



Impact Report 2024

GROWING RESEARCH WITHIN HEALTHCARE

ONE VOICE FOR BETTER HEALTH THROUGH RESEARCH TRANSLATION

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country. We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.

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Message from the Chair

Professor John Prins

Advancing health outcomes through multidisciplinary research and collaboration

The Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) connects the nation's accredited Research Translation Centres (RTCs) and Emerging Centres, supporting, facilitating and advocating for enhanced health research translation and evidence-based healthcare. It is the only network bringing together health services, research institutions, community organisations and academia across Australia.

AHRA members are the 11 RTCs and 3 Emerging Centres recognised by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). In this report we provide some examples of how they support research translation into healthcare, improving health outcomes and equity.

Since its establishment in 2017, AHRA has continued to mature. This year, AHRA launched its first strategic plan. The plan has 3 pillars:

- Pillar 1 aims to support a strong, multidisciplinary research translation workforce that advances knowledge, improves healthcare delivery, and ultimately enhances health outcomes for all Australians. The Melbourne Academic Centre for Health's MacHSR Future Leaders Fellowship program is just one example of how RTCs can support clinician-researcher career pathways.
- Pillar 2 aims to facilitate health research translation into healthcare delivery. Central to this pillar is increased collaboration with patients, community, health services and researchers to enhance research translation. A tangible example is the West Australian Health Translation Network's new handbook, *[Involving Consumers in Health and Medical Research: A practical handbook for organisations, researchers, consumers and funders](#)*, now available Australia-wide.
- Pillar 3 aims to advocate for health research translation and evidence-based healthcare, tapping into AHRA's extensive network to gather and share insights from community, health services and researchers. Maridulu Budyari Gumal, Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise's (SPHERE) 2 submissions to recent parliamentary inquiries demonstrate how RTCs can help address the pressing health needs of diverse communities. At a national level, AHRA's advocacy led to new NHMRC Health Services Research grants.



AHRA's other noteworthy milestones this year include:

- Our new Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Sub Committee provides a stronger voice for the RRR health research workforce and the communities they serve. Pleasingly, the RRR Sub Committee has already provided advice and guidance to both NHMRC and Medical Research Futures Fund (MRFF).
- We have strengthened relationships with the NHMRC and MRFF at many levels. The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care has invited me as AHRA Chair to join its Stakeholder Advisory Group, a sub-committee of the Inter-Governmental Policy Reform Group.
- Enhanced relationships with aligned academies, such as the Australian Clinical Trials Alliance (ACTA) and the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences (AAHMS), help to streamline training and education.

This year, the AHRA Impact Report showcases the breadth of work of the accredited and emerging RTCs to advance research translation across Australia.

I congratulate the RTCs and Emerging Centres on their impactful work. I am confident that AHRA will continue to build momentum, united by our vision for improved health outcomes for all Australians.

Professor John Prins
Chair, Australian Health Research Alliance

Message from the Deputy Chair

Associate Professor Nicki Hodyl

AHRA's proactive approach to addressing health disparities in rural, regional, and remote communities

As the director of a regional Research Translation Centre (RTC), I am encouraged and inspired by the progress AHRA has made over the past year advocating for improved and dedicated research funding to support health research translation in rural, regional and remote (RRR) areas. This has been achieved through the activities of the AHRA Rural Sub Committee, established in 2023.

Australians in RRR communities have worse health outcomes and shorter life expectancies than those in metropolitan areas. As a national collaborative network, AHRA understands that health and medical research in these locations also faces significant challenges—from navigating vast geographies and limited resources to workforce shortages. Addressing these challenges requires tailored strategies and increased support for place-based research, i.e. research that prioritises community leadership and leverages local strengths to create a tangible and sustainable solution.

It is promising to see that both the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) acknowledge the need to support research that addresses disparities in RRR health outcomes. In its latest medical research and innovation strategy, the Australian Government has said projects funded through the MRFF will address existing areas of unmet health need, tackling underinvestment and supporting capacity development with a focus on achieving equity in health outcomes, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other priority populations.

AHRA's Rural Sub Committee has worked with NHMRC and MRFF to facilitate applications to their schemes being assessed by people who live and work in RRR areas who are best placed to determine whether the grant represents good value. AHRA has committed to supporting:

- the NHMRC and MRFF to find relevant reviewers for these assessment panels
- people living and working in RRR areas to participate in assessment panels.

We have also worked with the NHMRC to define “excellence” in an RRR setting, to increase understanding (and therefore competitiveness) of grants from RRR areas, which may not have



scored highly using current grant assessment metrics. For example, research conducted in RRR areas often leverages the limited resources available in RRR areas (e.g. older infrastructure, fewer patient numbers, higher comorbidity rates) that make it difficult to design flawless (yet important) research.

Further, the ability of the team to conduct the work in an RRR setting relies on community leadership, community integration, local standing, strong local partnerships and an understanding of and connections across the RRR health system.

With the AHRA Chair, I have presented to the MRFF leadership group on the unique challenges of health and medical research in RRR areas and shared considerations for future grant schemes to support RRR research.

By promoting greater understanding and collaboration, AHRA continues to expand our nation's capacity to deliver relevant and impactful health and medical research that improves healthcare regardless of location.

Associate Professor Nicki Hodyl
Deputy Chair, Australian Health Research Alliance

About AHRA

The Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) is the peak body for 11 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) accredited Research Translation Centres (RTCs) and 3 RTCs recognised as emerging.

Through this network of RTCs, AHRA brings together 75 health services, 31 universities, 43 research organisations, 2 community organisations, 8 government bodies and 10 other organisations such as Primary Health Networks, reaching more than 90% of researchers and 86% of the acute health care services across Australia.

AHRA's mission is to support health and medical research to be translated and embedded into health care, to improve health outcomes, health equity, and the health economy.

The NHMRC defines research translation as activities that use the results of research to inform health policy, systems and practice to improve individual and population health.

In 2024, AHRA released its first Strategic Plan focusing on 3 strategic themes:

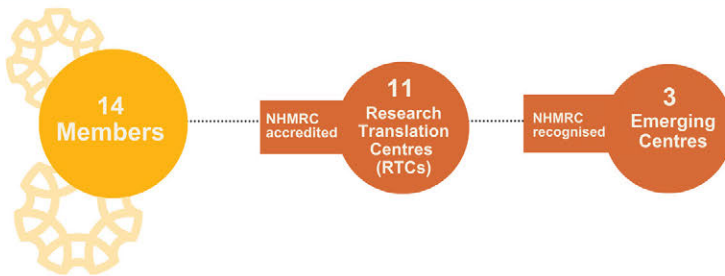
Support a strong multidisciplinary research translation workforce	Facilitate health research translation into healthcare delivery	Advocate for health research translation and evidence-based healthcare
Focusing on: - Health research education and training - Upskilling clinician-researchers and all health professionals involved in research translation - Defining and promoting clinician-researcher career pathways	Focusing on: - Collaborating with patients, community, health services, researchers and other stakeholders - Reducing duplication and waste in the health translation spectrum - Streamlining research translation processes	Focusing on: - Partnering with Federal and State Governments - Connecting prevention, primary care and acute care - Improving health equity for underserved groups, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities, and rural, regional and remote Australians

Each RTC has their own strategic priorities and work programs, but these centres coming together under the banner of AHRA leverages their collective expertise and creates a truly national network.

The AHRA Impact Report 2024 features some of the inspiring work RTCs are doing in the areas of workforce development, clinical trials, and consumer and community involvement. Their work advances the translation of health and medical research into clinical practice, and together we are working to create a lasting impact on health policy, systems, care and ultimately, the health of all Australians.

AHRA Snapshot 2024

AHRA MEMBERSHIP



AHRA COVERAGE ACROSS AUSTRALIA

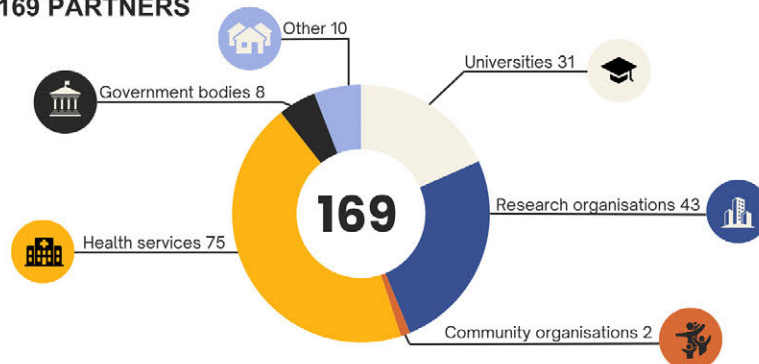
90% OF RESEARCHERS



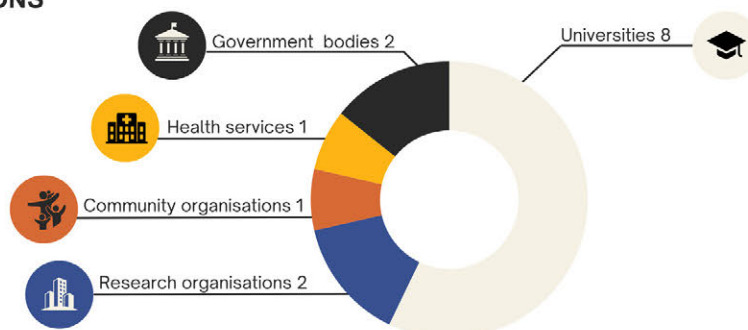
86% OF ACUTE HEALTH CARE SERVICES



RTC BREAKDOWN OF 169 PARTNERS



RTC HOST ORGANISATIONS



Workforce development

Bolstering Australia's health research translation workforce

Strengthening Australia's health research translation workforce is vital for improving healthcare delivery, advancing medical research, and ensuring all Australians benefit from health research innovations. AHRA, in partnership with its network of Research Translation Centres (RTCs) and Emerging Centres across Australia, supports a strong, multidisciplinary health research translation workforce.

The stories in this report demonstrate the breadth and depth of the education and training activities RTCs and Emerging Centres deliver across the country. As the national body connecting these centres, AHRA's role is to help promote and connect these activities to support more effective research translation.

The collective effort of the RTCs across Australia is immense, delivering 231 education and training events in the financial year 2023-24. During the year, close to 20,000 Australians registered for those education and training events.

RTCs education and training activities have an impressive range and reach: for example, in Queensland, the Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre is leading a 4-year project to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, the Western Alliance Academic Health Science Centre is delivering the Supporting Translation of Research in Rural and Regional settings (STaRR) Program to build research capacity, capability and activity in rural and regional health settings.

Read on to learn about some of the RTC workforce development activities happening across the country.

RTC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FY 2023-24



Above: Sydney Health Partners Implementation Science Masterclass participants

A medical retrieval services model enhancing care for remote regions

For Australians living in remote regions, access to effective primary care and timely, high-quality emergency care can mean the difference between life and death. One research team has evaluated a service model introduced in Central Australia to meet these needs, gaining new knowledge that will benefit remote regions worldwide.

The Researcher Wappayalawangka-Central Australia Academic Health Science Network (CAAHSN) is a Centre for Innovation in Regional Health dedicated to improving the health of people in central Australia, focusing on Aboriginal health.

CAAHSN Partner, the Menzies School of Health Research, evaluated the medical retrieval service (MRaCC) model for acute care cases and the primary health care telehealth service in Central Australia.

Central Australian medical retrieval services cover an enormous area of more than 1.26 million km² across 3 jurisdictions. The research team aimed to assess the timeliness, efficiency and impact of the MRaCC system compared with the previous model.

Their objectives also included assessing the impact of the model on remote clinicians and emergency department specialists, the changes in patient outcomes and cost-effectiveness.

Project Manager Dr Deborah Russell explained the team found that patient and clinician outcomes improved under the new system.

“

The redesigned retrieval model improved timeliness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, including a 10% reduction in retrievals and hospital admissions.

”

“The project showed the benefits of the new system that modestly increased overall medical staffing and separated emergency and primary care referrals, with each type of referral directed to the health professional with the most appropriate skills.”

“This knowledge is particularly relevant for policymakers responsible for the design and outcomes of remote health services in Australia and internationally.”

The findings have been used to improve the retrieval system in Central Australia and inform planning for other remote retrieval service studies.

Name Researcher Wappayalawangka-Central Australia Academic Health Science Network

Location Alice Springs, NT

Year established 2014

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2017

Host organisation Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

Partners

12 partners, including:

- 2 universities
- 2 research organisations
- 1 community organisation
- 6 health services
- 1 other

 caahsn.org.au

 info@caahsn.org.au



New Implementation Science Academy accelerates research translation

In Sydney, a new academy is building a strong foundation for implementation science, expediting the translation of innovative research findings into practical healthcare solutions.

The Sydney Health Partners (SHP) Implementation Science Academy plays a pivotal role in SHP's mission to revolutionise the impact of research on patient care and public health.

SHP's Associate Professor Heather Shepherd, co-lead for the Implementation Science Academy, said the Academy addresses the increasing need for health professionals and researchers to enhance their ability to implement evidence-based practice.

"By equipping health professionals and researchers with implementation science skills, we promote a workforce and health system that prioritises innovative research and interdisciplinary collaboration to improve patient care," Associate Professor Shepherd said.

"The Academy launched in 2023 in response to a call within the Australian health workforce for leadership in implementation science. This demand for leadership underscores the Academy's pivotal role in training and empowering healthcare leaders to drive effective change and improve patient outcomes through rigorous implementation research."

The Academy's growing program includes:

- A practical 2-day Implementation Science Masterclass, with 122 health professional and researcher graduates to date
- A monthly online seminar series presenting advanced topics and challenges in implementation science, with 580 attendees in 2024
- An Academy Fellows Program that gives recognition of implementation science expertise and leadership in SHP-affiliated health service partners.
- A Matching and Advisory Program for Implementation Science (MAPS) connecting researchers and health professionals with implementation science advisors
- An Implementation Pilot Grant Program, which has awarded 25 pilot projects with grants of up to \$20,000 for collaborative projects between the University of Sydney and SHP affiliated health service partners
- Monthly drop-in sessions offering Q&A, shared resources and discussion
- An online Community of Practice, with a membership of 1,639 researchers and health professionals – an 81% increase since January 2023
- Grant application consultation for implementation science.

Name Sydney Health Partners

Location Sydney, NSW

Year established 2015

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2015

Host organisation The University of Sydney

Partners

16 partners, including:

- 1 university
- 10 research organisations
- 5 health services

 sydneyhealthpartners.org.au

 shp.communications@sydney.edu.au

Featured opposite: Sydney Health Partners Masterclass

Strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce

Participatory, iterative, and co-design principles underpin a 4-year project to strengthen the First Nations health workforce in northern Queensland.

The Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre (TAAHC), with grant funding from the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia, leads the project, which brings together health partners across northern Queensland and beyond.

In the TAAHC region, approximately 2% of the health workforce identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and most of these employees work in lower-level positions, such as personal care workers and Aboriginal Health Worker trainees.

The project aims to increase First Nations peoples' participation in clinical and non-clinical roles across the entire health system and strengthen the cultural competence of non-Indigenous staff to enhance the delivery of high-quality, culturally appropriate care and improve health equity. While the project focuses on northern Queensland, initially covering the TAAHC footprint, the learnings may be highly relevant across northern Australia.

Jointly led by Associate Professor Catrina Felton-Busch and Professor Sarah Larkins, the project supports shifts in education and training, recruitment, support and retention, and career development and mentoring for First Nations peoples within the health sector. The project concludes with outcome and impact evaluation, supporting future scalability.

Professor Larkins said the project has hit important milestones since starting in 2023.

“We have established a Technical Reference Group in Stage 1 of 5 project stages, and employed largely Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design research fellows for each Hospital and Health Service region. Co-design workshops are now being held across the region,” Professor Larkins said.

“The group, comprising Executive Directors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, senior project partners and education and training stakeholders, meets monthly to guide project delivery.

“The project will support better career pathways and the improved recognition of the qualification and skills that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and practitioners bring to our workforce, ultimately leading to better health outcomes for First Nations people.”

Featured opposite: Kisha Neville, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner – Healthy Skin team (left) with Joice Reuben, Indigenous Liaison Officer (right) celebrating NAIDOC

Name	Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre Ltd	Partners	8 partners, including:
Location	Townsville, Qld		• 1 university
Year established	2019		• 5 health services
Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation	2020		• 2 other
Host organisation	James Cook University		
	taahc.org.au		
	taahc@jcu.edu.au		





Balancing clinical work and health services research to deliver innovative care

Health services research questions can often immediately inform better patient care. In Victoria, a fellowship program gives frontline clinicians the skills, resources and time to investigate these questions and become future health services research leaders.

The Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH) leads the MacHSR Future Leaders Fellowship program. MACH is a joint venture working to ensure breakthroughs made at universities, medical research institutes and health services have the greatest possible impact on patient care.

MacHSR Director and Group Leader Health Services + Economics at Murdoch Children's Research Institute Professor Harriet Hiscock said MacHSR offers opportunities and support for frontline clinicians to explore and address health service problems.

"Clinicians are the most likely to identify a problem within their health service, and when research happens in the clinical environment, there's a quicker translation of evidence into clinical practice," Professor Hiscock said.

“

Through MacHSR, we are supporting the delivery of more innovative care and the development of clinician-researchers.

”

The Fellowship is available to a select cohort of frontline clinicians. It provides formal training, protected research time, expert supervision and networking opportunities.

Jen Corda is a MacHSR Fellow and a Senior Respiratory Physiotherapist at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH). Ms Corda identified a way to improve care for children living with cystic fibrosis (CF) and reduce the burden of care on their families by detecting CF exacerbations early.

During her MacHSR Fellowship, Ms Corda collaborated with CF clinicians, virtual care experts and parents of children with CF to embed a remote monitoring system into the RCH electronic medical record and assess it using a pilot randomised controlled study.

The Fellowship gave Ms Corda time to devote to her research while still working clinically.

The system design can easily be adapted to other disease cohorts, and other hospital units have already expressed an interest in it.

Name Melbourne Academic Centre for Health

Location Melbourne, Vic

Year established 2014

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2015

Host organisation University of Melbourne

Partners

19 partners, including:

- 1 university
- 8 research organisations
- 10 health services

 machaustralia.org

 mach-admin@unimelb.edu.au

Featured opposite: Some of MacHSR Future Leaders Fellows 2023-24

Bridging the gap between research and applications that improve healthcare

Successful research translation requires skills that go beyond traditional clinical or research training. Translation is more than a step in the research process. It requires adopting a mindset and ways of working that consider and prioritise impact from the outset.

In South Australia, work is underway to strengthen the skills and knowledge of the health and research workforce in areas such as implementation science, co-design, consumer and community involvement, and health economics, with promising results.

Health Translation SA (HTSA) – South Australia's statewide Research Translation Centre – has 2 core capacity-building initiatives that empower participants to bridge the gap between their research and the practical applications that improve healthcare and save lives.

The Research Translation Essentials course delivers affordable training in research translation competencies via a 2-day, in-person workshop led by local experts across HTSA partners. The Spotlight Series provides additional online learning opportunities in research translation competencies via a quarterly webinar series, with resources shared via HTSA's social media channels and website.

HTSA's Capacity Building Lead, Dr Agustina Gancia, explained health and medical researchers, clinical researchers, health practitioners, and project managers have welcomed these education and training opportunities.



Since its launch in December 2022, more than 80 participants have done the Research Translation Essentials course, and many have said it has provided a treasure trove of useful, actionable advice.



HTSA has also delivered 8 Spotlight Series on various topics, including co-design, consumer and community involvement, patient-reported measures, and research-policy partnerships, since November 2021.

Each Spotlight Series hosts expert presenters who speak from their experience, demystifying the elements of effective research translation and leaving people with practical tools and resources they can immediately apply in any health service improvement or research translation project.

The Research Translation Essentials course and the Spotlight Series also help participants identify other opportunities to upskill, extending their learning.

Name Health Translation SA

Location Adelaide, SA

Year established 2015

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2015

Host organisation SAHMRI

Partners

11 partners, including:

- 4 universities
- 2 research organisations
- 1 community organisation
- 2 government bodies (including 10 health services)
- 2 other

 healthtranslationsa.org.au

 enquiries@healthtranslationsa.org.au

Featured opposite: Health Translation SA Research Translation Essentials course participants



Upskilling in data analysis and health economics to strengthen research translation

By integrating data analysis and health economics in health research translation, the resulting policies and practices are evidence-based, cost-effective and equitable. In Northern Australia, a new workshop is supporting healthcare workers, researchers and other health professionals to upskill in these areas.

The Top End Academic Health Partners (Top End Partners) is an established collaboration and leader in healthcare, medical research, and education in Northern Australia. Top End Partners identified the need for their partnership to invest in skills training in quantitative data analysis and health economics, supporting translational research of the highest quality.

To address this need, Top End Partners coordinated a new 3-day, in-person workshop delivered by two experts in health economics and data analysis.

Associate Professor Oyelola Adegboye, an experienced public health researcher and chartered biostatistician, led the workshop's first 2 days.

Nineteen participants from healthcare, research and government delved into the world of data analysis using the R programming language. They gained insights into various topics, including data exploration, summarisation, and presentation, creating result tables and graphs, and a basic understanding of inferential statistics.

On the third day, experienced health economist Associate Professor Angela Devine took 8 specialist participants through various aspects of health economics.

“

It was great to see the growing interest in the NT to learn about health economics and how it can help to inform decision making.

”

Professor Devine introduced policymakers, clinicians, researchers, and health sector managers to the foundational concepts in health economics.

They gained insights about identifying, valuing, and analysing costs and outcomes and the practical use of cost-effectiveness analyses in policy decision-making.

Top End Partners continues to develop workshops and resources to meet the growing appetite for capacity-building in research translation among the Northern Territory's primary healthcare workforce. Their next workshop is *CQI for clinicians: Implementing new advances in health and medical research* at Compass, the annual conference for Northern Territory primary healthcare professionals.

Name Top End Academic Health Partners

Location Darwin, NT

Year established 2013

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2022

Host organisation Menzies School of Health Research

 topendpartners.com.au

 rosi.aryallees@menzies.edu.au

Partners

7 partners, including:

- 1 university
- 1 research organisation
- 3 health services
- 2 government bodies

STaRR Program shines in western Victoria, building better regional health outcomes

In western Victoria, the Supporting Translation of Research in Rural and Regional settings (STaRR) Program is building research translation capacity, capability and activity in rural and regional health settings—a must for improving health outcomes.

Western Alliance Academic Health Science Centre (Western Alliance) is the first Australian academic health science centre to focus on rural and regional health outcomes. Since 2021, Western Alliance has delivered the STaRR Program, which includes mentored training programs, a mentor network, online resources and grants.

- 112 emerging researchers have completed STaRR Mentored Emerging Researcher Training.
- 96 emerging researchers have completed STaRRlite—an entry-level research training workshop.
- More than 40 health leaders and managers have taken STaRR training for leaders.
- More than 50 research mentors have joined the STaRR Mentor Network.
- 11 STaRR Emerging Researcher grants have supported research and translation activity.

Western Alliance Chief Operating Officer Drew Aras said STaRR is ideal for participants who identify a practice-related problem in their health setting and want to address it through research.

“These participants are frontline health professionals who can see a way to improve things for patients but have limited research experience,” Mr Aras said.

“That’s where we can make a difference by pairing these emerging researchers with experienced mentors and supporting both groups with training, online resources and grants.

Mentors provide individualised support and guidance as emerging researchers develop their practice-based problem into a research question and protocol.

“STaRR simultaneously builds workforce capacity and expands health research produced and translated in rural and regional settings.

“The program works because we have engaged and enthusiastic emerging researchers and more than 50 dedicated STaRR Mentors, workshop presenters, and facilitators, all prepared to provide invaluable contributions to the program.”

The STaRR program builds on the support provided by Western Alliance’s Research Translation Coordinators, who are embedded in local health services to foster engagement and drive capacity building and health sector-led research.

Name Western Alliance Academic Health Science Centre

Location Warrnambool, Vic

Year established 2014

Year of (first) NHMRC recognition 2022

Host organisation Incorporated as its own entity (registered charity)

Partners

11 partners, including:

- 2 universities
- 8 health services
- 1 other

 westernalliance.org.au

 info@westernalliance.org.au

Clinical trials

Enhancing Australia's clinical trials landscape

Over the past year, AHRA has worked to build its relationship with the Australian Clinical Trials Alliance (ACTA) to support the clinical trials community. By working together, ACTA and AHRA amplify their advocacy efforts, reduce duplication in clinical trials support for researchers, and help build the quality of Australia's clinical trials activity.

RTCs are supporting their partner organisations to meet the standards in the new National Clinical Trials Governance Framework. The Framework embeds clinical trials into routine health service provision and strengthens clinical and corporate governance arrangements for governments, hospital administrators, health services, private companies, trial sponsors and trial investigators.

For example, Melbourne Academic Centre for Health, Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre and the Western Alliance recently established the Australian Clinical Trials Education Centre (A-CTEC): a not-for-profit national education centre, that

provides a suite of evidence-based, interactive clinical trials education and training opportunities. More than 8,000 people are now using this online platform to build and maintain essential clinical trial skills.

The WA Country Health Service, a founding member of West Australian Rural Research and Innovation Alliance, leads the implementation of the Australian Teletrial Program in Western Australia, enabling people in regional areas to participate in clinical trials closer to home.

Eight RTCs are also involved in the development and coordination of 7 national Health Studies Australian National Data Asset (HeSANDA) nodes, helping to build national infrastructure for accessing, sharing and reusing health data from health studies, including clinical trials.

Here, we shine a light on the work that RTCs are doing together, and with other organisations to support high-quality clinical trials in Australia.



Above: WA Country Health Services

Education platform expands nationally to enhance clinical trials workforce

An education platform developed in Victoria to address barriers to clinical trials workforce education and training has expanded to a national audience with the support of AHRA.

The Australian Clinical Trials Education Centre (A-CTEC) is an online education and training platform, established by MACH, Monash Partners and Western Alliance. The concept of A-CTEC originated with the Parkville Cancer Clinical Trials Unit, which has offered support to clinical trials professionals for several years.

A-CTEC delivers internationally recognised education and training resources and expertise across Australian research organisations and health services, reducing duplication and building the capability of the clinical trials workforce, as well as supporting health services to align with the National Clinical Trials Governance Framework.

The platform is free for end users, enabling equitable access, especially for people in rural, regional and remote locations, and is supported by State and Territory governments and the Australian Teletrials Program.

A-CTEC Director Dr Eman Nafea explained that A-CTEC caters to the various levels of experience and competency of the clinical trials workforce and the different needs of clinical trials sites across Australia.

“The training is interactive, practical and relevant to clinical trials staff working in hospitals, medical research institutes, primary care and universities across metropolitan, regional and rural Australia,” Dr Nafea said.

Over 8,000 people across Australia have registered with A-CTEC and are using the education platform.

A-CTEC also provides opportunities for the clinical trials workforce to network, share learnings and engage in the co-design of A-CTEC activities.

In March 2024, 470 attendees from various states gathered for the second A-CTEC Conference, where the theme “Better Together” highlighted A-CTEC’s vision of collaboration.

A-CTEC is administered and governed by Cancer Trials Australia, Melbourne Academic Centre for Health, Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre and Western Alliance Academic Health Science Centre.



>8,000
USERS ON A-CTEC PLATFORM



>4,000
**PARTICIPANTS AT A-CTEC
LIVE EVENTS**



>17,600
**ENROLMENTS IN A-CTEC
COURSES & ACTIVITIES**



470
**ATTENDEES AT 2024 A-CTEC
CONFERENCE**

Australian Clinical Trials Education Centre (A-CTEC)

Collaborators Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH), Monash Partners and Western Alliance.

 actec.myopenlms.net

HeSANDA: Building national infrastructure for health data sharing and collaboration

The Health Studies Australian National Data Asset (HeSANDA program), led by Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC), is building national infrastructure to allow researchers to access, share and reuse data from health studies, including clinical trials, cohort studies and other data valuable for research. AHRA members have been integral in the set up and coordination of 7 national HeSANDA nodes.

As health data is often publicly funded, the HeSANDA program seeks to facilitate the efficient and wide sharing and reuse of data by more researchers in line with FAIR data principles, increasing the health benefits for all Australians. During the HeSANDA Clinical Trials project, ARDC consulted widely with the research community and relevant stakeholders before forming partnerships with research institutions and organisations involved in clinical trials research. These partnerships have established 9 HeSANDA nodes, representing 72 research organisations across Australia.

The HeSANDA Clinical Trials project has focused on enabling researchers to find and reuse existing data to inform new research questions and initiate new collaborations. The major output of the partnerships is a new national catalogue, Health Data Australia, launched in July 2023. Each of the 9 nodes feed their meta data into this catalogue and researchers can now use it to search for and request access to clinical trial data.

In Phase 1, the HeSANDA program focused on investigator-initiated and academic clinical trials. The next phase aims to improve the nodes' local infrastructure, extend the approach

to other health study types, such as cohort studies and clinical registries, and synchronise the activity across the whole network.

HeSANDA received co-investment from the ARDC. ARDC is enabled by the National Collaborative Research Investment Strategy (NCRIS).

From the AHRA network, the 7 nodes and the respective RTCs involved are:

1. Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH) Clinical Trials Consortium Node: Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH)
2. Monash and Partners Node: Monash Partners
3. Northern Australia Node: Top End Partners (Menzies School of Health Research and Charles Darwin University)
4. Queensland Node:
 - Health Translation Queensland
 - Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre
5. South Australia Node: Health Translation SA
6. Sydney Health Partners Node: Sydney Health Partners/NHMRC Clinical Trial Centre
7. WA Node: Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN)

Below: HeSANDA Program stakeholders at the Health Data Australia launch on 18 July 2023 (photo courtesy of ARDC/Andy Steven)



Regional patients join Perth-based and interstate clinical trials closer to home

The West Australian Rural Research and Innovation Alliance (WARRIA)—an emerging Research Translation Centre—is a partnership focused on health systems in regional, rural and remote Western Australia (WA).

WA Country Health Service, a founding member of WARRIA, is leading a new regional clinical trial program for the state. The Australian Teletrial Program, funded by the Medical Research Future Fund, enables people in regional WA to participate in clinical trials closer to home, improving equity of access to health services.

WA Country Health Service's Director of Teletrials, Dr Wei-Sen Lam, welcomed the rollout of the Teletrial Program in country WA. "Patients in regional areas can now participate in potentially life-saving clinical trials while staying at home in their communities," Dr Lam said.

“

Someone identified as suitable for a trial can say yes regardless of their postcode, improving access and equity for regional residents.

”

“Staff benefit from using cutting-edge treatments and interventions and working collaboratively with other health teams.”

The Teletrial Program targets clinical trial investigators from public and private organisations, supporting these researchers to connect with regional, rural and remote communities through local health services.

In 2023, dedicated teams in Albany and Perth recruited the first regional participants for the Vitafoot diabetic foot ulcer study. Clinicians from the Albany High Risk Foot Service team worked closely with lead researchers from the Fiona Stanley Hospital's Multidisciplinary Diabetes Foot Ulcer team using videoconferencing technology.

Through the Teletrials Program, Geraldton Regional Hospital is the first regional site in Australia to meet its target number of participants in the Telenutrition and Kidney Health (TeleKinesis) Study in dialysis patients.

The WA research community has also gained access to the Australian Clinical Trials Education Centre (A-CTEC), a resource developed and led by AHRA colleagues in Victoria.

Name WA Rural Research and Innovation Alliance (WARRIA)

Location Western Australia

Year established 2022

Year of (first) NHMRC recognition 2022

Host organisation WA Country Health Service

Partners

9 partners, including:

- 1 university
- 7 health services
- 1 other

✉ WACHSResearchandInnovation@health.wa.gov.au

Consumer and community involvement

Boosting consumer and community involvement in health research

Across AHRA, embedding and enhancing consumer and community involvement (CCI) in health and medical research is a major focus for Research Translation Centres (RTCs) and Emerging Centres.

This year, AHRA delivered an extensive national consultation for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), to inform the review of its statement on CCI in health and medical research. Between February and May 2024, 13 Centres as well as the Australian National University hosted 11 online and 11 in-person workshops, with central support provided by the Monash Partners team, to discuss and collect feedback on NHMRC's position paper about what to include in the revised statement.

A total of 440 people attended the 22 workshops, with almost equal numbers of consumers and researchers participating, and all Australian states and territories were represented. AHRA collated the results and reported them to the NHMRC in June 2024.

In addition to this national project, individual RTCs and emerging centres have progressed CCI initiatives to foster genuine partnerships between researchers and the communities they serve.

For example, through its microgrants program, Health Translation Queensland has funded consumer time in 42 health research projects over the 2023-24 financial year, enabling researchers to involve consumers where they may not previously have had the resources to do so.

The Western Australian Health Translation Network, as part of the AHRA CCI National Initiative and funded by MRFF, produced a practical CCI handbook and resources freely available on the AHRA website www.ahra.org.au.

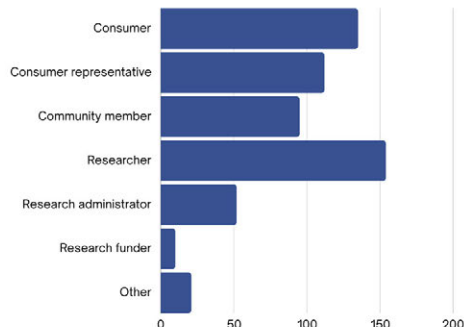
Read on for more stories about RTCs' work to support best practice CCI in health research across Australia.

AHRA ENGAGEMENT ON NHMRC'S CCI STATEMENT



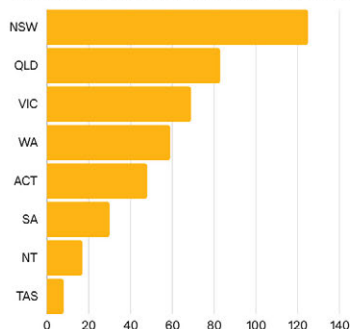
22
WORKSHOPS
440
ATTENDEES

PARTICIPANTS' SELF-IDENTIFIED ROLE IN CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

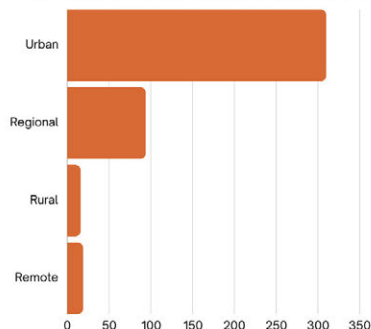


Note: Participants could choose more than one role.

STATE/TERRITORY WHERE PARTICIPANTS RESIDED



LOCATION OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



Advancing consumer involvement in health research with new resources

Many people understand why to involve consumers in health and medical research, but fewer know how to embed consumer and community perspectives in research. In Western Australia, a handbook designed to remove the guesswork has evolved into more resources.

The Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN) is a state-wide collaborative network advancing the translation of evidence-based health and medical research into policy, practice, training and innovation.

WAHTN recognised the need for practical, accessible information about optimal consumer and community involvement (CCI) in health and medical research. As part of the AHRA CCI National Initiative and funded by MRFF, the team has written and published a step-by-step guide entitled *Involving Consumers in Health and Medical Research: A practical handbook for organisations, researchers, consumers and funders*. The PDF version of the handbook and an accompanying quick guide flip chart are available on the WAHTN website.

WAHTN's Manager of Strategic Projects, Ms Jo Wilkie, conceived the handbook. She explained it has now evolved into several new online CCI resources.

"These resources are freely available Australia-wide and are aimed at getting the consumer and community voice into how health research is designed, delivered and translated," Ms Wilkie said.

“

We are developing the handbook into an online, fully interactive course for users to easily access and learn about successfully embedding CCI in their organisation or research.

”

"In collaboration with, and funding from, the Eastern Health Foundation (Victoria), we have used the handbook as a guiding document to co-develop and test a CCI Audit Tool.

"Organisations, researchers, consumers and funders can use this tool to ascertain the extent and nature of CCI in their organisation and research activity."

In addition to the CCI Handbook and Audit Tool, WAHTN's Consumer and Community Involvement Program has developed 2 free online courses—an introduction to CCI and CCI in grant applications.

Name Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN)

Location Perth, Western Australia

Year established 2015

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2017

Host organisation The University of Western Australia

Partners

22 partners, including:

- 5 universities
- 6 research organisations
- 10 health services
- 1 government body

 wahtn.org

 info@wahtn.org

STAGE 3:
Developing the
project & seeking
agreement

STAGE 4:
Collecting data

STAGE 5:
Analysing the data &
making sense of the
findings



Supporting researchers for effective consumer and community involvement

Many researchers want to engage consumers and the community in their projects but acknowledge they don't know where to start. In Queensland, an evolving program equips researchers with resources and a community to help advance their consumer and community involvement (CCI) endeavours and boost their confidence.

Health Translation Queensland (HTQ) addresses the challenges and barriers that can limit the effective translation of health and medical research into clinical practice. HTQ has built a CCI program that includes:

- an advisory service for researchers and clinician-researchers
- microgrants to help fund consumer involvement
- CCI training for researchers and clinicians
- curated CCI information, resources and tools
- a CCI community through its CCI in Research Alliance.

HTQ Operations Director Katrina Cutler explained the goal of the CCI program.

“We want to ensure Queensland research reflects the needs and priorities of local communities,” Ms Cutler said.

“We want researchers and clinician-researchers to involve consumers in their research from priority setting to project planning, delivery and evaluation. We can help them to develop the skills and find the resources to do so.”

“Our microgrants program is one example of our support for CCI in research.”

Since HTQ established the microgrants program in 2022, it has funded consumer time in 93 research projects across Queensland. The topics have ranged from consumer engagement in mealtime-based therapy in rehabilitation to gathering Indigenous perspectives on cancer research.

On that project, University of Queensland Professor of Indigenous Health Research and proud Kamilaroi woman Professor Gail Garvey said a community-driven research agenda is more likely to lead to sustainable outcomes because the community has a vested interest in the process and its results.

“Involving the community in shaping the research agenda of the First Nations Cancer & Wellbeing Research Program at the 2023 Queensland Murri Carnival promoted inclusivity, engagement, and relevance in the research process and will improve the quality of our research,” Professor Garvey said.

Name Health Translation Queensland

Location Brisbane, Qld

Year established 2014

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2017

Host organisation The University of Queensland

Partners

13 partners, including:

- 3 universities
- 3 research organisations
- 6 health services
- 1 government body

 healthtranslationqld.org.au

 hello@healthtranslationqld.org.au

Featured opposite: CCI workshop at Health Translation Queensland

National study reveals how to strengthen CCI in health research



Above and opposite: Monash Partners CCI workshop

Name Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre

Location Melbourne, Vic

Year established 2011

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2015

Host organisation Monash University

Partners

13 partners, including:

- 2 universities
- 3 research organisations
- 7 health services
- 1 other

 monashpartners.org.au

 info@monashpartners.org.au

A national study is generating new knowledge and evidence-based solutions to strengthen consumer and community involvement (CCI) in healthcare improvement and health and medical research.

With support from the Medical Research Future Fund, the Consumer and Community Involvement: Implementation Research for Impact (CCIRI) is co-led by Monash Partners, the Western Australian Health Translation Network and Maridulu Budyari Gumat (SPHERE).

CCIRI Co-Lead and Chief Operating Officer of Monash Partners, Dr Angela Jones, said behavioural and systems change is required to embed and systematise CCI in research and healthcare.

“Despite policy mandates, increasing recognition of the value of CCI in research and tools and resources, CCI efforts are often limited, ad-hoc and tokenistic,” Dr Jones said.

“Guided by an evaluation of the WAHTN CCI Program, we are working collaboratively to build a network of engaged and upskilled consumers, including members of under-represented community groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

In 2024, 287 consumers, researchers and clinicians participated in a national survey to identify barriers and enablers and understand the attitudes and behaviours that influence the adoption of CCI.

The CCIRI team also conducted 70 interviews with stakeholders in Research Translation Centres, funding bodies, health services, researchers, consumers and community organisations.

Preliminary findings reveal fundamental challenges around awareness and access to implementation resources focussed on embedding CCI at individual and system levels. Barriers to CCI include a lack of training for researchers and systemic institutional challenges. However, the results identified enablers, including strong leadership support and the presence of dedicated consumer engagement staff.

Guided by these insights, the CCIRI team has engaged all stakeholders in co-designing an innovative, interactive, dynamic digital platform, the Health Research Hub, launching in late 2024. The hub will provide centralised, up-to-date resources and opportunities to connect, share and learn with others working in CCI nationally.





doing research, together – a new, online resource for effective co-design

Involving end users in the design and delivery of research leads to better research, yet co-design and co-delivery are typically not well understood or effectively applied. *doing research, together* is a new resource that facilitates effective collaboration in health and medical research teams from the beginning to the end of the research cycle.

Working with consumers, carers, healthcare workers, researchers and partner organisations, NSW Regional Health Partners designed this best-practice guide using a user-centred design approach. This approach ensured that the information and advice were informed by the people it was created for.

NSWRHP Director Associate Professor Nicolette Hodyl said the resulting online resource provides practical tips and tools for working together as a cohesive team, regardless of the ‘co’ activity you are doing – co-planning, co-designing, co-producing, or something else.

“We developed this resource to clarify the principles and processes that underlie true co-design,” Associate Professor Hodyl said.

“It is inclusive, accessible and practical, ensuring all stakeholders have access to the same tools and language.

“*doing research, together* includes practical tools and editable templates that researchers, healthcare workers, consumers, carers, and others can use to support effective co-design. We worked with the end-users to make the co-design principles as easy as possible for teams to apply in real-world settings.

“The resource can also guide those managing or funding health and medical research in understanding what best practice co-design looks like, so they know what to look for when evaluating proposals, processes and research outputs.”

doing research, together's guidelines and tools build on the principles of NSW Health's All of Us Guide and other existing resources. It provides practical answers to frequently asked questions, tips, and links to further information, making it a valuable tool for anyone engaged in collaborative research.



Name NSW Regional Health Partners

Location Newcastle, NSW

Year established 2014

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2017

Host organisation Hunter New England Local Health District

Partners

9 partners, including:

- 3 universities
- 1 research organisation
- 3 health services
- 2 other

 nswregionalhealthpartners.org.au

 hnelhd-nswregionalhealthpartners@health.nsw.gov.au

SPHERE's parliamentary submissions make recommendations for critical health needs

Maridulu Budyari Gumal, Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE) has made evidence-based recommendations to 2 parliamentary inquiries into some of the most pressing health needs of diverse communities.

SPHERE is an academic health science partnership combining 15 thought-leading organisations that together address issues that communities want to be solved.

Researching for the submissions, SPHERE consulted consumers and expert representatives across its partnership.

SPHERE Executive Director Professor Chris White said the consultation process involved those directly affected, clinicians, researchers and expert stakeholders, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the most relevant issues.

"We wanted researchers and health professionals working with impacted people to identify their concerns. We based our recommendations on their insights, ensuring the proposed solutions influence practical and effective policy settings for diverse populations," Professor White said.

The Australian Senate Inquiry into Menopause and Perimenopause

SPHERE's recommendations were based on women's experiences of menopause and perimenopause and included equitable and individualised care for women.

"Our objective was to address gaps in policy, education, service provision, and research translation for the practical management of women as they age," Professor White said.

“

Improving menopause management enhances women's lives, promoting health and productivity while cutting healthcare costs.

”

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into diabetes

SPHERE's objective was to tackle equity, access, and care delivery gaps within diverse communities using real consumer stories. The recommendations addressed care and management issues while advocating for the continuation and expansion of successful programs.

With community collaboration, SPHERE conveyed the patient experience, describing how access to advanced technologies could improve their experience and how preventive measures could reduce the overall burden of type 2 diabetes.

"Diabetes disproportionately affects the wellbeing of many of our most isolated and priority populations," Professor White said. "We must help set the agenda, leading to better health outcomes, especially for these high-risk populations."

Name Maridulu Budyari Gumal, Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE)

Location Sydney, NSW

Year established 2016

Year of (first) NHMRC accreditation 2017

Host organisation University of New South Wales (UNSW)

Partners

15 partners, including:

- 4 universities
- 7 research organisations
- 2 health services
- 2 government bodies

 thesphere.com.au

 infoatsphere@unsw.edu.au

TCHI's new governance model empowers consumer and community voices

The Tasmanian Collaboration for Health Improvement (TCHI)—an emerging Research Translation Centre—has initiated a new governance model to strengthen consumer and community connection with Tasmanian researchers and health professionals.

The newly formed Consumer and Community Advisory Panel (CCAP) will inform a shared translational research agenda to deliver better healthcare and health outcomes for Tasmanians.

The CCAP brings together 11 health consumers from across Tasmania, with broad representation across age, location, cultural background and gender.

TCHI Board Member Professor Tracey Dickson explained that the CCAP ensures strong consumer representation at all levels.

“The CCAP is a core element of our governance structure developed through deep conversations with communities across lutruwita/Tasmania,” Professor Dickson said.

“Its purpose is to share knowledge, skills, experience, and advice regarding consumer and community involvement (CCI) in TCHI initiatives.

“The CCAP has already contributed to the stakeholder engagement process for the review of the national statement on CCI in health and medical research.

“CCAP members will eventually be represented on the Executive Committee and the Board.”

In 2023, TCHI brought together a Consumer Working Group to consider the most important values when consumers, researchers, and health professionals partner on research.

After a comprehensive review, consultation and iterative deliberations, the Working Group recommended:

- principles to guide TCHI's CCI work
- research roles, levels of involvement, and expectations for the involvement of consumers and community in TCHI's work and translational research
- an evidence-based model for CCI in TCHI's governance structure
- a review of recruitment and induction materials to ensure they were appropriate and accessible.

The CCAP was one of the initiatives resulting from these recommendations.

The Consumer Working Group has also co-designed principles and supporting practices to inform TCHI's organisational culture and ways of working in the Tasmanian research context.



Above: TCHI's CCI Coordinator working with consumers and researchers

Name Tasmanian Collaboration for Health Improvement

Location Hobart, Tas

Year established 2016

Year of (first) NHMRC recognition 2022

Host organisation The University of Tasmania, College of Health and Medicine

Partners

4 partners, including:

- 1 university
- 3 health services

 tchi.org.au

 tchi.admin@utas.edu.au

NHMRC-accredited Research Translation Centres



Researcher Wappayalawangka-Central Australia Academic Health Science Network (CAAHSN) is dedicated to improving the health and social outcomes of Aboriginal people living in central Australia and Barkly regions. CAAHSN focuses on Aboriginal community-driven research and research translation in close collaboration with research, educational and service delivery organisations.



Health Translation Queensland (HTQ) is a partnership organisation that brings together 13 of Queensland's universities, research institutes, health and hospital services, with CSIRO's Australian e-Health Research Centre and Queensland Health. HTQ provides a platform for greater integration and collaboration between clinicians, educators, researchers, academics, policy makers and health consumers. We work to address the challenges and barriers that can limit the effective translation of research into clinical practice, for the benefit of all Queenslanders.



Health Translation SA (HTSA) is a statewide collaborative network that unites 11 academic, research, and healthcare partners, along with the community and other key stakeholders. Our primary purpose is to enable the timely and effective adoption of research outcomes within the South Australian health system. We do this by acting as an independent catalyst and broker, mobilising collaborations across our network.



Maridulu Budyari Gumal

Working together for good health and wellbeing

Maridulu Budyari Gumal, the Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE) is a collaborative entity bringing together 15 leading organisations on a shared mission: to change the future of healthcare. SPHERE is committed to accelerating life-changing research, reducing healthcare costs and increasing healthcare value, while inspiring and training the next generation of researchers and health professionals to improve the health outcomes of their patients and communities.



MACH
Melbourne Academic
Centre for Health

Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH) is a joint venture between Victoria's top healthcare providers, medical research institutes and leading universities. It works to make sure the breakthroughs made at universities, medical research institutes and health services have the greatest possible impact on patient care. It does this by bringing clinicians and researchers together across important research themes, supporting translational research and nurturing the future leaders of the healthcare sector.



Monash Partners
ACADEMIC HEALTH SCIENCE CENTRE

Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre is a partnership between leading health service, research and teaching organisations focused on innovating for better health. The purpose of Monash Partners is to connect researchers, clinicians and the community to support the wellbeing of around 3 million Australians and beyond.



NSW Regional Health Partners (NSWRHP) works with its 9 strategically aligned partners to accelerate the translation of evidence into practice to improve the health and wellbeing of regional and rural communities, and the efficiency and effectiveness of health services. Leveraging our diverse skills, expertise and scale, NSWRHP actively fosters new ways of working by bringing together researchers, clinicians, managers and consumers to address local health problems.



Sydney Health Partners (SHP) is a health services-led partnership between major health services, a world-leading university and medical research institutes. SHP facilitates research translation that enables the adoption of effective innovations at a pace and scale to deliver optimal patient and public benefit. We support translational research guided by the needs and priorities of our health organisations.



Top End Academic Health Partners is an established collaboration and leader in healthcare, medical research, and education in Northern Australia and across the region and represents more than 82% of the Territory's population. Its goal is to undertake translational research of the highest quality to improve health care and health outcomes for its regional, rural and remote communities.



Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre (TAAHC) was established to improve the health of the northern Queensland population and grow prosperity in the tropical region through a partnership that enhances collective capability in health service delivery, health and medical research, and workforce development. TAAHC is a regional, collaborative vehicle for northern Queensland member organisations and their employees to lead, undertake, translate, and advocate for locally relevant health research of significance that improves the health of our communities.



Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN) is a collaboration of universities, research institutions, health service providers and state government. Its primary aim is to promote and facilitate the translation of research into improved health outcomes for the community. It acts as a bridge between researchers, clinicians, policymakers, consumers and organisations to ensure that research findings are effectively translated into clinical practice and health policy.

Emerging Research Translation Centres



West Australian Rural Research and Innovation Alliance

Impact Report 2024

For more information about this report, please contact:
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ahra.org.au