

Centre for Rural Health BULLETIN

December 2019

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New Nursing Science degree planned to be offered in North West Tasmania

The University of Tasmania's new Bachelor of Nursing Science (BNSc) will commence in 2021 (subject to approval and accreditation processes) to replace the current Bachelor of Nursing. The new course will be a significant change to the way in which U Tas offers undergraduate nurse education. The aim of the BNSc is to advance graduates' clinical skill sets within their scope of practice to ensure they have the capability to help drive the transformation of health outcomes in Tasmania and beyond. The program will be delivered at a number of locations including Burnie in North West Tasmania.

The BNSc is a flexible, contemporary offering based on industry input, student feedback and values of the School of Nursing and the University. Increased flexibility will be offered in a new trimester model with a variety of differing pathways, including a two year accelerated, three year standard and four year part-time degree offering.

Adoption of the blended mode of

delivery aims to provide increased accessibility for students from diverse groups and populations; an agile program that recognises the changing student landscape with a diversity of authentic assessment, and quality clinical placements. The BNSc degree has three key pillars delivered within its blended learning model; (i) online learning, (ii) face to face intensives and (iii) professional experience placement (PEP).



In the online platform, the BNSc will reverse the traditional lecture style of program delivery with interactive online content that focuses on understanding and learning about key concepts. Interactivity between students and academics will be

strategically embedded at all stages of the online experience.

The face to face intensives in the BNSc program are condensed face to face campus experiences. Intensives provide an opportunity for student engagement, networking with staff and peers, intraprofessional and interprofessional learning opportunities and engaging with guest speakers. Intensives

are designed to provide students with an opportunity to apply theory to practice situations and develop their skills in the practice of nursing. Intensives provide an opportunity to promote higher order learning, active learning and peer interaction.

Professional experience placement is the final pillar in the blended

learning model, and ensures that the students' learning is relevant, real and sustainable.

If you would like to provide feedback, please email: BNCourseReview@utas.edu.au

News and Activities

NAIDOC Week at Trawmanna 7-14 July 2019

NAIDOC Week (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout our country. The 2019 theme, 'Voice. Treaty. Truth. Let's work together for a shared future', captured the key message from the Uluru Statement from the Heart – for First Nation peoples and all Australians to come together in a spirit of genuine reconciliation and reform.

At the Circular Head Aboriginal cultural centre, 'Trawmanna' (our place), around 170 people came together to celebrate NAIDOC Week; with the local Aboriginal community along with special guests and visitors from around the State. The Week featured a flag raising ceremony, smoking/cleansing ceremony and cultural activities such as, the manufacture of fibre rope and twine, kelp baskets and water carriers, clap sticks and spears, along with music and art. We shared in a feast of traditional foods including mutton bird, crayfish and kangaroo while yarning about our history, culture and being together as a community.

Guest speakers included respected Elder Auntie Patsy Cameron AO who provided a heart-warming welcome to Country and paid homage to the traditional owners and the local community. Roger Jaensch MP and State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs acknowledged the need to both recognise and consult with different Aboriginal stakeholders, communities and organisations in Tasmania regarding cultural heritage policies. Tony Smart, CHAC Manager, provided an update of the ongoing family, education, health and cultural programs to support the local community. Joan Rylah MP and local councillors also shared the day with Elders and community members.

Terry Cox, community member, took the opportunity to discuss his close cultural links to Circular Head and his role as a researcher with the Centre for Rural Health. He spoke of how

Elders view community health in terms of intergenerational relationships, cultural healing and spiritual wellbeing through ongoing connections to community and Country. He also emphasised the deep history of the region, from the first voices ever heard on country that were spoken by Aboriginal people thousands of years ago, and the continuity of our voices today and into the future.



NAIDOC Week was celebrated at Trawmanna with guest speakers (left to right) Roger Jaensch MP State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Tony Smart CHAC Manager, Elder Auntie Patsy Cameron AO, Terry Cox CRH and Sam Cleland CHAC Chairperson.



Further Information

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NEW STAFF

Rachael Zeeman

Rachael Zeeman is a speech and language pathologist who has been practicing for six years. She graduated from La Trobe University in 2013 with a combined Bachelor of Health Sciences and a Master of Speech Pathology. Rachael returned to Tasmania in 2014 to complete her graduate year at St Giles, Launceston where she worked in the field of early intervention. At the time of appointment to this position, she was



awarded a new graduate scholarship which allowed her to extend her knowledge and skills specifically in the paediatric field by attending many conferences and workshops.

Rachael then spent four years employed by the Department of Education, Tasmania where she assisted school-aged children who were experiencing communication and swallowing difficulties. This role allowed her to work in a variety of settings, including early intervention, mainstream schools and disability.

Currently, Rachael is working part-time in private practice in Launceston, helping children who have speech and language difficulties, and complex communication needs.

Rachael is also working part-time with the Centre for Rural Health at the University of Tasmania, as a research assistant on the Recent Graduate Workforce Project.

NEW PhD candidate

Christine Low

My name is Christine Low Siew Lan and I have recently started doing my PhD with the University of Tasmania's Center for Rural Health.

My research project is mainly looking into clinical outcomes and the impact of after-hours tele-assistance service in a Palliative Care setting.

I graduated in a Master of Palliative Care from Flinders University, Adelaide, and a Bachelor in Nursing (Hons) from the International Medical University, Malaysia.

In the past, I have worked as a community palliative care nurse, back in my home country, Malaysia. I was involved in caring for patients and their families in the community as well as teaching a program involving nurses, medical students, and future palliative care specialists.

I am very passionate in the development of palliative care and looking forward to contributing more in this field.



Mental Health Week Wellbeing Scavenger Hunt!

Mental Health Week was held between 7-11th October 2019. This year the theme focused on, '5 Ways to Wellbeing' including Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give.

A Wellbeing Scavenger hunt was held on the Newnham campus for staff and students. The Hunt was organised by two students, Emma Langley (Psychology) and Graziela Ferrari (Social Work), currently on professional experience placement at the UTAS student counselling service and supported by Dr Heather Bridgman (Lecturer in Rural Mental Health, CRH). Prizes for the event were supported by the Centre for Rural Health and the School of Health Sciences.

Ten teams of 3-5 students and staff members competed in the 30 minute lunchtime Scavenger Hunt. Hunt activities were designed to offer participants opportunities to engage in the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. Examples of activities included: Connect – find out the hometowns of your team mates; Be Active – take

a photo of your team down at the Unigym; Take Notice - take a photo of anyone or anything on campus that has the Utas logo/mascot; Keep Learning – find out who 'Nurse Maxwell' is; and Give – buy a student a coffee.

Despite some rainy weather, teams reported thoroughly enjoying the event. One staff member later emailed: "Congratulations, yesterday was a magnificent initiative. The treasure hunt was such a great idea and so engaging. Really enjoyed it".



Further Information

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Photos (left to right): CRH team working together (Ha Hoang, Stuart Auckland, Edwin Mseke, Kehinde Obamiro and Vandana Bhagat); Student organisers Graziela Ferrari (Social Work) and Emma Langley (Psychology); Teams return for prize time!

News and Activities



Rural Pharmacy Liaison Officer Program

The Rural Pharmacy Liaison Officer (RPLO) program was established to support rural pharmacists and pharmacy students undertaking placements in rural areas.

RPLOs promote collaboration between pharmacists, pharmacy students, universities and the broader community.

Many activities have been conducted this year in Tasmania including providing pharmacists with relevant professional development information and funding options, supporting pharmacy students on placement, promotion of pharmacy as a career choice across high schools and colleges, and engaging with the community, using avenues such as university open days, AGFEST and the Deloraine craft fair.

Positive feedback regarding the benefits of the RPLO program has been received from pharmacists, pharmacy students and the public.

Photo (right): Making hand cream with Pharmacy students

AgFest HealthStop

AgFest is an annual event for the University of Tasmania and this year was no exception. Kehinde, Mandy, Vandana and Belinda represented staff from the Centre for Rural Health and assisted at the HealthStop marquee. Activities included supervising students doing blood pressure measurements and pharmacy hand cream mixing.

All up, 89 students participated with 15 staff over the 3 days. A total of 1551 blood pressures were measured with the busiest day being Saturday. Over 700 hand creams were also made, to the delight of children and adults alike. Also, 150kg of apples were consumed as giveaway healthy snacks.

Overall it was a marvellous promotional event and well enjoyed by patrons and staff.

Photos (left) TOP: BP participant David Anneard; BOTTOM: CRH representatives - Kehinde, Vandana and Amanda



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School of Health Sciences Research Retreat

The School of Health Sciences research retreat which was held in Launceston over two days on 5-6 September, was well attended and received by our HDR candidates and staff alike.

The retreat provided great opportunities for our candidates to be inspired by keynote speakers' talks, learn about the research that staff are involved in, and network with other candidates and supervisors.



Celebrating NESMH's Contribution to Supporting Rural Placements

The staff of the Centre for Rural Health (CRH), University of Tasmania, acknowledge and congratulate the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital (NESMH) for servicing the health care needs of the community of Scottsdale and the region for 100 years. There has been a long, well-established mutually respectful relationship between the CRH, previously the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), and the Administrative and clinical staff of the NESMH.

The table below refers to the number of students placed at the NESMH each year since 2002, however, behind the numbers are multiple stories. First, the number of students often understates the level of activity over a year and an increase in the number of weeks students are placed. That is, the number of students itself does not do justice to the workload attached to supervising and supporting student learning over the number of weeks of the year that students do placements. The shifts in student numbers also reflect the changing role and circumstances of the NESMH and the way it has been restructured and rationalised over the period, changes to curricula over time, fluctuations in the number of students enrolled in courses, staffing profile and pressures to contain costs.

Table: Centre for Rural Health supported rural placements at Scottsdale NESMH 2002-2019 number of students by discipline

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Medicine	19	9	14	15	8	11	9	13	14	21	19	15	16	19	9	7	6	9	233
Nursing	12	23	24	14	19	21	18	30	30	38	27	32	14	22	19	8	10	10	371
Pharmacy	5	4	4	2	4	2	3	2	4	2	5	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	44
Allied Health	4	5	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	16
TOTAL	40	41	42	33	31	35	30	45	49	61	51	50	34	43	29	15	16	19	763

The Commonwealth government funds University Centres/Departments of Rural Health to provide subsidised accommodation and funding to support health science students doing rural placements as a strategy to expose them to a positive rural placement experience in the hope they will want to work in rural areas after graduation. The CRH really appreciates the valuable role that staff play in making students' rural placement experiences positive and memorable. We hope the relationship continues for many years to come and that the NESMH realises a solid return on the investment staff put into supervising students.



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Graduate Research

Our Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates at CRH are progressing well with their research. They have shared their research at local and international conferences, published their research in academic journals and proudly walked on the stage at the graduation ceremony to receive their academic degrees.

Graduations

Dr Jackie Stuart has proudly graduated in the winter graduation ceremonies in August 2019.

Congratulations to Dr Stuart and her supervisors (A/Profs Tony Barnett, Dr Ha Hoang and A/Prof Len Crocombe)! Dr Stuart's PhD topic entitled, "Relationship of Dental Practitioners to the Primary Care Network in Rural and Remote Queensland and the Application of Technology in the Management of Dental Problems". We wish Dr Stuart all the best for her future endeavours!



Photo: Jackie Stuart with her Certificate of Graduation

Jacki says,

"Once again, thank you for giving me to opportunity to study at this prestigious University. My experience with UTAS and the CRH has been wonderful.

My three Supervisors have been very patient with me. Coming from a clinical and not an academic background has allowed for many interesting conversations.

The "tyranny of distance" with Skype Supervisory meetings surprisingly smooth and was improved as time went on. I can honestly say that my entire experience as a remotely located student was very satisfactory.

Thank you to UTAS for allowing me this opportunity to reinvent myself. I don't quite know what would have become of me without this amazing journey."



Photo: From left to right - Leonard Crocombe (Supervisor), Jackie Stuart, Ha Hoang (primary supervisor), Tony Barnett (Director CRH)

We would like to congratulate all candidates for these wonderful achievements and look forward to another productive year in 2020!



Further Information

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The mental health of people who have compromised access to the human right of bodily autonomy suffers due to discrimination, stigma, criminalisation, and exclusion.

Under the supervision of Dr Ha Hoang and Dr Heather Bridgman of CRH, and Dr Bróna Nic Giolla Easpaig of Macquarie University, PhD Candidate, Tamara Reynish is exploring bodily autonomy and mental health and how it pertains to counselling service use by sex and gender minorities (LGBTIQA+ people and BDSM/kink practitioners) and sex workers in rural or remote Tasmania.

Data collection began mid-November. To recruit additional participants and support the queer community in the North West of the state, Tamara attended the sixth annual 'Out' in the Park in Ulverstone on 17 November 2019. Organised by Connect4Life, 'Out' in the Park is a North West Tasmanian event to celebrate TasPride. There was great interest in the research from LGBTIQA+ community members, families, friends, and third-parties alike.

Data collection is expected to continue until 29 February 2020, so there is still time for involvement. Participants can either complete an anonymous online survey:

<http://surveys.utas.edu.au/index.php/157236?lang=en>

or they can participate in a confidential interview – or they can do both.

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Photo taken by Peter King: Tamara at the 'Out' in the Park event.

Conference presentations

Our PhD candidates have been very active in sharing their research at international, national and local conferences as well as School Friday research seminars.

Jacki Goode and Shah Khan presented at the 97th General Session of the International Association for Dental Research. The conference took place in Vancouver Canada on 19-22 June 2019.

Sangeeta Khadka presented her research at the Federation of European

Microbiological Society Meeting – Microbiome on 18-21 July 2019 in New York, United States.

Vandana Bhagat presented her paper entitled "Incorporating oral health into nursing curriculums: a systematic review" at the 53rd World Congress on Nursing and Health Care, 21-22 June 2019, in Brisbane.

Tamara Reynish and Shah Khan presented at the National Rural Health Conference on 24-27 March 2019 in Hobart.

Eleven HDR candidates (Edwin Mseke, Shoaib Hamrah, Ali Morse, Abhinav Acharya, Priya Bindal, Jacki Goode, Melissa Kirschbaum, Tamara Reynish, Anne Gilme, Vandana Bhagat and Dung Trung Bui) shared their research at our successful Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium on 2 July 2019 in Launceston.

Last but not least, Ali Morse, Melissa Kirschbaum and Peter Mulholland presented their research at the School Friday research seminars.

Publications

Our HDR candidates have not only been active in sharing their knowledge at conferences, but also productive in publishing their research in quality academic journals.

Shah Khan is the first author of the paper, "Obesity and periodontitis in Australian adults: a population-based cross-sectional study", published in the International Dental Journal. Shah Khan also co-authored a paper, "Preventable hospital admissions for oral health-related conditions in Australia: a descriptive analysis", published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health.

Melissa Kirschbaum is the first author of a paper titled, "Q sample construction: A novel approach incorporating a Delphi

technique to explore opinions about codeine dependence", published in the BMC Medical Research Methodology. Melissa and supervisors also published a paper, "For pain, no shame" and 'My secret solace': accounts of over-the-counter codeine dependence using Q methodology", in the International Journal of Drug Policy.

Tamara Reynish and supervisors published a conference paper, "Towards barrier-free counselling for sexual/gender minorities and sex workers in rural Tasmania".

Peter Mulholland and supervisors published a paper titled, "A grounded theory of interprofessional learning and paramedic care", in the Journal of Interprofessional Care.

Loraine Walker and supervisors published a paper titled, "Students' experiences and perceptions of interprofessional education during rural placement: A mixed methods study", in the Nurse Education Today.

Jacki Goode and supervisors published a paper, "Strategies to improve access to and uptake of dental care for people experiencing homelessness in Australia: a grey literature review", in the Australian Health Review.

Our graduate, Sancia West, and supervisors published a paper titled, "Establishment of radiation therapy services in North West Tasmania: A community need or election strategy?", in the BMC Health Services Research.

HDR Social

Candidates and supervisors participated in a 'Meet and Greet' on Friday 8th March which marked the beginning of the social event calendar for the year. It was great to see many of our candidates and supervisors came to the event to mingle with other colleagues and enjoy afternoon tea.



Practitioner Development

Health Practitioner Research Development Program 2019 (HPRDP)

The Health Practitioner Research Development Program is run by the Centre for Rural Health to offer project-based opportunities linked to Centre for Rural Health research. This is an opportunity for health professionals with an interest in research to build their skills, experience and track record through hands-on involvement over a 140-hour, paid research 'placement', supervised by CRH staff. Practitioners across Tasmania are invited to apply through an Expression of Interest process. This year, five practitioners from psychology, social work, dentistry, aged care and nursing joined research projects to develop research skills in interviewing, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, data interpretation, literature reviewing and academic writing.

This is some of the feedback from the Practitioners...

Caroline McLeod

What was the nature of work you undertook during your project?

Qualitative data analysis for an existing project looking into the experience of parents/carers and service providers supporting young people who access mental health services in Tasmania.

What did you learn from your experience?

I had very limited experience in qualitative data analysis prior to

commencing the project. I learned to use software (NVivo) to assist with the data analysis and got to trial a range of more manual analysis techniques to explore the meaning and themes in the interviews. Understanding more about the unique challenges and supports in place for young people accessing mental health services and their families has also been useful in my clinical work.

What did you enjoy the most?

I was incredibly well supported during my time working on the project. Being

provided with a space to work closer to home made the experience even more accessible for me. The main research team were very supportive and patient with me as I learned the ropes. The team in Latrobe where I did most of my work were fantastic to work with – such a fun, supportive and welcoming group of people.



Amelie Fuller

What was the nature of work you undertook during your project?

Research work, including planning and designing a research project, writing an ethics application, recruitment ads and interview prompts, conducting qualitative interviews and analysing data, and also drafting a research article for publication.

What did you learn from your experience?

I learned how to plan a research project, how to write a research design and

what is involved in writing an ethics application. I also learned a lot more about the topic we were researching by reading and from talking to experts. I got to read extensively about qualitative research methodologies and was trained to conduct qualitative interviews and in methods of analysing data guided by the head of the research project.

How has your experience impacted on your future interest in undertaking ongoing research/study?

My experience in the Practitioner Program has motivated me to further

pursue a career in academic research. The process of data gathering via indepth interviews has especially encouraged me to continue my studies in the field of qualitative research with a focus on people's lived experiences and aim to relate this experience to a wider socio-political context.



Annika Wilson

What was the nature of work you undertook during your project?

Systematic literature review from search strategy to submission to a journal for publication. The area of research was skill mix in the oral health workforce.

What did you enjoy the most?

Being able to see progress of the project and having relative autonomy over the direction of interpretation and writing.

Also working closely with the supervisors who were very supportive, professional and encouraging!

How has your experience impacted on your future interest in undertaking ongoing research/study?

I am currently waiting for the outcome of an application for a PhD at Utas for 2020.

Do you have any suggestions for improving the health practitioner program?

No - my supervisors were very engaged (responding to emails on the same day), and the project was well defined and achievable in the timeframe. I would recommend it to other practitioners!



Projects included:

- Recruitment and Retention of Healthcare Professionals in Rural and Remote Australia
- Creation of a New Classification Model for Community Pharmacies Across Australia
- Skill Mix in The Oral Health Workforce: A Systematic Review
- Home Care Packages Program: Issues for a Rural Workforce in Tasmania
- Rural Youth Mental Health Service Access: Perspectives of Service Providers And Parents.



Further Information

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Projects

Connecting Through Food: Traditional Recipes for Cancer Recovery



Good nutrition is important for people who are undergoing cancer treatment as it helps the body repair, cope with and fight disease. In times of stress, people with cancer can often have poor diets. They often do not want to eat and are unsure of what they should be eating. Whilst information is readily available on diet and nutrition for English speaking people with cancer, little is available for those who may not readily understand the English language and whose diets are not Western. Many members of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community do not know or cannot access information about food and nutrition appropriate to their culture when they have cancer. This project addresses this problem. The project aims to co-design nutritional resources for the Chinese and Greek community who are undergoing cancer treatment. The resources will be made available for free for communities through the Cancer Council Tasmania (CCT) website.

This project received funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund and is a collaboration between the project team from UTAS Dr Pathma Namasivayam, Assoc Prof Tony Barnett, Ms Sophie Hofto (Leap Health) and Dr Suzanne Mallick, the Greek Community of Tasmania, Australian Fujian Association of Tasmania, Chinese Community Association of Tasmania, Eating with Friends and Cancer Council Tasmania.



Further Information

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Photos: from left: Pathmavathy Namasivayam; Sophie Hofto; Suzanne Mallick

Assessing Unmet Allied Health Service Need for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Clients: A Pilot Study

Since its initial roll out in 2013, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) now provides financial support to over 6000 Tasmanian participants who have a permanent and significant disability, to facilitate access to necessary supports and services that will help them build skills and capacity to participate in the community and employment. There is concern however, that the current provider market may not be expanding at a sufficient rate to meet the growing demand for services. Of particular concern is allied health, with speech pathology, psychology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy all having been identified as specific areas of provider shortage. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has also acknowledged that people living in rural and remote areas may face additional challenges in accessing a range of disability supports and services which further impacts on allied health service accessibility for Tasmanian NDIS participants given the states' regional and rural construct.

As the success of the NDIS hinges on a well-resourced service provider network that can be responsive to the needs of NDIS clients in the community, a pilot project has commenced within the Centre for Rural Health to explore the presence and

degree of any unmet demand for allied health services from NDIS participants across Tasmania. This study has focused on examining the experiences of Coordinator of Supports (COSs) who are directly responsible for sourcing allied health services on behalf of participants.

After completing interviews with COSs working all across the state, interview data is now being collated and analysed. Preliminary themes emerging from the interviews are that the current number of occupational therapists, speech pathologists and psychologists working within Tasmania is not sufficient to support the demand for services from NDIS participants. This results in a direct underutilisation of participant funding due to either an inability to access a therapist, or through having an extensive waiting time for services. Despite a number of novel strategies being described by COSs as mechanisms to circumvent the current shortage, there appear to always be downsides for participants in terms of time, cost or quality of care. COSs are pleading for further efforts to attract allied health professionals to the state to support the growing demand for services from NDIS participants who are highly motivated to utilise the funding made available to them.



Further Information

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Projects

Tasmanian National Suicide Prevention Trial Evaluation - update

The local evaluation is currently underway gathering and analysing information from the three Tasmanian regions, Launceston, the North-West coast (the Local Government Areas of Burnie, Central Coast, and Devonport), and Break O' Day, selected under the Australian Government's National Suicide Prevention Trial Initiative (NSPT).

Through the adoption of a Participation Action Research (PAR) approach, the local evaluation team has engaged trial site working group (WG) members and other key stakeholders through quarterly Action Learning Circles, attendance at WG meetings, as well as advising WGs on methods to evaluate their own activities. As the local evaluation is being conducted alongside a national-level evaluation conducted by the University of Melbourne (UoM), data relating to Tasmanian trial site activities is being continuously collected and entered into the UoM Primary Mental Health Care Minimum Data Set.

Preliminary findings emerging from the first of two rounds of surveys completed by WG members highlighted the effectiveness of current structures and functions of the WGs to engage community service providers and members with a lived-experience, which were considered in need of improvement, and working well, respectively. In addition, several areas were highlighted as in need of further focus for the remainder of the trial. These include a need for WGs and the funding body to plan for sustainability post-June 2020, local communities preferring face-to-face delivery of suicide prevention activities, focused on community engagement, awareness, and capacity building. In addition, using a PAR approach has presented a number of opportunities and challenges for the evaluation team thus far, for example, where it has contributed to collaborative decision-making and buy-in from WG members whilst leading to some confusion among stakeholders concerning the scope of the evaluation team's role within a PAR approach. These findings were presented at the Centre for Rural Health's Rural Health Research Symposium in July 2019, the UTas School of Health Science's Research Retreat in September 2019, and at the Australian Rural and Remote Mental Health Symposium in October 2019. Local evaluation team members also attended the National Suicide Prevention Conference in Melbourne in July 2019 and the International Evaluation Conference in Sydney in August 2019.

A second round of survey data collection, along with the conduct of focus groups and in-person interviews with WG members and other key stakeholders, will commence in early 2020. Key upcoming deliverables include the development of a community resources kit for local suicide prevention activities and a draft final report.

Evaluation of the CORES and LGBTI Training Programs

Sitting alongside the NSPT local evaluation is the evaluation of the Community Responses to Eliminating Suicide (CORES) and the 'Working Effectively with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) People' training programs. The CORES training program is a well-established suicide prevention (SP) program based in Tasmania, seeking to address the increasing suicide rates and assisting Tasmanian communities to build local leadership and social networks to improve general community wellbeing. A key aim of the training is to equip participants with the ability to recognise warning signs of suicide, intervene before a potential crisis occurs, and support at-risk persons with accessing appropriate services.

In 2018, CORES received funding under the National Mental Health Commission to evaluate four new CORES network training programs, two in Tasmania and two in Queensland. The Centre for Rural Health received funding through the Kentish Regional Clinic Inc. to undertake the evaluation of CORES training programs in Tasmania (Launceston and Devonport). The evaluation focus is on process and outcome aspects of the training delivered within these areas, over a 12-month period, concluding June 2020. The evaluation seeks to determine the extent to which the training reflects "best practice" in enhancing community awareness, capacity, and ownership of SP, within a Tasmanian context.

In addition to the evaluation of the CORES program, the CRH was also engaged by Kentish Regional Clinic Inc. to undertake an independent evaluation of the LGBTI training program. The purpose of this training is to provide service providers and interested professionals, who would like to deepen their understanding and confidence in working with LGBTI people, with some general knowledge and 'tools for their toolbox.'

The evaluation will be aimed at identifying the extent to which this training provides participants with skills-based knowledge to assist individuals and organisations to offer an inclusive and welcoming service for LGBTI people, in addition to identifying baseline "indicators" that can be used for on-going monitoring and evaluation of the networks. As with the evaluation of CORES, this evaluation will recruit training participants as well as training facilitators, who will participate in a mixed-methods research design involving surveys and focus groups/interviews.

Findings from the evaluation of CORES and the LGBTI training programs will assist with ensuring the sustainability of the programs, in addition to future planning initiatives for the programs.

Both these evaluations are being conducted by the NSPT Tasmania local evaluation team.



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Photo: Laura Smith (CRH), Grant Akesson (Primary Health Tasmania), and Stuart Auckland (CRH) at the Australian Rural and Remote Mental Health Symposium in Adelaide, October 2019



Photo: Jon Mond at the International Evaluation Conference in Sydney, August 2019



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After Hours Palliative Care

Access to palliative care support afterhours is a critical issue for those dying at home and their carers. The Tasmanian Palliative Care After Hours Phone Support Service (TPCAHPSS), a dedicated service for palliative care clients and caregivers across north and north west Tasmania, was trialled between September 2018 and June 2019.

The service, delivered by GP Assist, is staffed by Registered Nurses and General Practitioners. The aim of the service is to offer Tasmanians with palliative care needs, afterhours access to high quality, timely and responsive care, information and support, and to reduce unnecessary or unwanted presentations to emergency departments and hospital admissions.

A collaborative team from the CRH, Heather Bridgman, Pauline Marsh, Tony Barnett, Simone Lee and Dung Bui along with the School of Nursing, Pathma Namasivayam, was contracted to undertake an evaluation of the TPCAHPSS.

A formative, iterative evaluation approach was employed to identify quality improvement suggestions for the TPCAHPSS based on the identified five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Effectiveness, Access, Appropriateness, Quality And Efficiency. The evaluation was undertaken from January to August 2019 and involved planning, review and consultation with the project implementation group, a brief literature review on best practice models, data collection, and data analysis and integration. A total of 13 stakeholders and 13 service users participated in semi-structured interviews. Service data related to call content, provided by GP Assist, was also analysed.

Overall there was strong evidence that TPCAHPSS offers positive benefit to palliative patients and their carers. Quality improvement suggestions were also made for future improvement. The TPCAHPSS has since received ongoing funding and has been extended to a state wide service.



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Student Placement Accommodation

Student placement accommodation properties receive funding for improvements

Health students on placement in rural Tasmania are set to benefit from a significant financial commitment by the Centre for Rural Health to improve the amenity of its rural accommodation network.

In 2019, the CRH provided 368 students with free accommodation in one of 23 properties in 19 rural locations. The properties are located close to a variety of rural health facilities which provide placement opportunities to nursing, medical, pharmacy and allied health students. The properties comprise of shared accommodation located onsite at District Hospitals, rental properties and houses occupied under long-term leasing arrangements, as well as the Latrobe accommodation which was purchased by the University of Tasmania in 2014. Most of the properties are managed in partnership with the Tasmanian Health Service and other health service providers.

Staff from the Centre for Rural Health and the College of Health and Medicine recently toured rural Tasmania to inspect the accommodation and ensure that students experience a high level of comfort and amenity by identifying and actioning any maintenance issues and continuing to meet health and safety standards. Meetings were also held with key staff at local health facilities to ensure that management of the accommodation continues to run smoothly.

Facilities Manager, College of Health and Medicine, Mark Burgess, was pleased with the overall condition of the properties. The maintenance issues identified were minimal and were dealt with as a matter of urgency. These included replacing lights and installing a kitchen fan at the Campbell Town house; remedial painting at the Swansea house; repairing windows and installing sensor lights at the George Town house; and replacing a flywire screen at the Latrobe accommodation. In addition, the CRH has offered a substantial contribution towards the cost of maintenance works at the St Marys accommodation for replacing the roof and windows, and repairing gutters.

As the inspection tour progressed, it became increasingly clear that several of the properties would benefit from a more substantial investment. "Students rarely complain about the accommodation, however, we are beginning to see a substantial difference between the modern rental properties in Burnie, for example, and some of the older houses we lease in more remote parts of the state. The furniture is fine, the whitegoods are fine - it's the kitchens and bathrooms which are the problem," explained CRH Student Support Officer, Karla Peek. "Modern kitchens and bathrooms are easier to keep clean and a modern kitchen makes better use of space."

After consulting with property owners, it was decided to embark on a major refurbishment program which will commence in late 2019 and finish in early 2020. The house at George Town will be recarpeted; the house in Oatlands will have a new bathroom and kitchen; the house at Swansea will have a new bathroom and kitchen and its carpet replaced (subject to the lease being renewed in 2020); and new furniture will be purchased for the accommodation at St Marys (bedrooms), Scottsdale (lounge room) and Smithton (lounge room and laundry). In total, more than \$120,000 has been allocated towards remedial work and the refurbishments.



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Photos from top: Campbell Town property; Swansea property; Latrobe property; St Mary's property; Scottsdale property

Grants and Research

Elderly aged care residents in teeth cleaning trial had better health outcomes, researchers say - ABC News article by Alison Costelloe

Now, a Tasmanian trial has shown the simple act of brushing an elderly person's teeth two times a day, can help save their life.

The trial was conducted at two aged care homes in northern Tasmania.

Residents with dementia, who are often least inclined to brush, had their teeth cleaned twice daily for two minutes at a time. Dentures were cleaned once a day.

Before the trial, a Launceston home reported 19 cases of chest infection in six months. After the trial, that figure dropped to seven in six months.

The Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre said residents' teeth were often neglected because of physical inability and cognitive decline.

Carers are also pressed for time.

"It's having staff, especially frontline staff, understand that what seems to be such a simple thing ... has these amazing run-on effects," the centre's Lyn Goldberg said.

"They're asked to do an awful lot during the day, so they're not criticised for not trying," she said. "It's just that people don't necessarily understand the impact or consequences of poor oral health."

The three-month trial showed a 57 percent decrease in the need for dental referrals, while the risk of aspiration, which often leads to pneumonia, dropped from 70 to 32 percent.

Leonard Crocombe from the Centre for Rural Health said a perfect storm was brewing in aged care when it came to dental health.

"The pre-baby boomer generation had lots of tooth decay but tended to lose their teeth," he said. "So by the time they got to residential aged care, the biggest crisis was probably losing the denture down the loo."

Dr Crocombe said baby boomers tended to enter aged care with their own teeth.

"They're on more and more drugs, the drugs dry up their saliva which makes tooth decay and gum problems more likely," he said.

"They're also often given high-sugar comfort foods to give them energy and keep them happy. Then, on top of that, it's difficult to clean their teeth."

He said governments needed to take heed.

"That perfect storm is going to happen first in Tasmania, because we have the oldest population, the sickest population and we have the population with the worst adult oral health."

Dr Crocombe said better teeth cleaning practices could also improve outcomes for residents with diabetes and heart conditions.



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Bowel Cancer Awareness in Tasmania

The burden of bowel cancer is enormous and is the second most common cancer (excluding non-melanoma skin cancer) in both men and women in Australia. Bowel cancer is more common in people aged 50 years and older, and the risk of being diagnosed by age 85 is 1 in 11 for men and 1 in 16 for women.

In recent times, strategies that have been implemented to reduce the burden of bowel cancer have focused primarily on improving screening rates; however, not much focus has been placed on assessing bowel cancer awareness in the population and to address knowledge deficit or misconceptions. For the national bowel cancer screening rate to be improved, it is important to first assess the level of awareness of bowel cancer in the population, and subsequently provide necessary interventions to subgroups with poor knowledge regarding modifiable risk factors and the benefits of participating in routine bowel cancer screening.

The Centre for Rural Health staff members, Dr Kehinde Obamiro and Dr Simone Lee, are working on a study aimed at assessing bowel cancer awareness in the Tasmania population, and identifying determinants of poor bowel cancer knowledge. This study was generously supported with a grant of \$10,000 by the Cancer Council Tasmania, Sandra Makepeace Research Grant Award.



Photo: Kehinde Obamiro receiving the Cancer Council Grant

Identifying subpopulation-specific knowledge gaps will be useful in guiding the development of educational intervention and would potentially increase the uptake of bowel cancer screening in Tasmania. About 5000 participants have already participated in the survey across Tasmania, and data analysis is ongoing.



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Events and Conferences

Notre Dame Nulungu Talking Heads Seminar Series - Aboriginal community understandings of dementia: Terry Cox



Photo: Terry Cox outside of the university of Notre Dame, Broome WA

In August 2019, I travelled to Broome in the north of Western Australia. The climate of 17-34 degrees celcius, took some getting used to, as did the turquoise Indian Ocean, white sandy beaches and the deep red of the desert.

On my first day, I was warmly greeted by University of Notre Dame (UND) Associate Professors Lindy Swain (CRH Director) and Sandra Wooltorton, along with a number of locally based health researchers. Our conversations soon focused on the challenges of rural and remote health education, student placement support, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, attracting and retaining health professionals to the region, and the many comparisons between Tasmania and the Kimberleys.

The next day I was given the opportunity to speak at the UND Talking Heads seminar where I discussed our recent dementia research with a rural Tasmanian Aboriginal community; our participatory research methodology and findings that illustrated their understandings of dementia and cultural obligations of dementia care. The UND research team saw the value of our translational research as Aboriginal people across the Kimberley region are impacted by dementia at far

higher rates and at a younger age of onset than the broader Australian population.

My presentation emphasised a pragmatic and collaborative public health strategy to gain a clearer understanding of how Aboriginal people live with dementia and their views of culturally appropriate dementia care, particularly with community and country connectedness. My key message was to consider the need to incorporate family and community members along with health and service provider support to care for someone with dementia. UND made the seminar available for communities and health providers throughout the vast Kimberley region, as a way to raise community conversations of dementia care.

I then spent an interesting afternoon with 25 nursing and allied health students, where I spoke of my academic journey and research projects in Tasmania and they shared their student journeys and experiences with remote health placements.

I look forward to forging closer links and collaborative research opportunities between UND and UTAS.



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Go West! Representing Rural Health at the 14th Behavioural Research in Cancer Control Conference, Perth

In May of this year, I had the opportunity to travel to Western Australia and attend the 14th Behavioural Research in Cancer Control Conference in Perth.

Supported by Cancer Council Australia, this biennial conference attracts behavioural researchers from Cancer Councils, universities and research institutes from around the nation and internationally. The conference provides a unique opportunity to discuss the latest developments in cancer control research and provides an excellent forum to network with colleagues and share ideas.

My paper – 'Using clinical prompts in general practice to increase participation in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program: a rural case study' – described the results of a feasibility study conducted in partnership with the George Town Medical Centre, Tasmania. The presentation was well received and

led to some good discussion among those working to improve bowel cancer outcomes in Australia.

The conference also provided the opportunity for me to meet with staff from Cancer Council Western Australia who work in the area of bowel cancer, general practice and regional education. This meeting demonstrated networking in the true sense of the word, with all parties sharing information about the work they do, while looking for ways to collaborate in the future.

I am very pleased to say that I have since been invited to speak with the Regional Education Officers who are looking to trial some bowel cancer screening reminder notifications at their local GP practices. Fingers crossed this is the start of an exciting new partnership with Cancer Council Western Australia.



Photo: Perth



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Tasmanian Bereavement Care Network - Gratitude & Connection in Bereavement Care

The Tasmanian Bereavement Care Network (BCN) was established in 2017 and aims to link and improve support for people working in bereavement care across Tasmania. The goal of the network is to enable all members of the Tasmanian community who are experiencing grief and bereavement to be appropriately supported when in need - www.bcntasmania.org.au.

The BCN hosted a personal development symposium at the Paranaple Centre in Devonport on November 27, 2019. "Gratitude & Connection in Bereavement Care", brought together a diverse range of speakers who sparked new perspectives and awareness in those that attended - Dr Kerry Howells spoke to the group about accessing gratitude in times of grief; local practitioners Jane Oakley-Lohm and Dr Rosemary Ramsay shared their unique experiences of working with the communities in the North and North West of Tasmania; artist Melissa Lubke spoke of the power of creativity in grief; Dr Tony Barnett facilitated round table conversations about how the BCN can ensure it continues to grow and deliver its aims, mission and

vision to the Tasmanian Community, and Robyn Moore spoke of the power of the word in living, dying, grieving and loving.



Photo: Di Carter, BCN Chairperson

Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium

The Centre for Rural Health, celebrating 22 years of service and engagement, was very pleased to host its annual Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium for 2019. This year's symposium was held at the Tramsheds Function Centre in Launceston. There were 21 presentations with 14 from research students. The focus this year was on our HDR students so they were allocated a longer time for their presentations than what was given to staff.

We welcomed over 60 guests to the symposium who came from a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, providing a great opportunity for the attendees to meet, network and collaborate, in addition to the research learnings from presentations.

The symposium concluded with supportive comments from Professor Tracey Dickson, Associate Dean of Research, College of Health and Medicine, UTAS. Once again, the event was a great day and deemed a success by all who attended and presented.



Director's Report

Another year has nearly flown by! Over recent months at the CRH, we have congratulated Pauline Marsh and Kehinde Obamiro on their grant success, Jacki Stuart upon her graduation (PhD) and also recently welcomed a new higher degree candidate – Christine Low.

Excitement is growing around the School of Nursing's plans to introduce a new undergraduate nursing course (a BNSc) in the North-West of the state in the not-too-distant future. Such an initiative will create opportunities for more locals to study 'in-place' and do much to strengthen the health workforce in rural Tasmania.



Program evaluation

During the week of 26th August, Professor Janie Smith visited Tasmania to gather evidence and gain insights on the work undertaken by the University of Tasmania through funding provided by the Commonwealth Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program. Janie, a medical educator and rural health consultant, is a member of the evaluation team from KBC Australia visiting University Departments of Rural Health and Rural Clinical Schools across Australia to look at the effectiveness of the program.

The RHMT program aims to improve the recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural and remote Australia. The evaluation will consider the benefits to local health delivery from engagement in teaching and training through the RHMT program. It will examine program design and delivery, outcomes and 'value for money'. The findings of the evaluation will be used to inform future program design, as well as the government's broader policy approach with regard to training the future rural health workforce.

During the visit, Professor Smith spent time at the Centre for Rural Health in Launceston and the Rural Clinical School on the Cradle Coast. Over the five days, she spoke to a wide range of university and health service clinical staff and students, and spent time at the Deloraine and Mersey Hospitals as well as visiting clinics and facilities in Hobart. During her visit, Janie spoke with more than 50 people about the program.

The key messages from these consultations and visits were that the RHMT program played a critical role in preparing and supporting the rural health workforce and in contributing to health service improvements in what is often a very complex and challenging environment.

Examples of 'success' stories we talked about included:

- the high level of community engagement and commitment to 'growing your own' health workforce;
- appointment of Whole of Community Facilitators (WOCF) to better support students placed across rural Tasmania;
- health promotion and health service evaluation activities;
- rural pathways in the medical course;
- the practitioner scholar development program.

Suggestions we made for improving the RHMT program into the future included:

- the introduction of new programs, pathways, opportunities and higher levels of support for new nursing and allied health graduates who want to work in rural areas;
- development of more flexible ways to enhance learning and teaching across all the health disciplines;
- additional strategies to support and enable greater numbers of rural students to enrol and succeed in health professional courses.

The evaluation will also draw on the annual RHMT performance reports submitted by the University to the Commonwealth, staff and student surveys, and rural health training and research papers produced as part of the program. It is anticipated that a report will be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Department of Health sometime in 2020.

Bereavement Care Network

The Tasmanian Bereavement Care Network (BCN) was established in 2017 and aims to link and improve support for people working in bereavement care across rural, regional and remote areas of Tasmania. The goal of the network is to enable all members of the Tasmanian community, who are experiencing grief and bereavement, to be appropriately supported when in need. Network

members subscribe to a set of values and principles that underpin the provision of high-quality bereavement care by both formal and informal service providers in Tasmania - www.bcntasmania.org.au.

This year, in the South of the State, members met regularly at different venues to share experience, build support, make connections and to learn about and from each other.

In the North West, the network recently held a full day symposium in Devonport that brought together a range of people with an interest in bereavement care to meet and hear from a number of speakers including Robyn Moore (the voice of Blinky Bill and national patron of 'Make-A-Wish') who spoke to, 'The Power of the Word in Living, Dying, Grieving & Loving'.

The impetus to establish a BCN in Tasmania stemmed from extensive consultation, research and policy development in the broad arena of palliative care. It is supported by funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund and underpinned by the Tasmanian Government's policy framework for palliative care which emphasises the importance of bereavement care across the community (Compassionate Communities: A Tasmania Palliative Care Policy Framework 2017-2020).

As we head into the festive season, I would like to thank each member of staff at the CRH for their hard work and commitment over the last 12 months and to also thank our supporters and partners who have all been critical to this effort. I wish you and yours a happy and safe break over the Christmas period and a wonderful New Year.

Tony Barnett (Director)

