reality activities led by medical and allied health university students who were undertaking rural placements in the area. They learnt practical skills including suturing, pharmacy, first responder skills and more.

We want young people to dream about themselves as future health professionals and we want to show them how impactful a career in healthcare can be. The long-term objective of the program is to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in the health workforce in the Northern Rivers, improving the cultural safety of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Traineeship rebooted

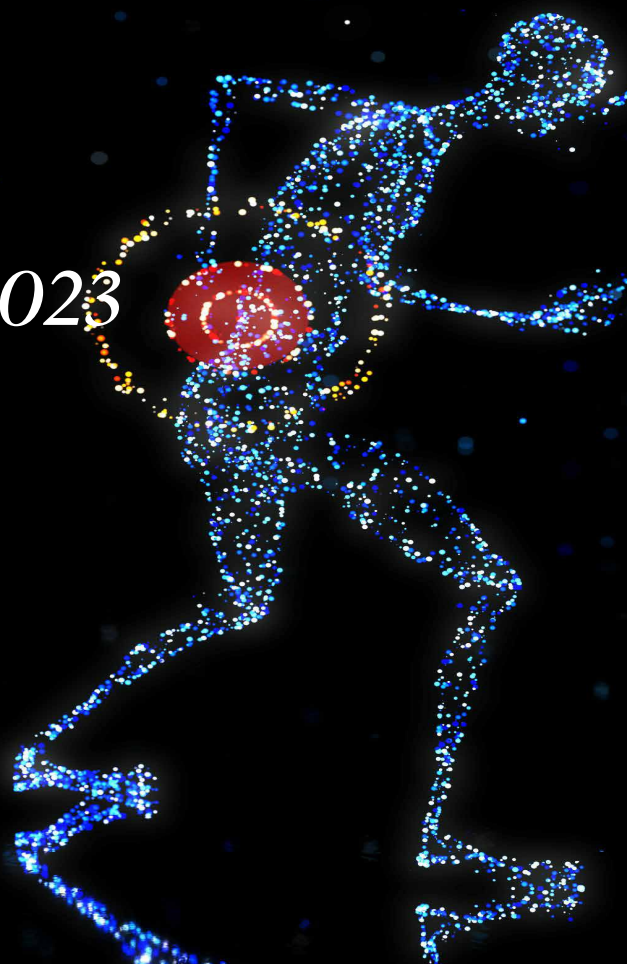
UCRH has a strong commitment to provide a culturally safe workspace for Aboriginal staff, and to building the future Aboriginal workforce. Ten years ago we implemented our first Indigenous Traineeship with the support of the University of Sydney partnership with AFL SportstReady. AFL SportsReady is a not-for-profit company dedicated to helping young Australians develop careers through traineeships, cadetships, direct employment and educational opportunities. The program sees trainees undertake a 12 month work placement at UCRH whilst also studying a Certificate Four in Business Administration. Since that original traineeship we have regularly hosted placements however COVID and the 2022 floods led to a three year hiatus. We recommenced the traineeship program again in July 23 with the employment of another business administration trainee in partnership with AFL Sportsready and funded directly by UCRH.

Advocating for the Voice to Parliament

After much very thoughtful consideration, UCRH publically endorsed the yes campaign for the 2023 referendum on the proposed Voice to Parliament. The Voice referendum resonated with our vision to apply self-deterministic models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program delivery, whether it be in education, research or workforce development. Knowing that the Voice to Parliament stemed from conversations had over many years, including the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we reached a view that the proposal would allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to work directly with the government on policies and laws that directly or indirectly affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We remain committed to ensuring that we walk lightly on this country and that we provide a strong education and cultural grounding for future health practitioners.

Funding support *research wins across 2023*

In 2023 we were proud that our researchers were successfully awarded funding support across a diverse subject matter, scale and approach and from a range of sources. Let's explore three of our projects which were awarded funding over the last year.



Musculoskeletal pain

Knee pain and back pain. Two of the most common reasons that Australians nationwide present to their primary doctor, an orthopaedic specialist and even the emergency department of their local hospital. Yet many people with chronic pain do not receive care to manage either of these sources of pain, and the challenge is even greater for people in rural regions. Thanks to a grant of nearly \$1.7m from the prestigious Medical Research Future Fund, UCRH's Associate Professor Chris Williams will lead the HeLP-R trial: Adaptation and implementation of an effective lifestyle program for musculoskeletal pain in rural populations.

Although many patients who present with knee or back pain have comorbid lifestyle risks (high BMI, smoker, poor nutrition, sedentary, high alcohol intake), less than 20% receive any care to manage these risks. For people in rural locations access to appropriate care is even harder. The initial HeLP trial was the first internationally to demonstrate that a healthy lifestyle program for pain, targeting lifestyle risks, led to better outcomes for people with chronic pain when compared to guideline

recommended care. However, this trial was designed and tested in a metropolitan hospital and relied on in-person delivery. Our research will test a co-designed virtual care intervention for pain and lifestyle for priority populations and will look at the effects of implementation strategies for rural clinicians. Our trial will provide high level evidence about the effects of adapting mainstream research in priority populations and test the role of virtual health to provide broader access to effective care at scale.

GP care

Senior Lecturer in General Practice, Dr Rosie Hamilton was awarded \$25,000 from the Avant Foundation to explore GP attitudes, experiences and needs in providing primary health care to Trans and Gender Diverse (TGD) young people. Previous research has shown that TGD young people often experience significant stigma and discrimination from health care providers, actively discouraging them from seeking necessary health care. However little evidence-based knowledge exists as to why this may be the case. While many health professionals may not receive adequate training, whether at

university, or in their further training, it is unclear as to whether this is the only barrier for GPs to provide best practice care, or what their needs are. Dr Hamilton's qualitative study will see GPs interviewed to explore and clarify their perspectives. By understanding what the needs and attitudes of GPs are, programs can be designed to best support them to deliver accessible, appropriate, best practice primary care to TGD young people, ultimately improving health outcomes.

Disaster response

Local disaster response has been an area of focus for UCRH researchers since the 2017 Lismore flood inundation. In the aftermath of the 2022 Northern Rivers flood disaster, it was unsurprising that our attention has returned to this topic (see story page 27). In September, two of our researchers, Dr Jo

Longman and Emma Pittaway were awarded \$25,000 from the Sydney Environment Institute to continue their work in this field. Their project, which seeks to understand the networks of the formal disaster response agencies in Lismore, takes a systemic approach to the complex question of community resilience. The intention is to comprehend the emergent network structures of connections between emergency management agencies and community-led self-organised groups during and after the 2022 floods. The research will analyse the structure of connections, highlight critical bridging links, and describe the barriers to and enablers of the network developing and functioning. Deepening our understanding of these connections will help us to identify ways to improve them for future disasters.



Virtual reality

UCRH has embraced the possibilities that virtual reality offers our program areas.

Our *Consider Everyone* project is investigating the potential of virtual reality for inspiring health careers in the young people who attend the Baribunmani Wanyi Ngay program. Our *Virtual Reality and Racism* project will consult with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about the appropriateness of engaging virtual reality to develop education packages to train medical and allied health students and professionals in the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the healthcare system. Meanwhile we have also received an \$80,000 Proof of Concept Grant from the University to develop a virtual reality-based training platform for pharmacists in rural and regional hospital settings. The program will use interactive simulations using AI to create virtual patients to provide a cost effective and flexible solution to training and preparing pharmacists and pharmacy students to work within these settings. The project will commence in June 2024.

Research in summary:

our 2023 outputs

In 2023, we conducted comprehensive local, national, and international research aimed at improving health services, promoting population health, reducing disparities, and contributing to a more proficient rural workforce.

Over the year, we addressed critical health priorities in the Northern Rivers region, with specific focus on engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and addressing environmental factors affecting health, including the ongoing impact of natural disasters and climate change – something clearly relevant to our region.

We maintained our commitment to research excellence through our contribution to 56 research projects. Of these, 18 focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, with seven led by UCRH itself. Nine grants were awarded to UCRH staff in 2023, five of which are UCRH-led projects.

Enhancing research capacity was a primary objective in 2023. Fifty-three student projects were supervised in 2023. This included 22 Higher Degree Research students, six of whom completed their studies. Thirty-one Medical Doctor student projects were supervised. We also invested in broadening and deepening the research capability of our staff, with funding allocated to 17 people to enable them to pursue important development opportunities.

We worked hard on translating research findings into policy and practice too. UCRH staff, students, and affiliates authored 71 peer-reviewed publications in 2023. UCRH staff were actively engaged in knowledge dissemination by presenting at and attending and research seminars. Across the year, our team members gave 27 presentations at national and international conferences as well as seven poster presentations.

Collaboration was woven into our approach. Our research staff participated in 12 new committees and contributed to the development and implementation of the 2023 Rural Research Plan and the Faculty of Medicine and Health's Rural Health Strategy 2024–2027. We continue to lead the only rurally based NHMRC funded Centre for Research Excellence, STRIDE, focusing on health systems, quality improvement, Indigenous methodologies, epidemiology, public health, and health and social policy.

We also dedicated resources to developing a robust program of education research and evaluation. Collaborations within the Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN) resulted in four projects, three publications currently under review, and the establishment of a new ARHEN research network on disability and health. The ongoing evaluation of the education program underscores our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in research and education.

Seminar Series

Throughout 2023 we continued our popular Rural Health Seminar Series. Eight seminars were held with six of these focused on work being done by our own researchers. The other two seminars featured invited guest presentations by external academics, Professor Melissa Haswell (QUT) and Dr Ivan Lin (WA Centre for Rural Health) who covered research relevant to UCRH staff and interested community stakeholders.

Building research capacity

supporting our own

As an organisation with such strong education and research roots, it should come as no surprise that we're proud to support members of staff who are undertaking doctoral degrees.

Sarah Miles, one of our Clinical Educators (Allied Health) commenced her PhD in Health Sciences through the University of Sydney in 2018 and is slated to complete it in 2024. Her studies explore how work readiness is understood and designed for in final practice occupational therapy education placements. Students graduate into a complex and ever-changing workforce and she wants to know how we can prepare them not only to transition to the workforce but to thrive.

Frances Barraclough, a Senior Lecturer and Academic Coordinator of Interdisciplinary Education, commenced her PhD in 2019 and, like others, juggles work and study. Her area of focus is workforce development in integrated care and specifically looks at the development of an international framework for this. She hopes her work will contribute to policy decisions around

health workforce training, encouraging broader thinking around interprofessional learning.

Kris Vine is undertaking her PhD with a focus on how to co-create community-driven evaluation processes and resources for holistic health that are appropriate for use by Aboriginal communities and adaptable to local scale, cultural context and landscape. Her study is part of the Healing Country research project and sees her working with three diverse Aboriginal communities: Whadjuk Nyoongar (Perth, WA); Bundjalung (Lismore, NSW); and Warumungu (Tennant Creek, NT).

In 2023, Jane Linton started her PhD in Health Sciences, looking at culturally appropriate models of care for Aboriginal people with osteoarthritis. On scholarship with UCRH's Centre for Research Excellence STRIDE, she hopes her PhD improves access to health care services so Aboriginal people with osteoarthritis can confidently manage their condition. Jane is also a Physiotherapist, working at Grafton Base Hospital. She expects to complete her PhD in 2029.

While our geographic footprint is firmly in the Northern Rivers, our research work takes us further afield, including to Junkurrarkur waterhole (Tennant Creek) which is part of a sacred Warumungu Law story that honours Cultural Protocol for keeping harmony amongst communities.





Research in action

At its core, the purpose of research is to grow knowledge. In our context, that means our research efforts delve into the health needs of communities across the country with the ultimate intention of promoting health and wellbeing for all people across rural and regional Australia.

We are proud of those moments where we see the knowledge generated through our projects and collaborations being applied or shared, those moments when we see the outcomes of our research making an impact. Throughout 2023, this happened in many forms and at many opportunities.

Parliamentary voices

In November, both NSW State Parliament and the Australian Parliament heard expert input from key members of the UCRH team, tapping into the unique insights and expertise our staff hold.

At state level, UCRH Director, Professor Vicki Flood and Academic Co-ordinator (General Practice and Community), Dr Christine Ahern, appeared before the NSW Parliament’s Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health. Their appearance was part of the second public hearing for the inquiry into regional, rural and remote health: *Health outcomes and access to*

health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote NSW. This committee, of which Member for Lismore Janelle Saffin MP is the deputy chair, was established to inquire into and report on health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote NSW.

Professor Flood and Dr Ahern spoke about attracting and retaining healthcare workers to the Northern Rivers in a day when the Committee heard evidence relating to health workforce issues, workplace culture and funding.

Federally, we were proud to see leading UCRH researcher Associate Professor Veronica Matthews speaking with national leaders as part of the Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Ministerial Roundtable at Parliament House. Hosted by the The Lowitja Institute (pictured above, photo by Lowitja) the roundtable provided an opportunity to canvass current and future policies, strategies, and reforms aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

One of the key discussion points was the recommendation that the Australian Government fund the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health. Associate Professor Matthews, along with other speakers, argued that First Nations people need to have power and agency around these issues.

Planetary ill-health

The intersection of climate change, health and First Nations knowledge was the subject of another area of UCRH research impact in 2023. *Science*, the international journal which has sat at the forefront of scientific discovery since its founding in 1880, released a special edition examining Australia's environmental challenges in August 2023. It featured a paper co-written by researchers from UCRH, the Healthy Environments And Lives (HEAL) network and the Lowitja Institute. One of the key conclusions of the paper is that Australia must address historic and contemporary systemic racism to better tackle the climate crisis.

The paper was clear that Indigenous people hold the knowledge to reform our relationship to the environment, however current Australian laws and policies limit the application of Indigenous knowledge for improved climate change mitigation and adaptation. The article outlined work which had been done to examine existing studies on Indigenous-led climate and health relationships and built on the work of a 2021 national roundtable discussion on climate change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, centred on the voices of Indigenous community leaders and advocates.

Associate Professor Veronica Matthews, one of the lead authors, said the paper highlighted the need to undo historical legacies of colonisation for the benefit of a healthier future.

"We already know how important it is to listen to and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for place-based solutions around health outcomes," said Associate Professor Matthews.

"What health and climate researchers are exploring now is how the same principle applies to climate change.

"The planet's ill health has largely come about because humans have forgotten their relationship and responsibility to Country. Imagine if we could tap into the way First Nations cultures focus on deep, holistic connections to the environment to help us rethink environmental and health policies."

Policy impact

Our footprint is broader than just our geographic location, and we welcome the chance to influence informed policy making by government at all levels. In various ways, this was something we pursued throughout 2023.

At a national level, our work investigating the community-led self-organisation of emergency response which followed the floods and storms of 2022 (see story on page 27) informed the Sydney Environment Institute's (SEI) submission to the Senate inquiry into Australia's disaster resilience, helping to illustrate that community responses to climate disasters have been critical and need support.

In the submission to the Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience, SEI provided preliminary findings which included investigations of the flooding events as well as the Black Summer bushfires (2019-2020).

The submission explained that communities throughout Australia were often the first, and sometimes the only, emergency responders to these disasters, and that community-led recovery has been critical in the aftermath. The resilience of communities contributes to recovery across all stages of the disaster cycle. This includes preparation in anticipation of disasters and post-disaster responses – both immediate and long term.

On another front, the work of one of our University of Sydney Students, Bradley Shea, was recognised for its impact on the National Roadmap to Improve Health Outcomes for People with Intellectual Disability. Bradley's MD Research Project was a scoping review on access to general practice for people with intellectual disability. Professor Nicholas Lennox, Senior Medical Advisor, Primary Care Division, Department of Health & Aged Care commented that Bradley's review "has and will continue to inform the work of the Department to implement the Roadmap to Improve the Health of People with Intellectual Disability. High quality research and analysis is essential to the development and implementation of good policy".



Twenty years of *research at UCRH*

While our twenty-year anniversary in 2021 was overshadowed by the global pandemic, we did take the time to look back at our research legacy in 2023, turning our minds to what we've achieved as well as future opportunities.

The avenue for this exploration was publication of a retrospective longitudinal study of publications in peer-reviewed journals from UCRH between January 2002 and December 2021. Published in *Health Research Policy and Systems*, the work was titled *Patterns of collaboration and knowledge generated by an Australian rural research centre over 20 years: a co-authorship network analysis*. Three academic staff based with UCRH authored the work, Dr Jodie Bailie, Professor Ross Bailie and Professor Megan Passey, with the support of Petr Matous from the School of Project Management at the University of Sydney's Faculty of Engineering.

The study involved a review of 577 individual publications. Organisational co-author networks were assessed over four periods diving deep into author's organisational affiliations. These were examined using social network analysis methods around characteristics including organisation types, study design, region of study focus, thematic research trends, Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander and female authorship, and journal characteristics.

One hundred and thirty different UCRH-affiliated authors were identified, and we saw publications and the co-author network increase in number and diversity over the years, with an acceleration and a consolidation of the network in the most recent period. Over time there was an increase in publications related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, coupled with an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authorship and collaborations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations; a rise in female senior authorship; and publication in top tier journals.

We can and should be proud of the body of work produced over the 20 years covered in the study. Collaboration in publications increased, expanded, and consolidated. The number and diversity of both co-authoring organisations and UCRH-affiliated authors also increased. The study's findings highlight the value of collaborations (including urban and international) in building and strengthening our health research capacity. That is something we can continue to focus on in the future, and look to ways that we can further understand and address rural health inequities.

Stengthening rural research centres

The research paper highlights a number of future strategies UCRH can consider to strengthen research outputs. This included targeted mentoring and support for rurally based researchers to link with established research teams; and providing support for development of research collaborations to specifically address rural health inequities and rural–urban disparities in health. It also recommended vertical investment in building rural academic pathways including:

- Targeted scholarships for rural students undertaking research degrees;
- Funding to attract and retain senior researchers with a track record of success in competitive grants;
- Targeted competitive funding for research addressing rural health inequities; and
- Employing and strengthening the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

National impact *international flair*

For a small organisation, UCRH has a powerful presence, here in our own region and further afield. In 2023, this was something that was demonstrated across various areas of the organisation.

University teaching

At the beginning of the year, the Australian Awards for University Teaching were announced, with UCRH's Frances Barraclough receiving a citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning. The awards celebrate teaching excellence and reward the contributions made to student learning. Frances' award reflected her leadership of our interprofessional education program that supports undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Nutrition Society

Book ending the year, our Director, Professor Vicki Flood, became President of the Nutrition Society of Australia. The Society is an organisation of qualified, practising scientists and educators with a common interest in the research and application of nutrition. Much of Professor Flood's work has been around nutrition and dietetics, nutrition and ageing and food insecurity, so she brings a wealth

of experience and a rural perspective to the table. In 2023, Professor Flood, with others established a new initiative to bring together rural nutrition and dietetic practitioners. Called ANCHOR, the Australian Nutrition Collaboration of Health Outcomes for Rural populations, the collaboration has already seen a workshop held at the New Zealand and Australian joint Nutrition Society conference. This focused on research co-design among rural communities to support nutrition priorities. More collaborative opportunities will continue to flourish.

The Gathering

A cohort of UCRH representatives was part of a delegation of University of Sydney staff who participated in the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Gathering in Vancouver, Canada. This event brings together thousands of Indigenous leaders and health care professionals from around the world to share and celebrate the healing power of traditional Indigenous knowledge and cultures. The Northern Rivers' influence on the Gathering was significant with Angela Sheridan, a WellMob project team member presenting, as well as investigators and collaborators from the Centre for Research Excellence – Strengthening Systems for Indigenous Health Care Equity.



Pictured left (L-R): UCRH's Marcelle Townsend-Cross, Tara Bayles, Tracey Piccoli and Angela Sheridan were among those from UCRH who attended the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Gathering in 2023.



Provost's grant *lights up student accommodation*

A grant from the University of Sydney's Provost Capital Equipment and Contingency Fund, 2023 saw us flex our solar muscle at six of our student accommodation facilities across the region.

The funding scheme supports faculties and schools within the University with funding for capital equipment to advance research and education. Our application for funding stemmed from the experience of the 2022 Northern Rivers flood disaster when power outages were experienced by students at our accommodation. To alleviate this, we were awarded \$93,000 to install solar batteries at various accommodation sites.

Solar panels had been installed previously to most of our student accommodation (and Lismore campus buildings) and these panels had been configured to accept battery integration later. The grant allowed us to install battery storage solutions to all but one our properties, including 27a Beith St Casino, pictured above. Other properties which had batteries installed included:

- 20 and 22 Dalziell Street, Lismore;
- 4 Ayr Street, Maclean; and

- 18 Beith Street and 34a Sandilands Street in Casino.

In addition to the grant funded project we also installed a full solar system, panels, and batteries to our new student accommodation property at 8 Thompson Close, Casino.

Batteries installed at the properties ranged from 7-14kWh and all have backup interface, which means that in the event of a power outage, the solar system would automatically detect the power outage and switch over to stored power. This means students staying with us will have continuous power. The system also identifies a return to normal mains power and switches back over. In general use, the houses run off stored power during the evening with batteries recharging during the day.

This work not only gives us continuity of power supply, but we have also seen a reduction in power bills and an overall reduction in our carbon footprint. We are proud that as an organisation, we can play our part in addressing the challenges of climate change through our research, teaching and the way we manage, maintain and upgrade our infrastructure.

A group effort *focused on aged care*

Older adults in rural areas face unique challenges in accessing healthcare services and we know that our region has one of the fastest growing ageing populations in NSW.

We want to provide this growing population with high-quality, safe, and innovative health services, so have designed a research project to explore new models of service delivery. With funding from the Australian Government, this project allows us to place an expanded cohort of allied health students in aged-care working environments using a service-learning model. This means we include student-centred learning, work-ready skill development, interprofessional learning and long-armed supervision. We are immersing them in real-life multidisciplinary settings in rural residential aged care homes and will undertake an extensive evaluation of the placements.

Throughout 2023, teams from across UCRH have worked closely on the project. Our Allied Health staff have been integral in planning and managing the student placements in Casino and Kyogle.

Research staff are leading the project evaluation, looking at the effectiveness and sustainability of the student placements. Their focus includes understanding to what extent the program enhances the residents' health & wellbeing. They will assess how the program changes students' perceptions of aged care and career decisions and considering whether the program contributes to local workforce capability and capacity building. Our Facilities staff have also been involved, coordinating the purchase and fit-out of new student accommodation to service the additional placements.

This project will facilitate development of an evidence-based rural placement model that is sustainable in rural and remote communities. We will share our project findings with partners to broaden the scope of placements across the region. We also hope to make a national impact. By listening to stakeholders, understanding placement needs and aspirations and conveying this to government, we can help shape future rural health workforce policies.



Caring for our community

In 2023, there was a region-wide focus on recovery across the Northern Rivers. After the devastating floods and storms of 2022, it was important for us to play a role in the rejuvenation of our region. One of the most important ways for us to do this is through our research capacity and expertise.

Throughout the year, our work on and around disaster recovery continued. UCRH led the Northern Rivers arm of a qualitative study about Community-Led Self-Organising Following Disaster. The study aimed to explore community-led organising before, during and after disasters. Our work focused on the aftermath of the 2022 floods. Staff from UCRH are working collaboratively with co-investigators from University of Sydney's Sydney Environment Institute as well as other teams in the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury. Preliminary findings from the Northern Rivers part of the study were presented in 2023 and initial findings from the whole project were included in a submission to a Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience.

Following the floods, staff from UCRH also turned their attention to how the devastation impacted medical students on rural placement in the region. Outcomes from this work were published in the *Medical Education* journal. This research delved into the experience of medical students who volunteered when Lismore experienced disaster, drawing important insights around their motivations and mental health implications.

Lead author Dr Jodie Bailie from UCRH said the study provided insights into supporting volunteering pathways and mental health support for medical students, and the implications of this in better preparing students for future disasters.

"The potential for medical students to support the community response and recovery after disasters should not be overlooked. Supporting them to volunteer will help students develop and hone valuable skills, but will also be a tangible support for countless people whose lives and health will be



impacted by climate change," she added.

The study highlighted the need for universities to offer comprehensive support to medical students who volunteer during disaster relief efforts. Adequate training in disaster response, trauma-informed care, and psychological support is crucial to ensure students' safety and well-being.

We are not the only research organisation harnessing our skills for flood recovery. We partnered with the Living Lab Northern Rivers, itself a collaboration between Southern Cross University, University of Technology Sydney and the NSW Government, to deliver a workshop on Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Cycle of Work from Disaster Preparedness to Reconstruction and Adaptation.

The workshop convened a diverse group of experts, community leaders, service providers, and government representatives. It brought to the forefront a need for comprehensive, community-centred approaches that emphasise effective communication, community engagement, and long-term sustainability of supporting services, such as community hubs. We hope the insights and recommendations from the workshop can provide valuable guidance for governments, organisations, and communities as they continue to work towards building community resilience in the face of evolving climate challenges and disaster scenarios. A report was produced from the workshop to help guide stakeholders in future decision making and planning.

Rural Health Strategy 2023–2027

health equity for rural communities

The disparities in health outcomes between urban Australians and those living in regional and remote locations is one of the great health inequities in Australian society.

The challenges of addressing these health inequities are enormous and the University of Sydney, through its Faculty of Medicine and Health (FMH) and its three Rural Clinical Schools, of which the UCRH is one, is well positioned to make a major contribution.

The University has historically made a strong commitment to improving health outcomes and health workforce training in rural NSW, including by establishing and operating two of the first nationally funded University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) in Broken Hill in 1996 and Lismore in 2001, and one of the first Rural Clinical Schools (RCS) in Dubbo in 2001. The separate Australian Government programs supporting UDRHs, RCSs and rural dentistry training were merged in 2016 through the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program.

With the need for whole of workforce development in rural health, and the importance of multidisciplinary and interprofessional approaches to our work, the three rural health campuses operate as multidisciplinary Rural Clinical Schools. It is important to note that other parts of the University undertake research in rural health, and each Rural Clinical School has partnerships with up to 20 universities and these wider networks and contributions are vital to achieving our goals.

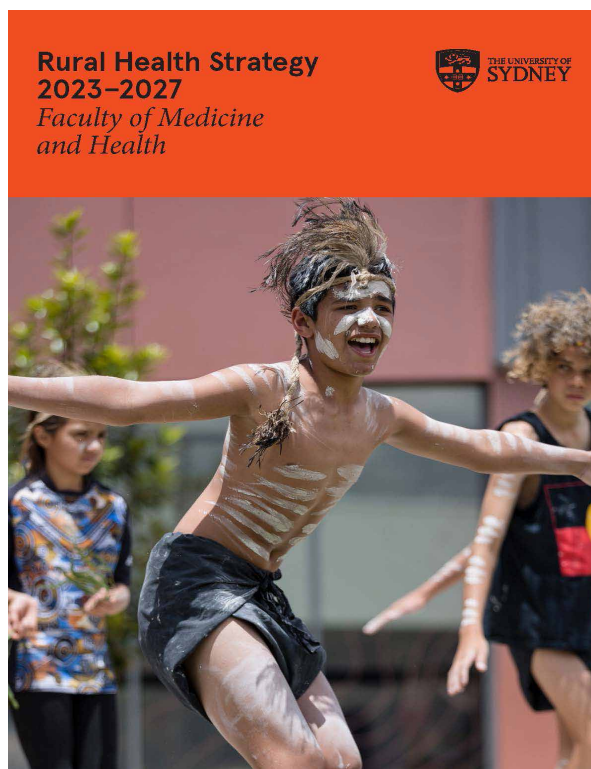
The Rural Health Strategy was developed through an intensive 12-month collaborative process with the Rural Clinical Schools, the University, and health partners, and directly aligns with the FMH Strategic Plan 2025 and the University “Sydney in 2032 Strategy”. The Rural Health Strategy connects rural and metropolitan activities and aims to drive stronger engagement in rural health beyond the parameters of the RHMT program, and to act as a roadmap in addressing the disparities in health that exist in regional and remote locations.

The Strategy aims to make use of existing networks and capacity including a focus on building the capacity and capability of the rural health workforce and promoting engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. It has four pillars:

- Leadership and culture
- Research performance and capacity
- Teaching and learning innovation
- Governance and contemporary operations.

In reflecting on the Strategy, the Director of UCRH, Professor Vicki Flood emphasised the role collaboration will have to play in achieving our goals.

“We are working together, building on our existing, strong relationships across rural NSW for better health equity for rural communities. Listening deeply and working alongside our communities will help us progress toward better health and wellbeing,” she said.





About us

Based in the Northern Rivers of NSW, we have grown significantly since our foundation in 2001. We partner with more than 20 universities from across Australia to provide the best possible educational experience in rural health for medical, nursing and allied health students.

We are part of the University of Sydney as one of three Rural Clinical Schools within the Faculty of Medicine and Health (along with schools in Dubbo/ Orange and Broken Hill). This rural alliance forms the Faculty's Rural Precinct with our strategic directions and priorities guided by the 2023-2027 Rural Health Strategy (see story on opposite page).

We are also part of a network of University Departments of Rural Health across the country all focused on multidisciplinary health education.

Since 2007 we have delivered the North Coast Medical Education Collaboration between the Universities of Wollongong, Western Sydney and Sydney to provide placements for long stay medical students in addition to our shorter stay students.

Much of our work is funded by the Australian Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program. This national initiative aims to build rural health workforce by supporting training and

research programs throughout rural and regional Australia. It has allowed us to deliver a robust education program and to pursue new opportunities across the Northern Rivers. We are now at the forefront of developments in service-based learning in multidisciplinary primary healthcare.

We have also developed our capacity to offer continuing professional development and have a state-of-the-art Simulation Centre providing training for students and rural health practitioners. We have partnered with the Local Health District to establish and operate the Northern NSW Regional Training Hub. We are part of the collective of organisations which founded the WellMob project and host the staff who deliver this important resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals.

We conduct leading research programs that contribute to large-scale health services and environmental health research collaborations, ranging from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care to the impacts of climate change on individual health.

Appendix:

UCRH authored publications 2023

AUTHORS	TITLE	JOURNAL	DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER
Aggar C.; Craswell A.; Bail K.; Compton R.; Hughes M.; Sorwar G.; Hamiduzzaman K. ; Greenhill J.; Shinnars L.; Baker J.	A co-designed web-based Delirium Toolkit for carers: An eDelphi evaluation of usability and quality	Collegian V30 E2	10.1016/j.colegn.2022.11.001
Baillie J. ; Bishop G.M.; Badland H.; Emerson E.; Aitken Z.; Stancliffe R.; Ekanayake K.; Llewellyn G.	Health and wellbeing outcomes associated with loneliness for people with disability: a scoping review	BMC Public Health V23 E1	10.1186/s12889-023-17101-9
Baillie J. ; Disney G.; Quilliam C.; Kavanagh A.M.	The NDIS at ten years: designing an equitable scheme for the next decade	Medical Journal of Australia	10.5694/mja2.52173
Baillie J. ; Fortune N.; Plunkett K.; Gordon J.; Llewellyn G.	A call to action for more disability-inclusive health policy and systems research	BMJ Global Health V8 E3	10.1136/bmjgh-2022-011561
Baillie J. ; Matous P.; Baillie R. ; Passey M.E.	Patterns of collaboration and knowledge generated by an Australian rural research centre over 20 years: a co-authorship network analysis	Health Research Policy and Systems V21 E1	10.1186/s12961-023-01029-y
Baillie J. ; Reed K.; Matthews V. ; Scott K.M.; Ahern C. ; Baillie R.	Volunteering as prosocial behaviour by medical students following a flooding disaster and impacts on their mental health: A mixed-methods study	Medical Education	10.1111/medu.15199
Baillie R.	Climate-Related Natural Disasters: Reflections on an Agenda for Rural Health Research	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health V20 E8	10.3390/ijerph20085553
Banna M.H.A.; Brazendale K.; Hamiduzzaman M. ; Ahinkorah B.O.; Abid M.T.; Rifat M.A.; Sultana M.S.; Tetteh J.K.; Kundu S.; Shekhar M.S.R.; Khaleduzzaman M.; Hassan M.N.	Exposure to secondhand smoke is associated with poor sleep quality among non-smoking university students in Bangladesh: a cross-sectional survey	Scientific Reports V13 E1	10.1038/s41598-023-43970-6
Bishop M.E.R.; Hamiduzzaman M. ; Veltre A.S.	Mindfulness meditation use in chronic pain treatment in rural Australia: Pitfalls and potential – A case report	Journal of Neurosciences in Rural Practice V14 E3	10.25259/JNRP-2022-4-7
Blackberry I.; Rasekaba T.; Morgan D.; Royals K.; Greenhill J.; Perkins D.; O'Connell M.; Hamiduzzaman M. ; Winbolt M.; Robinson A.; Davis H.; Wilding C.	Virtual Dementia-Friendly Communities (Verily Connect) Stepped-Wedge Cluster-Randomised Controlled Trial: Improving Dementia Caregiver Wellbeing in Rural Australia	Geriatrics (Switzerland) V8 E5	10.3390/geriatrics8050085
Bourke L.; Brand A.; Howard C.; Aitken R.; Argus G.; Brown L.J.; Debenham J.; Felton-Busch C.; Flood V. ; Jones D.; Jones M.; Knight S.; Perrin B.; Thompson S.; Versace V.	Let us not forget what the Romans did do—The impact of RHMT	Australian Journal of Rural Health V31 E4	10.1111/ajr.13023
Casten M.; Herbert S.; Smith D.J.; Petoumenos K.; Coorey C.; Edmiston N.	What are the predictors of change in multimorbidity among people with HIV? A longitudinal observational cohort study	HIV Medicine V24 E7	10.1111/hiv.13483

AUTHORS	TITLE	JOURNAL	DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER
Chakraborty A.; Walke E.; Bainbridge R.; Baillie R.; Matthews V.; Larkins S.; Burgess P.; Askew D.; Langham E.; Smorgon S.; Swaminathan G.; Cameron D.; Piccoli T.; Passey M.	VOICE–Validating Outcomes by Including Consumer Experience: A Study Protocol to Develop a Patient Reported Experience Measure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Accessing Primary Health Care	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health V20 E1	10.3390/ijerph20010357
Cunningham J.; Baillie J.; Warner S.; Condon A.; Cheung D.; Minc A.; Herbert S.; Edmiston N.	Determinants of access to general practice in a shared care model for people living with HIV: a qualitative study of patients' perspectives in an Australian rural community	BMC Primary Care V24 E1	10.1186/s12875-023-02142-1
D'Aprano A.; Lloyd-Johnsen C.; Cameron D.; Wunungmurra A.; Hull C.; Boyle C.; Naylor M.; Brunette R.; Campbell J.; Matthews V.	Trusting relationships and learning together: A rapid review of Indigenous reference groups in Australian Indigenous health research	Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health V47 E3	10.1016/j.anzjph.2023.100051
Davies A.; Gwynn J.; Allman-Farinelli M.; Flood V.; Dickson M.; Turner N.; Porykali B.; Lock M.	Programs Addressing Food Security for First Nations Peoples: A Scoping Review	Nutrients V15 E14	10.3390/nu15143127
Edmiston N.; Hu W.; Tobin S.; Bailey J.; Joyce C.; Reed K.; Mogensen L.	Correction: "You're actually part of the team": a qualitative study of a novel transitional role from medical student to doctor (BMC Medical Education, (2023), 23, 1, (112), 10.1186/s12909-023-04084-9)	BMC Medical Education V23 E1	10.1186/s12909-023-04127-1
Edmonds C.; Tam R.; Madigan S.; Gubb L.; Beck K.L.; Gifford J.A.; Flood V.M.; Prvan T.; Gemming L.N.; O'Connor H.	Validation of a sports nutrition knowledge questionnaire for athletes in the United Kingdom and Ireland	Journal of Nutritional Science 12	10.1017/jns.2022.109
Fortune N.; Baillie J.; Gordon J.; Plunkett K.; Hargrave J.; Madden R.; Llewellyn G.	Developing self-report disability questions for a voluntary patient registration form for general practice in Australia	Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health V47 E2	10.1016/j.anzjph.2023.100032
GBD 2019 Australia Collaborators (Hamiduzzaman M. UCRH)	The burden and trend of diseases and their risk factors in Australia, 1990–2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019	The Lancet Public Health V E8	10.1016/S2468-2667(23)00123-8
Gilanyi Y.L.; Wewege M.A.; Shah B.; Cashin A.G.; Williams C.M.; Davidson S.R.E.; McAuley J.H.; Jones M.D.	Exercise Increases Pain Self-efficacy in Adults With Nonspecific Chronic Low Back Pain: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis	Journal of Orthopaedic and Sports Physical Therapy V53 E6	10.2519/jospt.2023.11622
Gleadhill C.; Dooley K.; Kamper S.J.; Manvell N.; Corrigan M.; Cashin A.; Birchill N.; Donald B.; Leyland M.; Delbridge A.; Barnett C.; Renfrew D.; Lamond S.; Boettcher C.E.; Chambers L.; Maude T.; Davis J.; Hodgson S.; Makaroff A.; Wallace J.B.; Kotrick K.; Mullen N.; Gallagher R.; Zelinski S.; Watson T.; Davidson S.; Viana Da Silva P.; Mahon B.; Delore C.; Manvell J.; Gibbs B.; Hook C.; Stoddard C.; Meers E.; Byrne M.; Schneider T.; Bolsewicz K.; Williams C.M.	What does high value care for musculoskeletal conditions mean and how do you apply it in practice? A consensus statement from a research network of physiotherapists in New South Wales, Australia	BMJ Open V13 E6	10.1136/bmjopen-2022-071489
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AUTHORS	TITLE	JOURNAL	DIGITAL OBJECT IDENTIFIER
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