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## Learning and Teaching Grant Success

In partnership with two other university departments of rural health (UDRHs), UTAS has been awarded an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Strategic Priority Project Grant to investigate and better support the transition of rural students as they move from home to study health professional courses at university.

The grant of \$209,000 will look at practical ways to adapt and apply a 'thriving in transition' model to different settings and with a range of health science students. By working with transition coordinators and student counsellors at university campuses in Tasmania, W.A. and N.S.W., this project will contribute to those activities and initiatives currently taken by universities to assist student transition. This research targets the assistance provided to rural students, including those from lower socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds, to enable them to better manage and cope with their transition to tertiary study - especially where this may involve a physical re-location.

As a collaborative project, the UTAS-UDRH team (Dr Martin Harris and Dr Tony Barnett) will be working closely with Professor Sandy Thompson and Judy Riggs from the

Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health (W.A.) and with Professor Lesley Barclay and Frances Barraclough from the Northern Rivers University Centre for Rural Health (NSW).

The project will assist transition coordinators initiate early interventions with students to help them recognise when support may be required, how to access and best utilise such support and then to learn from these experiences so that they are better equipped to manage similar challenges in the future. By detailing these activities and providing guidelines that may be used or adapted for use by universities across a range of different cohorts of students, this project will contribute to the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. It will also help improve the "success" of rural students in studying and completing health professional courses and in this way contribute to a range of rural health workforce initiatives that seek to bolster the number of health care professionals choosing to live and work in rural and remote areas.

For further information, contact Dr Martin Harris: Project Leader on [Martin.harris@utas.edu.au](mailto:Martin.harris@utas.edu.au) or telephone 6324 4029.

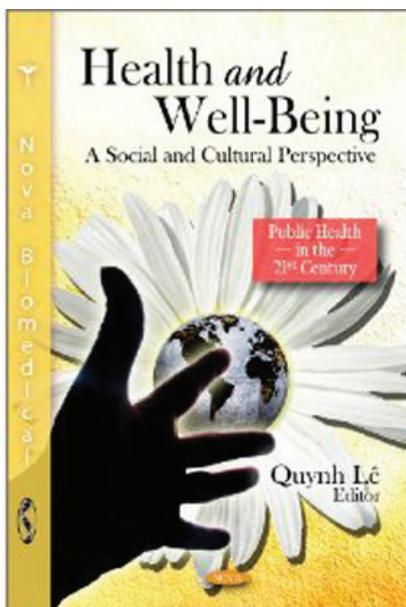
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Dr Martin Harris, ALTC "Thriving in Transition" Project Leader

## UDRH publish new books “Health and Well-being: A Social and Cultural Perspective”



Globalisation has brought people of different social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds closely together. This cultural diversity has become an important social phenomenon in various contexts and at different levels. This global phenomenon also brings along many insights on current complex issues in health and well-being, particularly migrant health which is of special interest to countries like Australia.

The book, edited by [Dr Quynh Lê](#), UTAS Department of Rural Health Health and published by Nova Science Publishers, (2011) is on sale at the Amazon website (<http://www.amazon.com/>) and the Nova Science Publishers website ([https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=19794](https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=19794))



Book Editor, Dr Quynh Le

## A Plus international journal paper published by UDRH’s climate change and health program

Some of the world’s biggest names in climate change research have come together in a new book to explain how climate change threatens the health of rural children. *Climate Change and Rural Child Health* is an edited collection of 19 papers by 46 authors from 10 different countries, including some of the world’s most celebrated climate change researchers as well as innovative new voices. [Associate Professor Erica Bell](#), leader of the UDRH’s climate change and health program, is the first editor of this collection.

A/Prof Bell says “Climate change is one of the biggest threats to human health in the 21st Century. Many climate change ‘hotspots’ lie in rural communities and within these communities children represent a most vulnerable group. Until now rural child health has been relatively neglected in climate change research.” The book brings together papers from a wide range of disciplines. Topics cover sustainability education for children, child rights and equity, and specific impacts of climate change on child health.

“The group that contributed is diverse but well connected by a shared commitment to excellence in climate change research for vulnerable groups,” says A/Prof Bell. “For example, Dr Michael MacCracken, Chief Scientist for Climate Change Programs at the USA’s Climate Institute in Washington DC; Professor Cheryl Macpherson who is Chair of the Bioethics Department in the School of Medicine at St. George’s University in the West Indies; Professor Mas Coma, President of the European Federation of Parasitologists and Expert Member of the World Health Organization, at the Universidad de Valencia, Spain; Dr Paul Beggs, Department of Environment and Geography in the Faculty of Science at Macquarie University, who won this year’s Eureka Prize for Medical Research for his work on the impact of climate change on allergens.”

The book is available from Nova Science publishers New York <https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog>

Adding to the UDRH’s growing publications record on climate change and health is A/Prof Bell’s paper ‘Making health services climate-change ready: A policy framework for regional development’ published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in May 2011, Vol 101, No. 5. and can be viewed at <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/content/short/101/5/804>

A/Prof Bell said that “climate change presents the biggest threat to human health in the 21st Century. However, many public health leaders feel ill-equipped to face the challenges of climate change. The paper explores how to achieve a regionally responsive ‘whole-of-systems’ approach to climate change.



Climate Change book editor, Dr Erica Bell

## Another day comes with good news!

Dr Quynh Lê, Mr Stuart Auckland and Associate Professor Tony Barnett have won a nationally competitive research grant of \$22,486 from the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development & Local Government to examine the food security and health risks of youth living in the rural North West area of Tasmania. The study will contribute to the understanding of food security and health risks of the youth living in the area. Insights gained from this study have implications for a wider social context in terms of regional and social disadvantage and social inclusion.

The project will commence in September 2011 and conclude on 31 August 2012.

For further information about the project please contact Dr Quynh Lê on telephone 6324 4053.



## Building Research Services for Policy Makers

Associate Professor Erica Bell has been working hard with Associate Professor Leigh Blizzard of the Menzies Research Institute and former UDRH staff member Dr Shandell Elmer, now senior project officer for Quality Management Services, to deliver a report commissioned by the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The project is aimed at evaluating the Connecting Care: Chronic Disease Action Framework for Tasmania 2009-2013. The consultancy addresses three different issues relevant to benchmarking Connecting Care: tools for benchmarking a service itself; critical issues in using big-N data in population health analyses; a novel policy

tool for treating small-N data in different kinds of benchmarking studies involving population health indicators or stakeholder perceptions. "The project is another example of why the UDRH needs to be a research focussed academic unit," says Professor Bell. "Policy makers and practitioners deserve to be supported with the best research evidence we as a rural health department can provide. The kind of research we are trying to do here is about bringing together community engagement approaches with well-established quantitative, as well as new policy-oriented, research methods for addressing the challenges of improving chronic disease services and outcomes.



## Yoga poses healing hope - new grant



Annette Loudon has been awarded a Swan Research Institute grant of \$1,008.00 for her research into the effects of yoga on health. The study is the first to explore the benefits of yoga for women who have survived breast cancer. Annette, a Masters student, is supervised by Associate Professor Tony Barnett, will use yoga skills she learned more than a quarter of a century ago in a Balinese village to explore whether yoga can help with lymphoedema, an incurable swelling and pain in the arm that affects 20% of women who have had radiation therapy or surgery for breast cancer. Annette has recently spoken about her research at the inaugural Australian Yoga Therapy Conference in Sydney in June. She has been asked to speak about her research at a workshop on lymphoedema in Hobart in August.

## Strategic Research Funds - in brief

The FHS Research committee in 2011 has made available funding to support discrete research activities critical to national competitive grant applications or publications. The intention of this fund is to enable researchers to generate critical data or support collaborative activity which will lead to future funding and publishing success. Research topics awarded are "The effect of yoga on women with secondary arm lymphoedema from breast cancer treatment", "Women's needs in maternity care and related sustainable service models in rural areas: a systematic review" and "Which features of the physical activity environment are important for physical activity among rural men? A qualitative investigation". For further information about these research topics please contact UDRH on telephone 6324 4000.

## Launch of Rural Health Week 2011

The UDRH is proud once again to be a partner in the Tasmanian Rural Health Week. Rural Health Week began in 2007 to allow rural communities to address local health issues through innovative health promotion activities. It provides an opportunity to raise awareness about rural health issues and the importance of healthy lifestyle choices. It's a way of highlighting the importance of a preventative approach to health and wellbeing. And it's a chance to thank the local champions who have worked so hard to improve health and wellbeing in rural communities through the Rural Health Awards.

The theme of Rural Health Week 2011 is "Collaborating for Rural Health". Collaborations are important in rural areas; as the saying goes, "many hands make light work" and close working relationships between health services, health workers, local councils, schools, community groups and individuals are vital for funding, organising and implementing successful health promotion activities.

Health Minister Michelle O'Byrne launched Rural Health Week 2011 on Friday 15 April. She encouraged local groups from communities around the state to apply for community grants and rural Tasmanians to nominate local champions of health and wellbeing. More than 50 people attended the launch which was held at Scottsdale Primary School including students from Scottsdale, Bridport, Ringarooma and Winnaleah primary schools. Scottsdale was chosen as the location for this year's launch as schools in the area received Rural Health Week funding in 2009 to develop school gardens. As well as providing substantial crops of both winter and summer vegetables, the gardens provide a learning environment in which theory and practical skills central to environmental sustainability are explored and developed.

Events like Rural Health Week have proved to be a successful way of empowering communities to improve their own health. Rural Health Week will be held from 14 to 20 November 2011, culminating with the Rural Health Awards on Sunday 20 November. For information about the event, how to apply for community funds, or how to nominate someone for a Rural Health Award, go to the website: [www.rhwta.com.au](http://www.rhwta.com.au)

Launch of Rural Health Week 2011, from top community members at the Launch, Rural Health Week Co-ordinator Stuart Auckland, A/Prof Tony Barnett addressing the Launch and invited guests taking a tour of the site



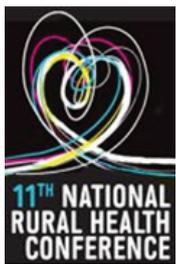
## Practitioners join UDRH for research fellowships

The UDRH is delighted to welcome on board this year's PHCRED Research Development Program trainees (RDPs).

In Launceston, [Jane Brodie](#) and [Annabelle Bond](#) are working hard to scope their projects under A/Prof Tony Barnett's direction and in Hobart [Lorraine Davies](#) and [Cecile McKeown](#) (pronounced Cecily) are working under the guidance of A/Prof Erica Bell.

Broadly, these projects will explore the topics of healthy ageing, inter-professional learning in the clinical environment, climate change and primary health care and translational research for health policy or practice. Each project will continue until the end of the calendar year. Welcome to our new research fellowships.

# 11th National Rural Health Conference



Karla Peek and Susan Johns presented on Staying healthy: how farmers and fishers maintain good health in difficult times; Peter Orpin discussed The broker: bridging the gap between the bureaucratic and the local in supporting older rural people; Judy Spencer shared Celebrating multidisciplinary practice and learning: three years' evaluation of an undergraduate interprofessional rural health education pilot; Hazel Baynes presented her poster Learning and older rural people: interest, opportunity and benefits to health and wellbeing at the conference; and Erica Bell presented on Climate change and rural primary health care: Towards better regional health impact and risk assessments. Erica also presented a pre-conference workshop on writing for publication in her role as deputy editor of the Australian Journal of Rural Health, the official journal of the National Rural Health Alliance, following an invitation from some of Australia's leaders in rural health research to join the journal's editorial team.

All delegates were encouraged to offer recommendations for future action and draft proposals for action at local, state and national level were collected at various stages of the Conference. A Conference recommendations group collated these and drew out key themes and issues. A number of Recommendations Roundtables were convened during the Conference at which interested delegates contributed to the development of a set of priority recommendations. These were progressively presented to all delegates in a number of plenary sessions for comments and, in the final plenary session, for approval. This was a way of ensuring that there were concrete outcomes from the latest research presented at the conference which could contribute directly to improvements in health policy for rural Australians.

Each year this conference provides a wonderful opportunity to share the research of the UDRH with our peers from other organisations around the country as well as building strategic relationships with potential for future collaboration. It was great to see such a broad range of our work represented this year. Well done to all who attended and presented.

## Induction of new RHD candidates

Our Induction Program for new graduate research students took place on 15 April 2011 with the participation of current students, supervisors and interested others. It was an opportunity to welcome new students to our UDRH Graduate Research family and most importantly to share with them important aspects of graduate research in the contexts of the University as well as the UDRH.

A warm welcome goes to our new PhD students: Robyn Collins, Alexandra King, Rowena MacKean, Christine Materia and Daniel Terry. We would like to thank colleagues and former students for their enthusiastic participation and strong support given to our Induction Program.



Our new Graduate Research Students, from left to right, Annette Loudon, Christine Materia, Daniel Terry, Graduate Research Co-ordinator Dr Quynh Le, Alexandra King, A/Prof Tony Barnett, Robyn Collins and Rowena Mackean



## Elite Scholarship opportunities in Rural Health

The University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) and Rural Clinical School (RCS), in collaboration with the Graduate Research Program at the University of Tasmania, are offering a number of Elite Research Scholarships for potential applicants to undertake PhD research in the rural health arena. The UDRH and the RCS conduct and support research on issues of rural health and health services. They have built a strong team of experienced researchers and evaluators drawn from a wide range of disciplines and professional practice areas. The Elite Research Scholarships are valued at \$30K per annum, tax-free, and are available for three years, with a possible six-month extension. To be eligible for a scholarship, applicants must enrol with the University Department of Rural Health and Rural Clinical School Graduate Research Program and undertake a topic under one of the following research themes:

### THEME: HEALTHY AGEING, CHRONIC CONDITIONS & REHABILITATION IN A RURAL/REMOTE CONTEXT

#### Topic: Ageing in place: how effective are current interventions to support older people remaining in their rural communities as they age?

Federal and state Governments have developed a number of approaches and a range of different programs over the past decade to support older people seeking to age in their home communities. These interventions, through a range of aged care packages are intended to provide personalised support which will enable older people to remain in their community and avoid or delay entry to aged care residential facilities. The growth in packages has come as the number of both rural hospital and residential aged care beds in rural communities has declined. While there are good aggregate data tracking the availability and usage patterns of the individual services, there is currently little research into how, and how well, these different services fit and work together to provide a quality, supported ageing-in-place experience for the older individual. The study would examine the effectiveness and quality of these interventions from the perspective of older service users and their families, with input from local service providers where relevant. The study would focus particularly on rural Tasmanian communities where the number of older people are increasing, and/or where traditional residential services are absent or decreasing.

Contact: Dr Peter Orpin and Ms Kim Boyer, Locked Bag 103, Hobart, 7000. Email: Peter.Orpin@utas.edu.au or Kim.Boyer@utas.edu.au Telephone: 03 6226 7344

#### Topic: Ageing in place in rural Tasmania

Across Australia, the population in rural areas is ageing more rapidly than that in metropolitan areas. A key strategy to sustain this ageing population has been to support "ageing in place" to extend the time spent by older adults living independently in their own homes whilst maintaining their quality of life. This can be problematic in rural areas where access to services and support are particularly challenging.



This study will draw upon concepts such as quality of Life, neighbourhood, networks, social support, sense of place, mobility and activity space to better understand how location and other place characteristics impact on well-being, access to and patterns of healthcare support. The outcome of this research will be to provide practitioners, health planners and policy makers with evidence upon which more appropriate interventions can be planned to better support ageing in place in rural areas.

Contact: A/Professor Tony Barnett, Locked Bag 1372, Launceston, 7250. Email: Tony.Barnett@utas.edu.au Telephone: 03 6324 4011

### THEME: RURAL WORKFORCE: SUPPORT, INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, INTERPROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

#### Topic: Interprofessional learning in health care – assessment and impact

Interprofessional education (IPE) and interprofessional learning (IPL) have become popularised over the last decade as realistic methods for promoting collaboration between health care disciplines and across sectors. The underlying goal of IPE/IPL in health care is to improve health outcomes for the individual patient or client, their family, the community and the population as a whole.

Whilst a great deal of encouragement and support has been provided to the development of more collaborative models of care in rural areas and calls made for health care professionals to work together more closely, the assessment and evaluation of IPL/E has been problematic. Much work has been conducted and reported on the impact learning about and from each other (working together) has had on participant health care professionals, though there exists a dearth of studies on the impact effective collaboration may have on patient (or equivalent) outcomes. Does IPL/IPE work? Does it contribute to health outcomes? How can this be realistically assessed or measured?

In this study, the candidate will interrogate these (or similar) questions. The focus of this empirical investigation could be on: organisational processes, health (patient) outcomes, critical incidents (adverse outcomes), student learning or clinical education and capacity building.

Contact: A/Professor Tony Barnett, Locked Bag 1372, Launceston, 7250. Email: Tony.Barnett@utas.edu.au Telephone: 03 6324 4011

# Elite Scholarship opportunities in Rural Health

## Topic: Personal and professional transitions

In this study, the candidate will investigate decision-making, adaptive responses and ways in which students or new entrants to the workforce manage their transition to new roles in challenging circumstances. The focus of this research will be on transition associated with a move from a rural environment to study in a metropolitan or major regional setting or in moving from such locations to work or study in a rural location. The long term aim of this research will be to enhance the capability of the rural workforce by contributing to our understanding of the transition process and to develop and tests ways in which this transition can be better supported. One aspect of the program would be to look at practical ways to adapt and apply a “thriving in transition” model to students who have relocated from a rural environment to study a health professional course in a regional or metropolitan University (or TAFE). Another option would be to investigate how university graduates (eg. health, service and primary industry workers) transition to employment in a rural location and map their trajectory for success.

Contact: Dr Martin Harris or A/Prof Tony Barnett, Locked Bag 1372, Launceston, 7250. Email: Martin.Harris@utas.edu.au or Tony.Barnett@utas.edu.au Telephone: 03 6324 4029 or 03 6324 4011

## THEME: HEALTH POLICY

### Topic: Health policy: making a difference to chronic disease services in rural communities

An elite scholarship is available in the area of health policy, targeting health services for chronic disease prevention and treatment in rural communities. The successful applicant will develop methods for measuring and improving how well health services meet the needs of those with chronic disease. A social inclusion approach will be taken that targets groups with unequal health outcomes in rural Australia who are experiencing particular disadvantages such as social exclusion through socio-economic disadvantage. The project will involve a strong policy development focus and step-wise consultation with state and national, as well as international, policy-makers and health agencies. The successful applicant will review existing methods for benchmarking health services in the area of chronic disease, including benchmarking data from such bodies as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare; consult with policy-makers and community stakeholders about appropriate indicators and approaches; develop methods and a model for better assessing service performance for disadvantaged and socially excluded groups.

Contact: A/Prof Erica Bell, Private Bag 103, Hobart, 7000. Email: Erica.Bell@utas.edu.au Telephone: 03 6226 7377

## THEME: HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

### Topic: Health literacy of older people living in rural Tasmania

The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that Tasmanians have the lowest level of health literacy among all the states and territories of Australia. Other research has also reported that older people generally have lower levels of health literacy, and that this results in difficulties communicating with health professionals, higher rates of accident and emergency visits and hospitalisations, poor chronic disease management, medication errors and lower uptake of preventative interventions. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods are proposed to examine the aspects and levels of health literacy of older Tasmanians living in rural communities, particularly those who are living with, or at-risk of, chronic illnesses. Two categories of participants are targeted in this study: older Tasmanians living in rural communities and health professionals working in Tasmania. Survey, interviews and/or focus groups will be used for data collection.

Contact: Dr Quynh Lê or A/Professor Tony Barnett, Locked Bag 1372, Launceston, 7250 Email: Quynh.Le@utas.edu.au or Tony.Barnett@utas.edu.au Telephone: 03 6324 4053

### Topic: Food security and cultural identity of migrants in the rural health context



The popular cliché “we are what we eat” is about the relationship between the food people eat and their consequent health conditions. This relationship underlies many health issues and problems associated with food security. Interestingly, current literature suggests that there is an intricate link between food security and cultural identity as individuals’ eating habits and their choice of foods are greatly influenced by their cultures. Thus food security is not only socially determined but also culturally constructed, which is strongly manifested in the context of migrants in Australia. This could explain why some migrants tend to live in areas where their culturally orientated foods are available.

The proposed research project examines the concept of ‘cultural identity’ and its influences on migrants’ food security and associated health issues, particularly for those living in rural areas. Methodologically, statistical analysis (using PASW), content analysis (using NVivo), and systematic review are needed for this research project.

Contact: Dr Quynh Lê, Locked Bag 1372, Launceston 7250. Email: Quynh.Le@utas.edu.au Telephone: 03 6324 4053



## Staff Changes

There have been a number of changes to the professional staff structure during 2011 to allow better alignment of responsibilities to the core functions of the Department. The key Professional Staff positions are now made up of the following positions:

Executive Officer – **Ms Lindie Lupo**. Lindie is accountable for the effective and efficient administrative and contractual management of the UDRH and has three distinct domain areas of responsibility, namely, strategic and business planning, financial management and human resource management and administration.

Administrative Officer: Executive Services – **Ms Amanda Feely**. Amanda is responsible for providing executive support to the executive of the UDRH; and in particular providing executive services to the Director. She is also responsible for preparing and co-ordinating reports to the Department of Health & Ageing (UDRH's funding body), co-ordinating the entry of academic publications and research outputs into the University's publication entry system (PES) and liaising with internal and external rural health stakeholders to promote the activities of the UDRH.

Administrative Officer: Teaching, Learning and Professional Development (AO:TL&PD) – **Ms Karla Peek**. Karla is responsible for managing and supporting the Department's teaching and professional development programs, including the Department's undergraduate student clinical placement support program, and our Rural Health Teaching Sites (RHTS). Her role also involves the coordination and implementation of professional development, seminar and community education programs, and the provision of administrative support to relevant graduate coursework programs.

Administrative Officer: Finance and Graduate Research – **Ms Kim Izard**. Kim provides high level support to the UDRH's postgraduate program including the administration and coordination of research and training activities for the Research Higher Degree students. Kim also contributes to the financial management of the UDRH.

Administrative Officer: Web Technology & Development – **Mr Darren Grattidge**. Darren provides assistance to the Department using internet technologies in the design and development of Web-based and other materials, including posters, and maintenance of the Department's web site.

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## New Appointments - in brief

**Janice Boric** has joined the UDRH team to carry on with Karla's role during her period of long service leave. Janice will be with us until Christmas working 4 days a week and is located in the Launceston office. Karla commenced leave on 21 July for 4 ½ months.

**Lyell Wilson** has joined the UDRH as coordinator of the PHCRED Mentoring Program. This is an exciting opportunity for the UDRH and our growing group of PHCRED mentees will benefit from Lyell's very considerable knowledge and skills in different health, education and community wellbeing areas.

Lyell is an indigenous Tasmanian who has been involved with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community since the early 1980s and has worked in Higher Education both here at UTAS and at Monash University for over 25 years.

His research interests and teaching areas include indigenous people both in Australia and internationally; mental health in indigenous peoples; indigenous health; indigenous knowledge; identity construction and maintenance; identity and cultural politics; ethnic identity and ethnic minorities. Lyell has published on indigenous people in India and Australia and also done reviews on indigenous health for Monash University and UTAS. Lyell will be working from the CML building in Hobart 3 days a week.



Newly appointed PHCRED Mentoring Program Co-ordinator, Lyell Wilson

## Other News - in brief

Senior Research Fellow **Kim Boyer** has been invited to join a new high-level group to provide strategic advice in relation to national primary health care research.

Kim has been asked by the Primary Health Care Research and Information Service (PHCRIS) and DoHA to join a Strategic Advisory Group which has been established to provide strategic direction and make recommendations to PHCRIS on its work related to PHCRED.

Other members of the Strategic Advisory Group are Prof Bob Wells from ANU, Prof Gawaine Powell-Davies from UNSW and former national leader of the RACGP Prof Michael Kidd.

**Dr Jess Woodroffe** has been involved in the West Tamar Council's first Positive Ageing Strategy. Its aim is to create a platform that will support and value the residents of the



West Tamar community as they grow older and to build opportunities for partnerships, planning and participation for positive ageing. It is a strategy designed for use by not only Council but also the community and relevant stakeholders.

This strategy was developed collaboratively by West Tamar Council and the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) after widespread community consultation

with over 650 community members and stakeholders and following a comprehensive review of research and policy relating to positive ageing

**Dr Martin Harris** presented at the First Year Higher Education conference in Fremantle in July. His paper 'Thriving in Transition' described the application of his model to the transition to first year university for students from non-traditional backgrounds.

The paper was well received and will facilitate the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Strategic Priority Project Grant to investigate and better support the transition of rural students as they move from home to study.

## Pharmacy News



Three Rural and Remote Pharmacy Scholarships, worth \$40 000 each over 4 years, have been awarded to Tasmanian candidates. Australia wide, 41 scholarships have been made available, which enable rural students to study Pharmacy at any University in Australia.

A further twelve Scholarships are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students wishing to study pharmacy. A unique aspect with these scholarships is the Pharmacy Mentor Program. Each student has a rural pharmacist as a mentor, who provides assistance and advice. They meet regularly and maintain contact to discuss issues that may occur both within and outside the university during the course of the degree.

Three students from the University of Tasmania are scholarship recipients in 2011. They are Claire Blackwell, from Carrick; Matthew Luciani from West Launceston and Fabian Dedal from Laurieton, NSW.

More information about the scholarships can be found at: <http://www.ruralpharmacy.com.au/AllowancesScholarships/GrantsScholarships/PharmacyStudentScholarships/tabid/644/language/en-AU/Default.aspx>

## Vacant Positions

An Administrative Assistant is required to work in our city based Launceston office. The administrative assistant is the first point of contact for visitors to the Department and provides general secretarial and administrative services associated with operations of the UDRH and supports the Community Health & Development academic team.

Senior Academic - Rural Health. This position will involve research, community engagement and teaching activities that make a direct contribution to the objectives of the University Department of Rural Health's (UDRH).

The appointee will contribute and undertake research in the UDRH's identified priority areas, initiate and manage projects, supervise students and, where appropriate, contribute to teaching programs. The appointee will also be required to undertake some administrative duties related to the position.

For further information about either role, please contact the UDRH on telephone 03 6324 4000 or email [rural.health@utas.edu.au](mailto:rural.health@utas.edu.au)

## UDRH Draft Strategic Priorities for 2012

### Learning and teaching

- Successfully implement the (new) Master of E-health course, achieving an initial enrolment of 10 students
- Review and revise at least 2 e-health units based on student feedback and peer review

### Research and research training

- Establish a relationship with an international high performance UDRH (however called) to extend and build research activity.
- Lift research performance by 25% (publication outputs, research grant income) and improve RHD completion rates from levels achieved in 2010.
- Benchmark research activity with a suitable UDRH in Australia.
- Through the further development of collaborations with other units (schools/departments, NGOs, Health service providers, DHHS etc.), consolidate and further focus the Department's research endeavours with appropriate regard to national health priorities and the Tasmania Health Plan.
- Build the Department supervisory base (for RHD students). Increase the number of supervisors by 25% from 2010 levels.
- Establish the UDRH as preferred research provider status for 1 or 2 new agencies.

### Community Engagement

- Participate in and contribute to the development and Centre of Health Services Innovation Australia in the Faculty of Health Sciences (CoHSIA).
- Establish a formal (research-based) working relationship with at least one new Local Government in rural Tasmania for purposes of assessing, mapping and improving the health of the population.

### Organisational

- Ensure the Department's resources are aligned to perform well against each of the (new) KPIs specified by the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) for university departments of rural health for the period 2011-2014.
- Develop a culture of service excellence across the Department in the achievement of KPIs, consultancies and other work

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## Men's Health focus at Agfest



The UDRH, in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Faculty of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and the Launceston Clinical School, provided a program of health checks at Agfest in May. The format was based on the DHHS

Events like Rural Health Week have proved to be a successful way of empowering communities to improve their own health. Rural Health Week will be held from 14 to 20 November 2011, culminating with the Rural Health Awards on Sunday 20 November. For information about the event, how to apply for community funds, or how to nominate someone for a Rural Health Award, go to the website: [www.rhwtas.com.au](http://www.rhwtas.com.au)

Students also dressed up in the 'Eric' suit to promote the DoHA 'Swap It, Don't Stop It' healthy choices campaign. The big blue suit was certainly a crowd pleaser. The DHHS's 'Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service' was also promoted. This service is a free, confidential telephone service that helps people to make lifestyle changes in relation to healthy eating, encourages physically activity and supports people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.



## UDRH to introduce new Masters of E-Health

From the beginning of 2012, the UDRH will be expanding its successful E-Health (Health Informatics) graduate program to offer a Masters in E-Health (Health Informatics). The program is being introduced in response to both student interest and trends within the health sector.

The Australian Government is committed to e-health and is facilitating the transition of paper-based clinical record keeping to electronic systems. The roll-out of the National Broadband Network will facilitate the adoption of e-health systems across the nation. Successful adoption and use of these systems will depend on a workforce with the skill and knowledge to exploit them. The National E-Health Strategy stresses the need to build Australia's e-health skills. This includes programs for specifically trained e-health professionals, but also extends to all health professionals. The new Masters of E-Health (Health Informatics) will contribute to the development of such a workforce.

The Masters of E-Health (Health Informatics) will replace the E-Health specialisation in the current Masters of Health (Specialisation) program. It will build on the existing Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in E-Health (Health Informatics). This will allow the UDRH to offer a suite of e-health programs that will include a Graduate Certificate, a Graduate Diploma and the Masters. It will also create opportunities for research, particularly socio-technical research, in this increasingly important discipline.

For more information about the program, contact Sue Whetton, Senior Lecturer and Coordinator, E-Health (Health Informatics) Program at [Sue.Whetton@utas.edu.au](mailto:Sue.Whetton@utas.edu.au)



E-Health Co-ordinator, Sue Whetton

## Current Research & Development Grants in the Department

Project Title	Funding Body	Funding Amount
Young people and physical activity	The Link Youth Service	\$18,980
Alcohol education for students	NSW Dept of Education & Training	\$10,000
Tasmanian food access research	Dept of Premier & Cabinet	\$42,550
Evaluation study of patient log books	Cancer Networks Tasmania	\$3,925
Enhancing friendly & safe communities	Dept of Premier & Cabinet	\$7,954
Rural Health Week	DHHS	\$30,000
Thriving in transition	Australian Learning & Teaching Council	\$209,000
Food security & related health risks facing vulnerable youth in North West Coast of Tasmania	Dept of Regional Australia	\$22,486
Climate change health impact & risk assessment tool	Tasmanian Climate Change Office	\$28,703
The effect of Yoga on women with secondary lymphedema	Swan Research Institute	\$1,008
Rural peer leadership project - wellbeing & drug education	Campbell Town District High School	\$3,500
Connecting care evaluation- chronic disease action framework	DHHS	\$31,573
Communities for children	The Salvation Army	\$54,546
Indigenous financial literacy	The Salvation Army	\$27,271
West Tamar council health & wellbeing mapping project	West Tamar Council	\$31,347
National suicide prevention strategy	Oz Help	\$33,420
Knowing the score	Drug Education Network	\$2,195
National binge drinking scope	Flinders University	\$39,019

## From the Director's desk

Welcome to the 2011 mid-year Bulletin from our Department. At this time of the year, we are busy collating information and reflecting on activities in association with our regular report to the Department of Health and Ageing. This year, things are a little different however as we are about to commence a new three year reporting and funding cycle, with some new objectives (KPIs) that highlight some of the Government's priorities in rural mental health and indigenous health. The cyclical nature of our funding means that this is a time to engage with our communities, the faculty (with our New Dean, Professor Ray Playford), and the university (with our new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Rathjen) in the development of new strategic and business plans that will shape our activities for the next



A/Prof Tony Barnett

To assist this process, we have convened internal fora on Teaching and Learning and Community Health and Development. These fora have been established as a regular mechanism to report, support and extend the work undertaken by staff across the UDRH in these areas. Of particular note, is the large number of research grants and consultancies undertaken for government and others in the area of rural health. At this point in time (mid-year), staff across the UDRH are working on a total of 18 externally funded projects that have attracted over \$500,000 in revenue. A highly significant achievement, with 11 of these projects having received funding and commenced this year.

The Department has farewelled **Lorraine Smith**, a lecturer in rural pharmacy based at the Mersey Hospital. Lorraine has worked on a part-time basis within the PAUDRH program which assists pharmacy students to be placed in rural areas of the state and strengthens university ties with community pharmacists. We have also recently said farewell to Associate Professor Peg Levine from the mental health program and Dr Susan Johns who has worked on a number of highly successful research projects with Professor Sue Kilpatrick. We wish them all the very best for the future.

Congratulations are extended to **Dr Gerard Gill** (an Honorary Associate with the UDRH) who has accepted a position as Professor of General Practice with Deakin University. Gerard has worked closely with the department over many years and undertook his doctoral studies with us. We wish Gerard and his wife all the very best with their move to Victoria and every success in the position. We welcome Lyell Wilson to our Hobart Office as coordinator of the PHCRED mentoring program and to our four new PHCRED scholars in Hobart and Launceston. A special welcome is also extended to our new research students and 'Elite' scholars who have joined the Department to undertake research in rural health. We wish them all a highly productive and rewarding time with us.

Tony Barnett  
Director

## UDRH Contact Details

University Department of Rural Health, Tasmania  
Locked Bag 1372  
Launceston Tasmania 7250  
Telephone: 03 6324 4000  
Facsimile: 03 6324 4040  
Email: [rural.health@utas.edu.au](mailto:rural.health@utas.edu.au)  
Website: [www.utas.edu.au](http://www.utas.edu.au)

For further information about the UDRH or material contained in this Bulletin, please contact [Amanda.Feely@utas.edu.au](mailto:Amanda.Feely@utas.edu.au) on 03 6324 4045 or email [Amanda.Feely@utas.edu.au](mailto:Amanda.Feely@utas.edu.au)