



NSW Regional
Health Partners

2023 Year In Review



Message from the Director

As we approach the end of the year, I would like to recognise the outstanding achievements made by our dedicated and passionate staff, committees, and healthcare, lived experience and research workforce. Together we have navigated the not inconsequential challenges in the current health and research landscapes, and have had victories, big and small.

For NSW RHP, the year started with the launch of our revised strategic plan. Since then, we have reinvigorated our committees and networks, developed new communications platforms, formed new collaborations, commenced new projects, developed CCI resources, and rolled out a suite of research capacity building programs across our region. A big thank you to everyone involved. We couldn't have achieved so much without your commitment and comradery.

A special thank you to our Research Translation and Consumer Advisory Committees, who have helped to ensure our projects and initiatives link in with others across our partner organisations and their broader networks. This has ensured our new initiatives, like Consumer Connect (our new consumer registry that links those with lived experience to health, service and research programs) have been a welcome addition and adopted smoothly by our partners.

A particular highlight of the year was travelling to work with researchers and health care staff across

our region to deliver skills training as part of the NSW RHP Research Roadshow. Our wonderful colleagues in Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Armidale, Tamworth, Gosford, Wyong, Taree and Newcastle all shared expertise acquired from their diverse backgrounds and different work contexts. Their insights have been instrumental in helping those eager to dive into research know how to get started. Attended by over 100 people, we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to work with you on your new research endeavours.

The upcoming year holds immense promise as we build on the successes of 2023. I look forward to new opportunities, and continued growth and success working with you in the new year.

Wishing you and your loved ones a very merry Christmas and a safe and rejuvenating break over the holiday period.

Warm wishes,

Nicki

Associate Professor Nicolette Hodyl



Our Team



A/Prof Nicki Hodyl
Director, NSW Regional
Health Partners



Dr Lisa McFayden
Chief Operating Officer,
NSW Regional Health
Partners



Dr Jessie Sutherland
Consumer Engagement
Officer, NSW Regional
Health Partners



Caitlin Curran
Communications
Officer, NSW Regional
Health Partners



Karen Williams
Executive Assistant
to Nicolette Hodyl,
NSW Regional Health
Partners



Catherine Johnson
Clinical Trials Network
Officer, NSW Regional
Health Partners

Our Board



Stewart Dowrick
(Chair)
Chief Executive, Mid
North Coast Local
Health District



Scott McLachlan
Chief Executive, Central
Coast Local Health
District



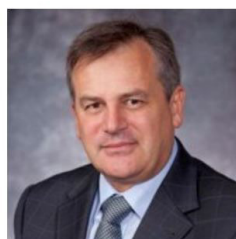
Tracey McCosker
Chief Executive, Hunter
New England Local
Health District



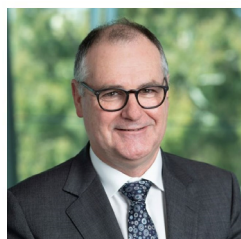
Richard Nankervis
CEO, Hunter New
England Central Coast
Primary Health Network



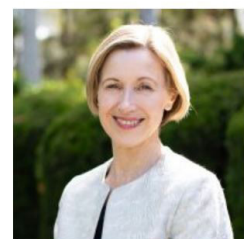
**Professor Frances
Kay-Lambkin**
Director, Hunter
Medical Research
Institute



**Professor Alex
Zelinsky**
Vice-Chancellor,
The University of
Newcastle



Professor Chris Moran
Vice-Chancellor and CEO
University of New
England



Renee Leon
Vice-Chancellor and
President,
Charles Sturt University

Our Translation Committee



**A/Prof Nicki Hodyl
(Chair)**
Director, NSW Regional
Health Partners



Dr Andrew Bailey
Director of Research &
Knowledge Translation,
Mid North Coast Local
Health District



**Professor Nick
Goodwin**
Research Director,
CentralCoastLocalHealth
District



**Professor John
Wiggers**
Research Director, Hunter
New England Local Health
District



Dr Alison Koschel
Executive Manager
Population, Access and
Performance, HNECC
Primary Health Network



**Professor Frances
Kay-Lambkin**
Director, Hunter
Medical Research
Institute



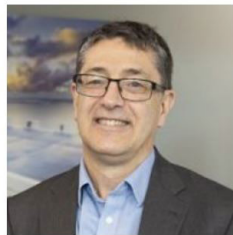
Professor Elizabeth Sullivan
Pro Vice-Chancellor, College
Health, Medicine & Wellbeing,
The University of Newcastle



**Professor Jennifer
Williams**
Dean of Medicine and
Health, University New
England



**Professor Megan
Smith**
Executive Dean of
Science and Health,
Charles Sturt University



Dr Ralph Gourley
Director Medical
Services, Calvary Mater
Newcastle

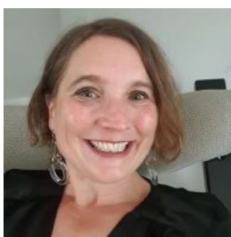


Brigitte Sigl
Chair, Consumer Advisory
Committee, NSW Regional
Health Partners



Dr Lisa McFayden
Chief Operating Officer,
NSW Regional Health
Partners

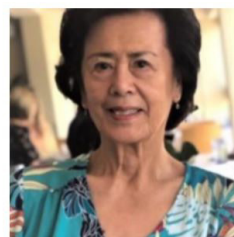
Our Consumer Advisory Committee



Brigitte Sigl
Chair, Consumer Advisory
Committee, NSW Regional
Health Partners



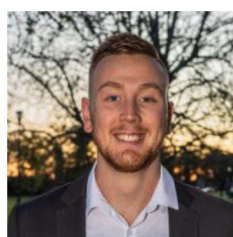
Sarah Lukeman
Committee member



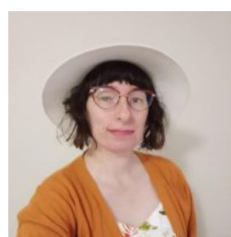
Vivienne Scott
Committee member



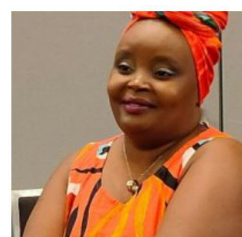
Ashraf Abdelbaky
Committee member



Benjamin Brien
Committee member



Ivy Scurr
Committee member



Joy Wairimu
Committee member

Capacity Building Activities

Supporting and building the capacity of our research, consumer and health care workforce is one of our key objectives. Funded through an MRFF Rapid Applied Research Translation grant, NSW RHP has delivered a suite of capacity building programs this year. Highlights include our Research Roadshow, and our new resources including the creation of a guide for teams to successfully codesign projects with different stakeholders, called 'doing research, together', and the development of our Research Translation Roadmap.

NSWRHP Research Roadshow

Kicking off in Taree in August, the Roadshow delivered skills training and workshops in Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Gosford, Wyong, Armidale, Tamworth and Newcastle. Each stop was marked by enthusiastic participation from health care professionals, consumers, stakeholders and presenters alike. The collaborative, engaged, and can-do attitude of all involved created a culture of shared learning, contributing to its overall success.

The purpose of the Roadshow was to bridge the gap between research and healthcare, equipping health care staff with the essential tools and knowledge to conduct impactful research that addresses the priority needs they see every day.

"It can be hard to get started in research, particularly when you are busy providing care to patients. Through the research roadshow, we aimed to raise awareness, and increase competence and confidence of staff to get started. When health care professionals research the problems they see every day, staff, patients and their organisations all benefit!" said Nicolette Hodyl, Director, NSW Regional Health Partners.

Roadshow sessions offered insights, tips and practical skills in ethics and governance, research protocols, research methodologies, statistics, grant writing, library services, co-design, working with Aboriginal communities, impact evaluation, health economics, evidence-based solutions and research translation.

NSWRHP is developing materials that complement the presentations to build an ongoing resource to support people getting started in health and medical research.



Research Networks

NSWRHP research networks support collaboration, shared learning, targeted training, and a united approach to address priority clinical questions across our region.

Our Networks

- Women’s Health Research Translation and Impact Network
- Clinical Trials Community of Practice
- Musculoskeletal Research in Practice Network
- NSW Regional Cancer Research Network
- New England General Practice Research Network
- Clinical Nurse Consultant / Clinical Midwife Consultant Research Network
- COMING IN 2024 Cardiovascular Research Network

Musculoskeletal Research in Practice Network

Under the new leadership of Stephanie Hodgson and Nicole Manvell, the Musculoskeletal Research in Practice Network has continued its membership growth trajectory, with 158 members and representation from around 40% of Newcastle/ Hunter physiotherapy private practices. In 2023, the Network introduced a professional development series, with evidence-based presentations and expert-led discussions addressing clinical priorities as identified by members (e.g. ACL and meniscal injury, frozen shoulder, lumbar radiculopathy). In 2024, NSWRHP aims to grow this network so those working in musculoskeletal health in other regions can participate.

158

members

235

attendees at 7 events

NSW Regional Cancer Research Network

The NSW Regional Cancer Research Network funded by the Cancer Institute NSW, aims to drive improvements in cancer care and outcomes for people affected by cancer in regional and rural areas. The Network connects over 200 people working across four local health districts (Central Coast, Hunter New England, Mid-North Coast and Northern NSW) through a virtual collaboration platform. The Network is open to any health professional working in any area of cancer care and those conducting (or wishing to conduct) cancer research.

200+

members

\$800k

in grants & fellowships

Clinical Trials Community of Practice

Since it began in 2020, our Clinical Trials Community of Practice has continued to grow, now involving 170 members from across five health districts (Central Coast, Hunter New England, Mid-North Coast, Northern NSW and Western NSW). The Community of Practice aims to strengthen relationships within the clinical trial community across our region, explore solutions to common problems, share learning, increase confidence and competence in conducting clinical trials, and acknowledge and share achievements. The monthly meeting topics have included the new NSW Health Clinical Trials Management System (CTMS), research ethics and governance, the Australian Clinical Trials Education Centre (A-CTEC), clinicaltrialsNSW project updates, and celebrating International Clinical Trials Day with the launch of the latest Clinical Trials in Focus podcast.

170

members

336

attendees at 8 events

Consumer and Community Involvement Update

In 2023, NSW RHP delivered several initiatives to support, promote and enable consumers to be actively involved in the design, planning, review of, and informing health projects, services, and research. These initiatives were led by Dr Jessie Sutherland, our Consumer Engagement Officer, and supported by our Consumer Advisory Committee, chaired by Brigitte Sigl.

Doing research, together

Doing research, together is a new online platform to help researchers, consumers, carers, and health workers co-design and co-deliver medical research. This resource has been codesigned with researchers and consumers from across the NSW RHP footprint, facilitated by [KA McKercher](#), a co-design expert who led the development of [NSW Health's All of Us](#). 2023 has seen the development of the prototype, which has undergone 12 rounds of end-user concept testing with consumers, researchers, health care staff, executives, and consumer engagement leads from the Agency for Clinical Innovation. It has received overwhelmingly positive feedback. In 2024 we will develop and incorporate graphics and tools and officially launch this exciting new tool.

Consumer Involvement in Research Training

Consumer Involvement in Research Training has been delivered to over 100 researchers and health staff at regional hospitals and universities within our footprint, and through an online training session. These newly designed 2-hour introductory workshops, co-facilitated by two of our consumer advisory committee members, Sarah Lukeman and Brigitte Sigl, and Dr Jessie Sutherland, have received excellent, positive feedback from participants, with new courses currently being developed to support further consumer, researcher and health staff training in 2024.

Consumer Connect

Consumer Connect is a platform designed and developed to support consumer engagement in health and medical projects, research, and services. It was launched in November following extensive codesign and pilot testing with our Consumer Advisory Committee and partner organisations. This registry of consumers was developed in response to our stakeholders expressing challenges in finding people with lived experience who would like to be involved in their health and research projects. Since its launch, we have had a steady stream of people with lived experience register for Consumer Connect. Our sincere thanks to HNELHD and CCLHD Consumer Engagement Teams for their excellent support and help developing Consumer Connect, and the HMRI Data Science Team for technical guidance with the application form.

If you are interested in being involved in the design, planning, advising or delivery of health and medical projects, researches and services, please join [Consumer Connect](#).

New Seed Grants

New seed grants to support Consumer Involvement in Research were open in 2023 to support early-stage consumer involvement in research projects and health initiatives. The twenty successful applications will use the \$1000 grant funding to support consumer involvement, including through remuneration, reimbursement for consumer-incurred expenses during involvement, focus group expenses and other forms of acknowledgement of consumer participation. We are very excited and looking forward to hearing the outcomes of these activities in 2024.

Improving care for patients with chronic pain in regional areas

Chronic non-cancer pain can severely impact a person's quality of life, their capacity to work and engage socially, their independence, and their mental and physical health. Defined as pain lasting more than 3 months and experienced on most days of the week, chronic non-cancer pain affects an astounding one in five (or 3.2 million) Australians.

Earlier this year, NSW Regional Health Partners' health partner organisations flagged chronic pain as a priority for their services. People in chronic pain were presenting to GP practices and regional Emergency Departments six times higher than they were in 2010, accounting for between 20% and 40% of all adult presentations. Further, there was strong desire to address the high rates of opioid prescribing for chronic pain across our region, with rates around 10% higher than the national average.

For people living with chronic pain in regional and rural Australia, access to high value, evidence-based interventions, such as integrated pain services, can be challenging. To address this, NSW Regional Health Partners united 24 experts from across our region to design a potential new model of care that could leverage existing services and community assets to increase local support for chronic pain management. This was developed and submitted as a MRFF Primary Health Care Research Grant, with NSW Health Agency for Clinical Innovation, Chronic Pain Australia, the Australian Pain Society, Armajun

AMS, and HealthWISE joining us as partners. The proposed model of care builds on foundational work conducted by Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network and the Hunter New England LHD Integrated Care Team, and the expertise of the Integrated Pain Services across our three Local Health Districts.

While we wait to hear from MRFF if our application has been successful, we have started working in Armidale and Port Macquarie – the two sites where we aim to test the new model of care. Local team members have been busy consulting with community members to engage them in the local program of work, explaining how they might be involved, and what this new model of care might look like for them. This means that even without research funding, we are making small steps to improve care provision locally. We will continue to work on this program of work with our partners in 2024.

Our thanks to all team members for their amazing collaborative effort developing the final grant proposal, and their ongoing efforts to improve chronic pain care across our region: Clara Murray, Ian Skinner, Nicolette Hodyl, Gena Lieschke, Maree Puxty, Anna Barwick, Rebecca Hodder, Joanna Coutts, Elizabeth Worboys, Fiona Hodson, Penny Reeves, Shanthi Ramanathan, Connor Gleadhill, Sujata Allan, Daiva Newby, Sue Rogers, Chris Williams, Cate Dingelstad, Sarah Wayland, Chris Oldmeadow, Pat Oakley, Anthea Fagan.

Liz Worboys (1971 - 2023)

It is with sadness that we farewelled our colleague, Liz Worboys, in August this year.

Liz was a valued member of our Chronic Pain team, joining as a passionate consumer, and as a voice and advocate for those with chronic pain living in regional areas where access to services and supports is more challenging.

Liz generously shared her story with us, so that others might have a better experience, and that we could all work together to improve services and care provision. Liz's contributions inarguably strengthened our proposed new model of care, ensuring it would meet the needs of people with chronic pain in regional areas. Liz's generosity, patience, determination and expertise enriched our lives and our work: Liz's legacy will live on in the work we do.



Grant Success!

NSW Regional Health Partners partnered on a number of successful research grant applications in the last 12 months. Congratulations to these researchers on their grant success. We look forward to working with you over the coming years to support translation of your work.



- MRFF Consumer led research: Consumer and Community Involvement in Research and Implementation. \$1 million. This is a grant being delivered through the Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA): Dr Jessie Sutherland is the NSW RHP representative on this grant. CIs: Helena Teede, Ainslie Cahill, Carol Hodgson, Debra Langridge, Sandra Reeder, Kerrie Doyle, Alan Dorin, Mark Parsons, Leah Heiss, Angela Jones, Diana Egerton-Warburton.
- AHRA Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network: Trauma informed healthcare: a co-produced multidisciplinary investigation into service provision and access. \$190,000. CIs: Deborah Loxton, Lisa Shipley, Melissa Harris, Kelsey Hegarty, Laura Tarzia, Emma Barrett, Rebecca Waters, Lis Ronneberg, Kristine Vicca, Susanne Oliver Armstrong, Nafiseh Ghafournia, and Joanne Louise Bell.
- MRFF Genomics Health Futures Mission: Using polygenic scores to guide the treatment and prophylaxis of hypertension. \$2.6 million. CIs: Murray Cairns, Aaron Sverdlov, Andrew Boyle, Doan Ngo, John Attia, Clare Collins, Christopher Reid, William Reay, Anastasia Mihailidou, Tracy Dudding.
- Cancer Institute NSW Accelerated Research Implementation Grant Scheme: IMPACT-CVD in CANCER trial. \$800,000 CIs: Aaron Sverdlov, Doan Ngo, James Lynam, Jarad Martin, Mathew George, John Wiggers, Nicolette Hodyl, Chris Levi, Trent Williams, Kerry Doyle.

NSWRHP staff are pleased to support our partners, state and national health agencies by participating in committees & advisory groups and in the delivery of projects & initiatives

MRFF - 2023 Consumer-Led Research Grant Assessment Committee	Translational Research Grant Scheme Review panel - HNE, MNC, CC LHDs
Implementation Science Health Conference Australia – Organising Committee	The University of Newcastle College of Health, Medicine and Well-Being Research Committee
AHRA Consumer and Community Involvement Advisory Committee	HNELHD District Partnering with Consumers Initiative and Planning Committees
NSW Rural, Regional, and Remote (R3) Clinical Trial Enabling Program	NSW Research Translation Centres Cardiovascular Symposium - panellist
Cancer Institute NSW State wide Education Committee Meeting	HNE Clinical Trial Partnership Committee
HNELHD Cancer Network Leadership Committee	HMRI Strategy and Operating Model Steering Committee
MNCLHD Research Support Grant Panel	HNELHD Rural Research Committee
CC Research Institute Priority-Driven Research Committee	The University of Newcastle – Research Advantage – Panellist

Communications Update

In 2023, NSW RHP delivered several new communications initiatives to support, promote and enable our outreach and impact. These initiatives were led by Caitlin Curran, our Communications Officer.

Our New Brand incorporates colour shades of green and blue, reflecting the diverse landscapes of our regions. Coinciding with the rebrand, we developed a new style guide, logos and templates, and updated our website to ensure a consistent and cohesive brand presence across all of our communication channels.

The **new-look website** was launched in April, with functionality incorporated to facilitate subscriptions to our newsletter, and advertisement of upcoming events and opportunities. The website also serves as

a central hub for showcasing our projects, sharing our stories, celebrating our successes, advertising training sessions, and as a depository for our resources.

We have also adopted GreenArrow as our **new email platform**. This tool overcomes the cyber security that has prevented our partners from receiving our communications in the past. We can now efficiently distribute our updates and newsletters to our growing subscriber base, which now exceeds 600!

We have **increased engagement** through disseminating relevant website updates and stories through our social media platforms which will continue to be a priority for 2024.



40
eDMs sent



42%
eDM click
rate



3.2k
WEB VISITS

USER BREAKDOWN BY PAGE

1.6k Home page
717 Upcoming events
257 Newcastle Research
Roadshow
217 Education and Training
186 Join our consumer registry
182 Consumer and Community
Involvement Grant



4,914
ORGANIC
REACH



1,835
ORGANIC
REACH

The Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) is the voice of the 14 Research Translation Centres, either fully accredited or recognised as emerging by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Each Centre is a partnership of multiple health services, connected to research institutes and universities. Individually and together, AHRA members provide unique networks, helping translation of innovation from research into better healthcare for all Australians.

Members of the Australian Health Research Alliance gather in Canberra each Autumn to meet face-to-face and consult with colleagues from key partners such as the NHMRC and Department of Health.

Members of AHRA work collaboratively to address national priorities. Our current national networks focus on building capability amongst Indigenous researchers, women's health, using data to drive healthcare improvement, and increasing consumer and community involvement in health and medical research. Most recently this has led to an invited submission to tender for leading the review of the 2016

AHRA Priorities

Embed research in Australian health care

Achieve better alignment of research capacity with clinical priorities

Enable more, better and faster research translation to deliver

Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research.

This year, our Director, A/Professor Nicolette Hodyl, was appointed as Deputy Director of AHRA, and the Chair of the inaugural AHRA Rural Sub-Committee. In these roles, Nicki has represented AHRA in meetings with Dr Masha Somi, CEO of the Health and Medical Research Office in the Department of Health, and Dr Ruth Stewart, National Rural Health Commissioner, to inform research grant schemes to ensure they provide equitable opportunities for those working in rural and regional Australia to improve health and health systems.





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