

Centre for Rural Health **BULLETIN**

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Augmented Reality Remote Assistance (ARRA) solution for managing rural patients: a partnership project between University of Tasmania (UTAS) and Bach Mai hospital in Vietnam

The Centre for Rural Health (CRH) and the Human Interface Technology Laboratory (HIT Lab), UTAS have recently been awarded a grant of \$387,245 by CSIRO-Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation - Aus4Innovation, for a partnership project between UTAS and Bach Mai hospital in Vietnam.

Vietnam has a disproportionate distribution of health workforces like Australia. In many rural and remote areas, healthcare staff have difficulty in accessing real-time, effective assistance from experts located centrally which may lead to less effectiveness of health care services and additional costs for rural/remote residents.

This innovative partnership project will employ Augmented Reality Remote Assistance (UTAS-ARRA) developed by the CRH and the HIT Lab to improve the effectiveness of remote situational tele-mentorship between central experts and rural/remote less-experienced healthcare staff in Vietnam in managing urgent and complex patient cases. Built on emerging Augmented Reality (AR) technologies, the UTAS-ARRA solution has the potential to enhance digital health and help improve efficiency, responsiveness, and productivity across hospitals in central and regional Vietnam.

For a number of years, the CRH has been working on innovative rural health training strategies that have the potential to provide health care professionals working in more isolated areas with additional guidance and support in providing care to patients. We have built and assessed how AR technologies can enable 'remote' instruction to occur, drawing on both simple and more complex clinical procedures. Dung Bui, a PhD candidate, has been progressing this work in the clinical simulation laboratory at UTAS with staff and practitioner scholars Elizabeth Clear, Joanne Hodge (nursing), Amanda Carnicelli and Kahlia Smith (paramedics), using the Microsoft hololens AR device.

Project team: Tony Barnett; Ha Hoang, Dung Bui, Darren Grattidge (CRH), Winyu Chinthammit; Son Tran (HIT Lab).



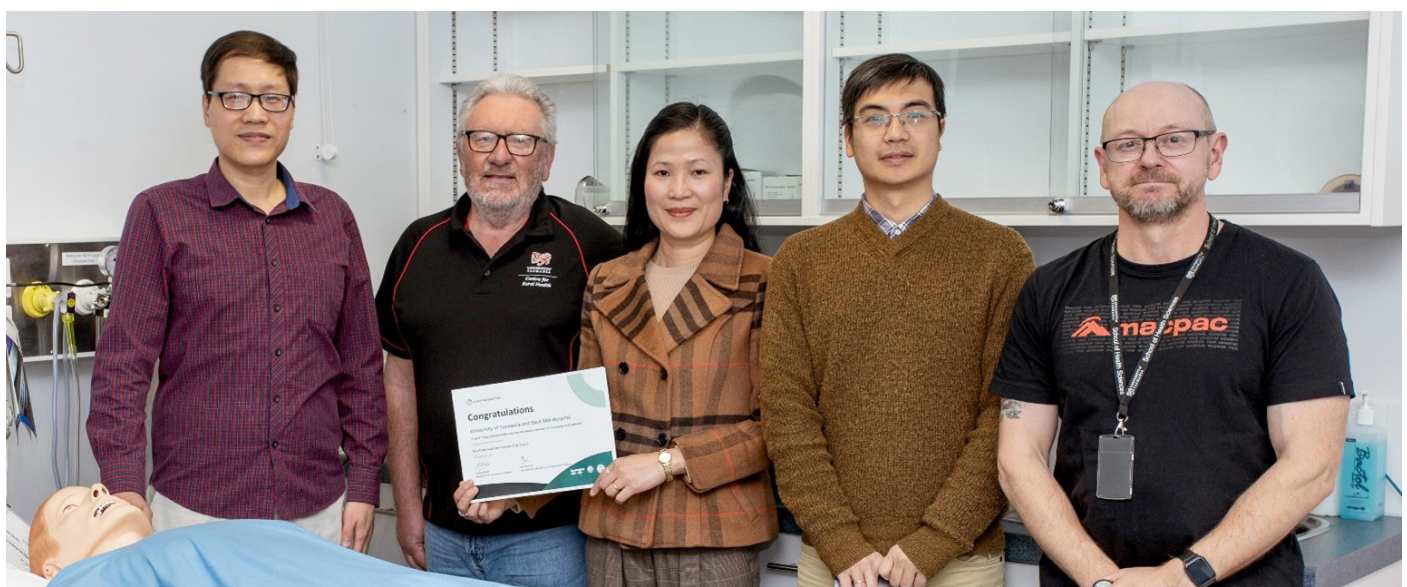
Further Information

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Pictured below (L to R): Dung Bui, Tony Barnett, Ha Hoang, Son Tran and Darren Grattidge



News and Activities

Rural Student Accommodation

As a colleague in the AHREN Student Support group said in his introductory email, "Crikey! – You've inherited a full plate", I would suggest an addition to that statement and say, that the order for the plate had been 'super-sized'.

Since taking on the role of Rural Student Support Officer at the end of April 2021, I have had a most amazing learning curve, and to say it was steep would be underselling it. I would also like to say that Karla Peek, my predecessor who had developed this role over the last 20 years, is an incredible person who was intimately associated with each of the 22 rural accommodation sites and well connected with every rural site's accommodation manager. She was able to reel off the top of her head, the processes surrounding all bookings, rural placement allowances, property maintenance, lease agreements and property ownerships. To use a common phrase, Karla was able to perform this role in her sleep.

More importantly though, I am so pleased to have worked with Karla over the last four years I've been with UTAS. She is a great friend and I only hope I can keep up her brilliant work in this role.

Here's a snapshot of what's been happening in the rural accommodation space since I've taken over:

- The CRH has provided support to approximately 500 students undertaking rural placements in 2021
- Accommodation in UTAS managed properties has accounted for 810 weeks
- In conjunction with the RHMT PEP Expansion project, we have provided 81 weeks in commercial accommodation at a cost of almost \$72,000
- The CRH has so far paid \$31,200 in financial support for the Rural Placement Allowance and Travel Subsidy schemes
- The septic, grease trap and stormwater systems decided to give up the ghost on Flinders Island and are currently being replaced with financial support from the CRH

- Major renovation works at the Nubeena accommodation have commenced in conjunction with the Tasman Council to bring the property up to scratch
- Some major and minor works are in the process of being planned for one of the two properties at St Helens, along with the properties at St Marys and King Island
- A COVID safety plan was developed for the December 15th border opening
- Documentation was also developed which is now being sent out to all accommodation users to ensure compliance with requirements for UTAS, THS and the various councils at all of the properties students have access to
- Our colleagues in Infrastructure Services & Development (ISD) are busy with the renewal of property leases ensuring all "i's" are dotted and "t's" are crossed

There is so much more to this role than booking a few students into our rural accommodation sites and paying the odd allowance or two. It has at times been overwhelming but also very rewarding knowing that many students are exceptionally appreciative of the support we provide for their rural placements.

I am also very, very lucky to be working in a team with such supportive colleagues. I cannot thank them enough especially Terri Stevens and Tony Barnett who have not only helped when I have really needed it, but have allowed me the opportunity to make my own mark on this role. I look forward to continuing in this space for a little while yet.



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New St Helens District Hospital Virtual Tour

At the beginning of 2013 the Centre for Rural Health (CRH) began developing virtual tours of the facilities and accommodation available to students for the duration of their rural placements around Tasmania. The St Helens District Hospital was one of four pilot sites initially developed. Since then, 15 facilities and 16 accommodation tours have been captured and added to the tour repository on the CRH website. In May of 2019 the new St Helens District Hospital opened, meaning the existing tour was no longer valid and was removed. In late 2021 we had the chance to reshoot the new facility in all its shiny new glory and re-add it to our extensive list of tour locations <https://www.utas.edu.au/health/professional-experience-placement/rural-and-regional-placement/tour>.



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The North West Coast Welcomes UTAS Nutrition Students

For the first time, 3rd year Bachelor of Nutrition Science students undertook a 2-week community placement in rural Tasmania in September 2021. A total of 15 students were generously hosted by Burnie Community House, Burnie Child and Family Centre, East Devonport Community House, East Devonport Child and Family Centre, and Rural Health Tasmania, Smithton.

While on placement, students had the opportunity to participate in a range of food, nutrition and community health programs and activities including:

- Men's DIY Health & Well-being Toolkit: A 7-week program for men that supports health literacy, focusing on nutrition, physical activity, health and emotional wellbeing.
- Curious Chefs: A program run in local primary schools and community spaces that aims to develop skills and knowledge around food and health literacy.
- SevenUP: A social hub for young people enrolled in years 7-12 that supports mental, emotional and physical health and encourages youth to try new things and build new skills.
- School Breakfast Club: An opportunity for primary school students to have something healthy to eat before school starts.
- Frozen meals: Convenient healthy meals cooked in bulk and frozen, to provide a low-cost take-away alternative for the community.

Students also had the opportunity to learn about the food and nutrition needs of the area through conversations with community members.

Despite being out of their comfort zone, all students embraced the opportunity to put their 3 years of nutrition theory into practice, with many reporting that it was the best experience of their degree. Feedback from the supervisors was also glowing, with all five placement sites keen to host students again next year.

Some comments from the supervisors:

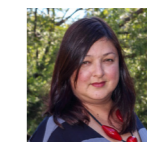
"As staff we learned so much. Thank you!"

"The most brilliant 'fabulous five' students. We want to keep them!"

"They were fabulous to have for 2 weeks and contributed enormously to our First 1000 Days project."

"They were the best students we have ever had!"

"Can we have them for 4 weeks next time?"



Further Information
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L-R - Vandana Bhagat (PhD Student, CRH), Heather Bridgman (Lecturer in Rural Mental Health, CRH), Christine Low (PhD Student, CRH) and Sandy Murray (Lecturer in Nutrition, SHS)



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Ravenswood Fair

On Friday 7th May 2021 a team from the Centre for Rural Health and School of Health Sciences, UTAS attended the Ravenswood Primary School Twilight Fair. The Twilight Fair was organised by the Launceston headspace Advisory and Reference Team (hART), the youth reference group that advises headspace Launceston. This event was a welcome face-to-face opportunity to support the hART, promote UTAS with community members (children and families) and to connect with other service providers such as Mission, the Ravenswood Child and Family Centre, Neighbourhood House and the Royal Flying Doctors.

The UTAS team set up a booth at the fair to raise awareness about the research study - Understanding Healthy Food and Physical Activity Beliefs, Behaviours and Needs of Young People Accessing headspace Launceston. This study is part of a larger funded project to increase the capacity of Cornerstone Youth Services (who auspice headspace Launceston) to better support young people accessing headspace through healthy eating and physical activity.

The booth offered an interactive opportunity for students and families where students needed to draw a favourite fruit or vegetable on a white board to then receive a free water bottle.

Christine Low (PhD student), who attend the fair commented, "Overall, the experience was very engaging and interactive. There were a range of activities held by different service providers that help to inform, connect and engage people from different age groups in the community. I hope that students like myself are able to take part in such events in the future".

News and Activities

Health Practitioner Research Development Program

The Health Practitioner Research Development Program has been running for 8 years and has seen more than 40 health professionals undertake small, supervised projects to develop their research skills.

In 2021, the Centre for Rural Health has welcomed 8 new practitioners from discipline backgrounds including social work, psychology, paramedicine, dietetics, sociology and nursing. The projects undertaken are equally diverse, ranging from augmented reality clinical skills training to rural community perspectives on bowel cancer screening,

perceptions of bowel cancer information overload, and a participatory action research project for an outdoor health intervention.

Below is some feedback we received from the practitioners who completed the program earlier in the year.



Further Information

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Fiona Girkin

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

I was required to complete a literature review for the project as well as evaluating the tools used to measure the success of the project i.e. the participant surveys and evaluations.

What did you learn from your experience?

I learnt about the difficulties of conducting a project for a new health technology not yet tested on patients and how using a Sims can be an effective way of looking at technologies without putting patients at risk.

What did you enjoy the most?

I enjoyed being apart of such an exciting and different project as well as assisting with writing the grant proposal.

What did you enjoy the least?

Sitting at my desk so much, I would have enjoyed being more involved in the project delivery.

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

I really enjoy research and assisting with the process, and I would definitely take on more opportunities like this.



Sally Larner

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

I conducted a systematic literature review on nature-based interventions and their impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people living in rural communities.

What did you learn from your experience?

How achievable further study/research is and how enjoyable it is working in collaboration with other researchers/academics.

What did you enjoy the most?

Learning from my colleagues about this area of study and the impact this research can have in the outside of academia.

What did you enjoy the least?

There wasn't anything that I didn't enjoy about the experience.

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

It has made me more confident in seeking further research in the form of a PhD and how my previous study is applicable within a wider field of research.

Nicola Gadd



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

I completed a literature review on health information overload, the data analysis of the study focusing on bowel cancer information overload among Tasmanians, I wrote the draft manuscript, and I submitted the study for publication with the support of my supervisor and the other author.

What did you learn from your experience?

I learnt more about inferential data analysis and the different software packages to complete the analysis – Stata and Arr. I learnt about how health information overload can impact individuals.

What did you enjoy the most?

Working within a research team. Getting to meet the different researchers in the CRH team and hearing what projects they are working on.

What did you enjoy the least?

Data analysis – learning how to conduct the statistical tests.

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

The health practitioner program has helped me to identify what topic I would like to study for a PhD and helped me find a research team I can work well with. The program has opened the door for me to start a career in research.

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

Opportunities to meet the other health practitioners in the program who are working from home. It can be a good support system to connect with others who are going through the same program.

Rural Pharmacy Liason Officer Update

The Rural Pharmacy Liaison Officer (RPLO) Program aims to support pharmacists and pharmacy students in rural and remote areas and to deliver local programs that support clinical placements, promote intra-professional collaboration and rural pharmacy as a career choice.

The RPLO program is situated within the Centre for Rural Health and contributes to the overall objective of improving access to appropriate healthcare services for rural and remote communities.

Recently, activities conducted to achieve these aims include participation in several events across Launceston and Burnie to promote pharmacy as a course of choice at the University to year 11 and 12 students. These events consisted of the Newstead College Masterclass, Cradle Coast workshop, and the Health and Medicine workshop. It is our expectation that through these events more students will be aware of the role of pharmacists in the community, decide to study pharmacy and go on to practise in a rural setting after graduating.

To support current pharmacy students, there have been several visits to placement sites in rural areas to provide educational support around research methodology, as well as professional support on case studies involving medication therapy problems. The students completed their placements with commendation from placement supervisors.

Pharmacists in rural areas are being supported by providing them with information regarding the benefit of the switch from the old PHARIA system to the Modified Monash Model, and how they can access funding for continuous professional development activities and staff recruitment. The switch from the PHARIA system to the Modified Monash Model has enabled more community pharmacies to benefit from several supports provided by the Commonwealth government, and pharmacists in rural areas are being encouraged to utilise this opportunity.

There is a current drive to increase the number of placement sites in these locations to ensure that there is a continuous availability for pharmacy students in rural Tasmania. As such, there have been many visits to community pharmacies in Burnie, Wynyard, Yolla and Railton to discuss the potential and benefits of using these practices as placement sites in 2022 and future internship training sites for pharmacy graduates.



Further Information

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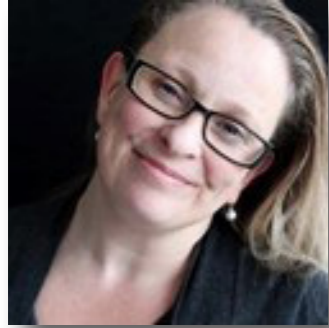
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News and Activities

Welcome New Staff – Carrie Lethborg, Melissa Belle, Grant Todd and Sarah Jordan

Dr Carrie Lethborg



Dr Carrie Lethborg began as a senior lecturer with the Centre for Rural Health in July 2021. This has been a 'full circle' moment for her, after living in Melbourne for the past three decades. Carrie was born on the North-West Coast of Tasmania and completed her Bachelor of Social Work at UTAS's Newnham Campus in 1988.

Carrie has over 30-years' experience in oncology and palliative care social work from a clinical and research perspective mostly at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne. She has also held a number of lecturing positions and has been involved with curriculum development in social work, nursing and medicine at the University of Melbourne, the Centre for Palliative Care and Latrobe University. She was the first social worker appointed to faculty at Monash University School of Medicine (1991). Carrie has held honorary research fellowships at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and The University of Melbourne and was the Psycho-oncology Research Fellow at Monash Medical Centre. She has generated over 50 peer-reviewed publications and has won over \$1.5 million in grant funding. In 2009, she was the inaugural winner of the Catholic Health Australia, Emerging Leader Award. Carrie's PhD and Post-Doctoral work on meaning-based therapy at end of life were completed at the University of Melbourne, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and partly developed during her time at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre in New York. This work has been widely published and presented in Asia, Europe, Canada, USA and across Australia and translated into a psychotherapy now used in a number of settings.

Her research focus has also involved an emphasis on health equity. Most recently, she managed a national research portfolio of over \$2 million a year over four years, across St Vincent's Health Australia's network. This research focused on examining and improving the health impact of homelessness, incarceration, trauma, addiction, social inequity, and unequal outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Carrie returned to her home state in 2015 to be a carer but continues as a distance worker in Health Equity research and Trauma Informed Care at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. She also provides debriefing and staff support for the Breast Cancer Network Australia, Ovarian Cancer Australia and the Cancer Council of Victoria, a role that has required many additional hours during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Returning home to Tasmania has reminded Carrie about the power of strong rural and regional communities to care for their own, a trait often lost in larger cities. Yet, she is also aware of a number of gaps in services available for a range of health issues across the state, and for specific parts of our community. Carrie believes research that is genuinely collaborative with clinicians, communities and people with lived experience, can be a powerful force in improving service provision and outcomes in health. She remains particularly interested in pursuing research on lasting impacts in the care of people experiencing trauma, bereavement, cancer and health inequities.



Further Information

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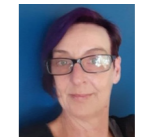
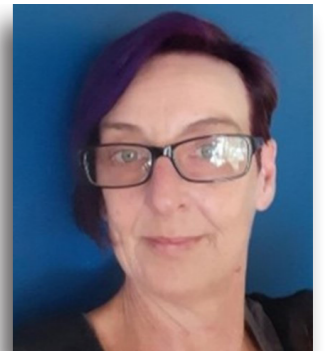
Dr Melissa-Jane Belle

Dr Melissa-Jane Belle is a former nurse and current health sociologist who has come to the Centre for Rural Health (CRH) from the School of Social Sciences and Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre where she has contributed to teaching and research. She is an on-going member of the Health Thematic Group of The Australian Sociological Society (TASA).

Melissa-Jane is a qualitative researcher with interests focusing on how health professions' (particularly nursing) education, training and professionalism contribute to strong workforce cohesion.

Melissa-Jane contributes to current research within the CRH including:

- 'Recent graduate workforce study'
- 'Rural Narratives'
- 'Evaluation of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) Specialist Training Program (STP) and Promoting success in the RANZCO Advanced Clinic Examinations (RACE)'
- 'Socio-political analysis of 'the rural' as reflected in National and State health and welfare workforce policy documents'
- 'Distance decay and impact on rural youth attendance at mental health services' PhD student project.
- RHMT RACF project (on-site workforce development and activities related to: transition of care bereavement and palliative care, nutrition, exercise and mobility' wellness and reablement)



Further Information

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Grant Todd



Grant is an accredited Exercise Physiologist and joined the CRH in May 2021 after gaining the position of Rural Student Support Officer following Karla Peek's retirement from 20 years in the role. Prior to this Grant had been supporting interstate allied health students attending rural placements on the North West Coast of Tasmania.

Grant returned to university part-time in 2007 to undertake studies in exercise science after having previously been employed as a Planning Forester with Forestry Tasmania, then taking on the full-time role of House Dad. He completed his Master of Exercise Physiology (Rehabilitation) in 2013, and became involved in the hugely successful Strength 2 Strength program with Primary Health Tasmania. While studying, Grant worked in a Launceston car yard, the Launceston General Hospital, and the Tasmanian Health Service's Community Podiatry team. He currently sees a small number of clients in his own business.

Grant has recently taken on learning the guitar with some blues and some Paul Kelly songs being the extent of his repertoire so far. He does not anticipate leaving this position to pursue a travelling stage performing career anytime soon.



Further Information

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Sarah Jordan

Sarah Jordan has been appointed as the Business Manager for the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program in the College of Health and Medicine and began her new role on 30 August 2021.

Sarah brings 30 years' experience working in senior management roles within Tasmanian health and community services organisations across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Sarah's extensive work history has enabled her to develop high level operational management capabilities across human, financial and information resources, as well as comprehensive skills and experience in strategic and business planning.

A University of Tasmania alumna, Sarah holds a Bachelor of Economics (Honours) and a Master of Economics (by research). She is also a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD). Prior to taking on the Business Manager role, Sarah was Project Manager of the Tasmanian Regional Training Hub within the RHMT Program, where she has overseen the strategic management and operational functions of the Hub.

Originally from England, Sarah immigrated to South Australia with her parents and two sisters in the late 60's. The family then moved to Hobart where Sarah spent most of her childhood and adult life until moving to Devonport in 2012. Sarah works across all RHMT sites in Burnie, Latrobe and Launceston.



Further Information

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News and Activities

Symposium Workshop Day

The Centre for Rural Health (CRH) held its annual Research Symposium and Workshop in September 2021, at the Silo Hotel in Launceston, celebrating 24 years of service and engagement in Tasmania. During the day, participants enjoyed presentations from our PhD students and staff on topics including, 'Connecting through food: traditional recipes for cancer recovery', 'Developing an implementation strategy to improve antenatal care providers' use of the clinical practice guidelines on oral health', 'COVID-19 and the impact on student placements', and 'The Augmented Reality Project - the story so far', to name a few.

Interspersed with these presentations, workshops were also conducted to tease out thoughts and ideas for new research projects for the next funding round of the RHMT program, map research projects to remote and rural areas of Tasmania, and explore and consider sourced data that looks at the rural origin of Tasmanian health students at the University of Tasmania over the last 10 years.

A full day that was enjoyed by all, ended with a social and well-deserved dinner to further converse about the day's topics. The annual symposium provides an opportunity for the CRH to come together to collaborate and network as well as to learn about the projects that individuals are currently involved in. It also provides inspiration for future work and boosts morale. We look forward to next year's event.



Further information

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GRADUATE RESEARCH

Our Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates at the CRH progress steadily with their research. They have shared their research at local, national and international conferences, published their research in academic journals and been part of grant success.

Grant Success

Dung Bui has been part of a grant success (\$387,245) from the CSIRO-Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation - Aus4Innovation. The project is a partnership between UTAS and Bach Mai Hospital in Vietnam where Dung worked as the Continuing Medical Education manager before he joined CRH as a PhD candidate. Well-done, Dung!

New PhD Candidate

We welcomed a new PhD candidate: Bethany Allen. Beth's project is entitled, "Geographic Remoteness as a Risk Factor for Poor Colorectal Cancer Prognosis in Tasmania: A data linkage study". Beth is being supervised by Drs Simone Lee, Kehinde Obamiro and A/Prof Tony Barnett.

Conference presentations

Our PhD candidates have been active in sharing their research at conferences and seminars.

Annika Wilson, Laura Grattidge, Dung Bui, Vandana Bhagat, Edwin Mseke and Priya Bindal all presented at School of Health Sciences Friday Research Seminars in 2021.

Tamara Reynish presented her research at the LGBTIQ+ Community Forum in Devonport on March 25, 2021 and the Health in Difference Conference Online April 16-23, 2021.

Laura Grattidge presented her research in progress at the Suicide Prevention Australia digital symposium, 20/21 April 2021; and Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Trial Advisory Group forum, 31 March 2021.



Publications

Not only have our HDR candidates been active in sharing their knowledge at conferences but also productive in publishing their research in quality academic journals. Vandana Bhagat, Dung Bui, Tamara Reynish, Lorraine Walker, and Annika Wilson co-authored with their supervisors in the following publications:

Bhagat V, Hoang H, Crocombe LA, Goldberg, LR "Developing a questionnaire to assess the perception, knowledge, and attitude of nursing students in providing oral health care to older people, and associated influential factors", *Australian Journal of Nursing Research*, 2 (2) doi:10.53634/2652-9386.100030 ISSN 2652-9386 (2021)

Bui DT, Barnett T, Hoang H, Chinthammit W, "Tele-mentoring using augmented reality technology in healthcare: A systematic review", *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 37 (4) pp. 81-101. doi:10.14742/ajet.6243 ISSN 1449-5554 (2021)

Reynish TD, Hoang H, Bridgman H, Easpaig BNG*, "Mental health and related service use by sex workers in rural and remote Australia: 'there's a lot of stigma in society'", *Culture, Health and Sexuality* pp. 1-16.

Walker LE, Barnett T, Cross M, "Interprofessional education in rural clinical learning environments: The role of clinicians", *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 29 (2) pp. 248-252. doi:10.1111/ajr.12723 ISSN 1038-5282 (2021)

Wilson A, Hoang H, Bridgman H, Bettiol S, Crocombe L*, "Factors influencing the provision of oral health practices by antenatal care providers: a systematic review", *Journal of Women's Health* doi:10.1089/jwh.2020.8956 ISSN 1540-9996 (2021)

Graduation

Ali Morse proudly graduated in the Hobart graduation ceremonies on 16 December, 2021. Two of Ali's four supervisors were able to be present to share the occasion, A/Prof Tony Barnett and Dr Pauline Marsh.

Ali's thesis is entitled: Implementation of developmental surveillance for autism using the Social Attention and Communication Surveillance-Revised (SACS-R) assessment tool for young children in Tasmania, Australia.

Autism spectrum disorder (autism) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person experiences the world and relates to others. The prevalence of autism ranges between 1-3% of population. Through the early identification of children with autism, access to Early Intervention (EI) services may be possible and improved outcomes achieved. The Social Attention and Communication Surveillance-Revised (SACS-R) is an autism-specific surveillance tool that detects autism and other developmental delays.

The aim of Ali's study was to explore the enablers and barriers to the successful statewide implementation of the SACS-R early childhood surveillance program. Implementation Science (IS) principles underpin this study. IS seeks to understand and narrow the gap between the discovery of new knowledge and its application in health care settings. Added to this, a Design Thinking (DT) approach was used to place the parents and the children undergoing early autism surveillance at the centre of the research. A mixed methods research design was used. A broad range of stakeholders were recruited to the study. Data was collected through online questionnaires and surveys and semi-structured interviews.

A key finding was that the SACS-R process was successfully introduced by the Childhood Health and Parenting Service (CHaPS). Young Tasmanian children could be identified as high likelihood for autism, diagnosed, and in theory, able to be supported through access to intervention much earlier than previously possible. The study showed that additional pathways need to be established to better support families to access timely services, following referral and post-diagnosis, including early intervention upskilling other professionals in the delivery of the SACS-R would be highly beneficial. Further work is needed to enable the problem of long wait times for assessment and diagnosis to be effectively addressed. Whilst this research is specific to Tasmania, the findings have relevance to other jurisdictions.

In 2022 Ali will continue in private practice working as a clinical psychologist with children and families with neurodevelopmental concerns.



We would like to congratulate all candidates for these wonderful achievements and look forward to another productive year in 2022!



Further Information

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2021 Publications

Journal Publication list 2021

In 2021, CRH staff (listed in bold) produced a total of 40 Peer Refereed Journal Articles with 17 of these published in Q1 journals (over 40%).

Auckland S, Kilpatrick S, "Restoring community cohesion through positive education: Applying a community resilience model", *International Journal of Lifelong Education* pp. 1-16. doi:10.1080/02601370.2021.2009584 ISSN 0260-1370 (2021)

Bhagat V, Hoang H, Crocombe LA, Goldberg LR, "Developing a questionnaire to assess the perception, knowledge, and attitude of nursing students in providing oral health care to older people, and associated influential factors", *Australian Journal of Nursing Research*, 2 (2) doi:10.53634/2652-9386.100030 ISSN 2652-9386 (2021)

Bui DT, Barnett T, Hoang H, Chinthammit W, "Tele-mentoring using augmented reality technology in healthcare: A systematic review", *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 37 (4) pp. 81-101. doi:10.14742/ajet.6243 ISSN 1449-5554 (2021)

Coe S, Marlow A, Mather C, "Whole of community facilitators: An exemplar for supporting rural health workforce recruitment through students' professional experience placements", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18 (14) pp. 1-11. doi:10.3390/ijerph18147675 ISSN 1661-7827 (2021)

Cox T, Hoang H, Mond J, Cross M, "Closing the Gap in Aboriginal health disparities: is there a place for Elders in the neoliberal agenda?", *Australian Health Review* pp. A-E. doi:10.1071/AH21098 ISSN 0156-5788 (2021)

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Projects, Grants and Research

Special issue on 'Social capital and rural health' from International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health

Message from the Guest Editors

Social capital resources including social networks, shared values, norms, trust, and leadership, influence how communities come together to take advantage of opportunities and solve problems, and how effectively they can access external resources for community benefit. There is room for more evaluation of what works where and when in drawing on social capital for innovative service delivery, wellbeing programs, and for attracting and retaining health professionals in rural communities. Papers addressing these topics are invited for this Special Issue, especially those combining a high academic standard coupled with a practical focus on providing innovative solutions for the provision of services, supporting community wellbeing, or attracting and retaining health professionals.

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Guest Editors:

Dr. Ha Hoang, UTAS; Dr. Chona Hannah, UTAS; Prof. Dr. Sue Kilpatrick, UTAS



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Bereavement Care Network

If you are a rural health professional whose work involves dealing with those facing or experiencing bereavement you may be interested in applying to join the multidisciplinary Bereavement Care Network. We meet regularly online for collegial peer sharing about bereavement-related work/volunteering/interests and for professional development sessions.

If you would like to find out more, please contact:
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Supporting Aboriginal people affected by cancer in remote Tasmania

Located in the remote region of North-West Tasmania, the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation (CHAC) is an established community-controlled health service with our small but dedicated health workforce to support the local Aboriginal community. The high rates of cancer and limited access to specialist care are major concerns in our community. We support Aboriginal people affected by cancer as best we can, and until recently we had no specialist cancer support program.

On behalf of the Aboriginal community in Circular Head, CHAC have collaborated with our partners from the Centre for Rural Health (CRH), the Circular Head Council and Rural Health Tasmania Inc. We are thrilled to have been recently awarded an Australian Government, Cancer Australia: Supporting people with cancer grant initiative. The grant enables CHAC and our partners to develop an Aboriginal community cancer support coordinator position. In this role, the coordinator will develop a holistic pathway guided by clinical evidence-based practices and culturally appropriate care to support Aboriginal people affected by cancer. The whole of community approach will ensure Aboriginal people affected by cancer are supported by family carers, extended family, and community members.

Informed by our Elders, Aboriginal people will be supported across the cancer continuum with on-country healing and/or community activities to enhance their social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual well-being. The coordinator will monitor the experiences of community members through cancer in terms of cultural safety, patient care, transport and/or health literacy needs, while simultaneously collaborating with cancer support providers, GPs, pharmacists, and palliative care to promote a clinically and culturally competent workforce. CHAC's collaboration with the Centre for Rural Health will further strengthen the cultural and clinical synergy necessary for the optimal care of Aboriginal people affected by cancer and the cancer care stakeholders.

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Aboriginal Elders yarning about Closing the Gap and the neoliberal agenda

From the 1970s, neoliberalism has become the dominant political ideology of successive Australian governments to address ongoing Aboriginal disadvantage. The Closing the Gap policy framework exemplifies neoliberalism with its agenda of free market capitalism and economic rationalisation. The policy is also ambiguous in promoting self-determination, but with coercive economic and political elements to control Aboriginal community organisation funding initiatives.

In this context we asked Aboriginal Elders from a remote community in Tasmania to share their views and concerns with the Closing the Gap programs for improving the health of Aboriginal people. Our qualitative findings emerged from thematic analysis of individual interviews and yarning circles. The Elders acknowledged the instrumental value of Closing the Gap programs for addressing Aboriginal community health concerns and improved access to clinical care, however, the programs also represented a source of external control and ongoing dependency that threatened to undermine the community's autonomy, self-determination and cultural foundations. Uncle Eric explains:

The RACE Study

Ophthalmologists are medical doctors who have completed additional specialist training in the diagnosis and management of disorders of the eye and visual system. Ophthalmologists provide the full spectrum of eye care, including prescription of glasses and contact lenses, medical treatment, and complex microsurgery. Training to become an ophthalmologist requires medical graduates who have completed 24 months of pre-vocational training to undertake a further five-year vocational training program. This training program utilises a prescribed curriculum to develop trainee competencies from basic to advanced, and culminates in the final hurdle assessment, the RANZCO Advanced Clinical Examination (RACE). The RACE, which comprises of both a written and clinical examination, must be passed in order for trainees to practice as ophthalmologists once their five-year vocational training program is complete.

According to workforce modelling, Australia is expected to experience a shortfall in the number of ophthalmologists needed to support eye care in the Australian population by 2030. Although the number of trainees being selected into the vocational training program has increased in recent years, ensuring that these trainees successfully pass their hurdle assessment is of critical importance to future workforce growth.

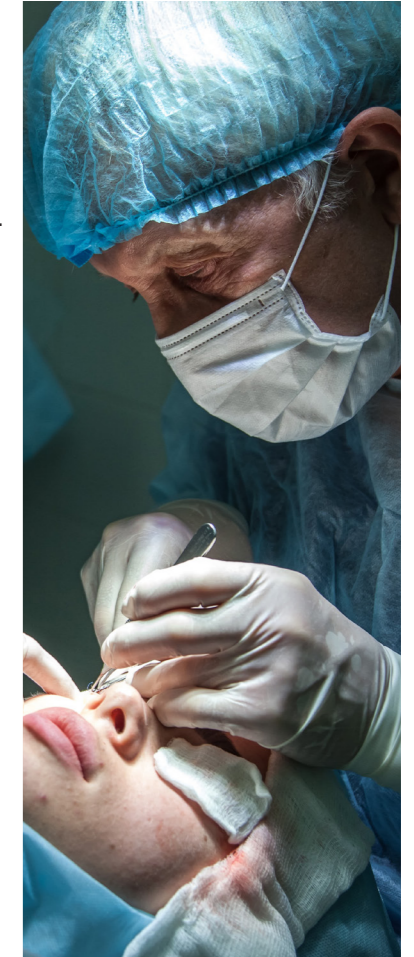
In recent years, there has been growing concern that the RACE, in particular the written examination, is not being successfully completed by a number of trainees. Although trainees can resit the examination once, the impact on trainees, the training network, the RANZCO, and the broader community who stand to benefit from their skills, is significant.

The 'Promoting Success in the RANZCO Advanced Clinical Examinations (RACE) Study', has evolved as a collaborative project with RANZCO, designed to explore issues underpinning trainee achievement on the RACE. The aims of the study are to unpack potential reasons for poor examination performance by exploring both examination design, as well as trainee factors including examination preparation, training experiences, attitudes toward RACE and the personal impact of failure. It is hoped that this data will pave the way toward promoting increased success in the RACE amongst future ophthalmology trainees, thus assuring continued growth of the Australian ophthalmology workforce.



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Cultural values and teaching our young people those things, they're the important things in life ... government funding has things attached to it - you must this, you must that - and I want to be totally independent of the government dictating what has to be done according to the rules of money. I think for Elders to have influence is to bring back an Aboriginal perspective on all the decisions made.

Auntie Anne spoke of the Closing the Gap programs as a business model:

Now it's just all business, Elders play no role within the programs. I think Elders have been silenced, we have been for a while now. I've spoken with a couple of Elders recently and they haven't been involved with [the organisation] for so long.

Similarly, Uncle Bill saw the programs as a form of economic rationalisation and not aligned with the community's cultural values:

The [organisation] is a community-based thing but it has grown bigger and bigger, it has all gone commercial now. Respect the fact that we're Elders. We should be treated like Elders, not just a member of the community,

... don't just run the [programs] as a business, run it as an Aboriginal cultural centre, that's what I mean by bringing back the Elders.

It was noteworthy that Elders' saw the Closing the Gap programs as a threat to their role and status in the community.

The Elders premised cultural well-being as the key determinant of Aboriginal community health. The Closing the Gap programs were seen as a vital health resource, but not aligned with the community's cultural foundations and self-determination. The findings reflect the tensions that arise when neoliberal policies are imposed on Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Greater collaboration between policy stakeholders and Aboriginal community Elders is required to gain more effective Closing the Gap outcomes.

A special thanks to the community Elders for sharing your wisdom. Best wishes to all at the Centre for Rural Health.



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Projects, Grants and Research

Rural Origin Student Study

There is a shortage of medical, nursing, and allied health professionals in rural and remote communities across Australia. In Tasmania especially, where the state is largely rural or remote, there is both maldistribution of health professionals and inadequate supply relative to mainland Australian states. Research over the past decade has consistently shown that people who grow up in a rural or remote area are more likely to return to work in a similar location once qualified. This research has fostered the concept of a 'grow your own' workforce, whereby rural origin students from areas of workforce shortage are encouraged into entry to practice medical, nursing and allied health courses with the anticipation that they facilitate workforce growth once they graduate by returning to the area to practice.

Part of the challenge in 'growing your own' workforce is the availability and accessibility of entry to practice health courses. In Tasmania, UTAS currently offers a range of entry to practice medicine, nursing and allied health courses including paramedicine, exercise physiology, social work and laboratory science. While many of these courses are available by both on

campus and distance study modes, it is not clear how many students from rural and remote backgrounds in Tasmania enrol in these courses, complete them, and go on to practise in a rural or remote location in Tasmania after graduating.

The Rural Origin Student Study is aiming to explore these issues by interrogating a large database of student enrolment data from 2011 to 2021. It is anticipated that this study will shed light on the current 'grow your own' workforce strategy in Tasmania by determining the proportion of rural and remote background students undertaking entry to practice medicine, nursing and allied health courses at UTAS, what types of courses, whether they are successful in completing their degree and ultimately whether they return to practice in areas of workforce need within the state.



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UTAS Medical Radiation Science Graduates Tracking Study

In Australia, allied health professionals, of which medical radiation practitioners are a part, account for about 18% of the healthcare workforce with medical practitioners and nurses contributing 12% and 63% respectively. In 2017, there were 13624 medical radiation practitioners representing 2.4% of the total health workforce.

Whilst there are many reports describing the health workforce for Australian nurses and medical practitioners, information is lacking about the distribution of medical radiation practitioners especially in rural and remote Australia, however, according to a recent Australian government labour market report, there is a shortage nationally and across all states and territories. Although there is growing evidence about shortages of allied health rural workforces, the primary focus for rural and remote recruitment initiatives has largely been on the medical profession.

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) in collaboration with Charles Sturt University (CSU) in New South Wales, offers a 5-year Bachelor of Health Science/Medical Radiation Science (with specialisations in medical imaging, nuclear medicine or radiation therapy) where students spend the initial 2 years of the course on-campus at UTAS and then relocate to complete the qualification at CSU.

The extent to which these graduates contribute to the Tasmanian rural health workforce is unclear. This study aims to track the past graduates of this course to help understand their experiences as a student and investigate possible underpinning factors of living and working in Tasmania after graduation.

The project has completed collection of data and analysis of such is currently in progress.



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Evaluation of Clarendon Vale Kitchen Garden Development Program

The Centre for Rural Health, Tasmania, was successful in securing funding from the MONA 24 Carrot Project to conduct an evaluation of the Clarendon Vale Kitchen Garden Development Program at the Clarendon Vale Primary School (CVPS). Clarendon Vale, located in southern Tasmania, is among the most disadvantaged communities in Australia (ABS, 2016). It has a low weekly median household income, high unemployment and 16% of children under the age of 15 are living in poverty.

In 2016 the CVPS, through the 24 Carrot project with funding from the Radiata Foundation, established a Kitchen Garden Program (KGP). In 2020, the CVPS was encouraged to explore an expanded version of their program in a way that would provide the opportunity to further engage and support the school and surrounding community. In particular, the expanded program considered the following developments.

- Expanding the KGP to provide additional hours for specialists to offer alternative learning programs, support for student leaders, explore transition links with high schools and improve parental engagement in the program.
- Developing kitchen and garden infrastructure to support an expanded program.
- Provision of an improved daily breakfast club.
- Replace two-day week canteen with a free, daily healthy lunch, with some produce being sourced from the garden.

Importantly, the multi-dimensional program offers opportunities for students, and parents and carers to work with kitchen garden specialists in learning about growing, harvesting, preparation and cooking skills. The program also provides alternate learning opportunities for specific students identified as requiring specialised learning opportunities. At a broader community level, the program will seek to establish closer engagement with the Clarendon community using program activities as a conduit for addressing food insecurity issues.

The evaluation of the program is an important step in understanding the impact program activities may have in terms of improved access to healthy food and learning outcomes for the students, parents and local community. The evaluation, to

be conducted over a three-year period, will adopt a co-design approach in determining key evaluation indicators, the most appropriate methodologies for the collection of data and reporting. The evidence suggests that community-centred approaches such as those adopted in co-design actions are valuable in leading to empowered action and positive change in public health interventions. The evaluation will seek to address the following research questions:

1. Do the extended KGP activities enhance a sense of inclusion and engagement in the school community amongst students, parents and carers, staff and other stakeholders, and if so, how?
2. Do the extended KGP activities improve engagement in learning and learning outcomes of the students, parent/carer cohort and broader community, and if so, how?
3. To what extent do the extended KGP activities contribute to improved practical food growing and cooking skills and awareness of healthy eating choices amongst students and parent/carer cohort?
4. To what extent have partnerships with the community and local stakeholders been developed or enhanced as a result of the KGP development?
5. To what extent do the KGP development outcomes align with the vision and goals of the Tasmanian Child and Youth Strategy and the 2022 – 2028 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy and how could the findings from the evaluation inform the implementation of these strategies?

Where feasible the evaluation will link into other school community food programs in the sharing of knowledge and resources. Insights and learning from the evaluation are expected to have direct benefit to community/school garden programs in Australia.



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Cancer Council Tasmania grant to co-design an educational intervention to improve bowel cancer awareness and screening in a rural community

Tasmania is among the most affected region by bowel cancer worldwide. There are indications that this could be due to poor awareness of bowel cancer, screening barriers, and lifestyle factors that may increase the risk of bowel cancer. Dr Kehinde Obamiro has recently secured a \$25,000 grant from the Cancer Council Tasmania to develop an educational intervention to improve bowel cancer awareness and screening in a rural community. In this study community members will participate actively in the design of their own educational intervention while researchers will help to facilitate the development and implementation of suggested intervention.

The project will include new PhD candidate, Nicola Gadd, who has worked with the Centre for Rural Health on other projects related to bowel cancer. Nicola brings on board a wealth of

experience, including research experience at a postgraduate level, practising as a dietitian in Tasmania and having strong connection with several rural communities. The project will also include other researchers and advisors including Dr Simone Lee and Dr Matthew Sharman.

We would like to thank the Cancer Council Tasmania for supporting several of our projects and efforts made to improve bowel cancer detection, treatment and survival in Tasmania.



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Director's Report

The Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program is one of several Commonwealth rural health workforce programs that aims to increase the number of health professionals working in rural, remote, and regional Australia. The program provides funding for a national network of 16 (soon to be 17) University Departments of Rural Health (UDRHs) and 19 Rural Clinical Schools (RCSs) in rural and remote areas of Australia. In mid 2021, the Commonwealth indicated its intent to extend funding for the program through to December 2024. Good news indeed!

Our sixth annual report (for the year 2021) to the Federal Government Department of Health captures key work activities and outcomes of staff from the CRH, the Rural Clinical School (RCS), the College of Health and Medicine's Professional Experience Placement (PEP) team and from the medical "HUB" project. Unfortunately, the pandemic meant that the placement of students for professional experience was challenged a little – especially due to travel restrictions and placement availability in some rural areas.

Over the 2021 calendar year, the RHMT program funding supported just over 2,450 multidisciplinary (non-medical) rural placement weeks in Tasmania.

Of these, 2,092 were in nursing and 362 were related to allied health student placements. The overall average length of these placements was 4 weeks. The lower than hoped for average placement length was associated with roll-out of the new Bachelor of Nursing course (which has shorter length placements for students in early years of the course) and a down-turn in the number of allied health students coming to Tasmania from mainland universities for their placements (allied health courses often have longer length placements for students). We are hopeful that these figures will pick up over the next reporting period as COVID related travel and healthcare organisation restrictions ease.

We have recently commenced a program of work to upgrade the facilities at some of our student accommodation sites.

Grant Todd and others have been busy assessing the requirements and working with local agencies to purchase and replace worn furniture and to commission various maintenance and building works needed in locations such as St Helens, Flinders Island and Nubeena. We anticipate this work will continue through 2022.

Despite the many disruptions caused by the continued COVID pandemic, staff members from the CRH were very active in contributing to quite a number of both large and small competitive research grant success to help progress the rural health research agenda.

Over 2021, grants were awarded from funding authorities such as the:

CSIRO (Aus4Innovation Partnership Grant scheme); Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists; Tasmania Break 'O' Day LGA; Material Institute Limited; North East Bioregional Network; Australian Dental Research Foundation; Arts Health Agency; Department of Agriculture Water and the Environment National Environmental Science Program (NESP).

In 2021, we also published a total of 40 research articles in peer reviewed journals. Over 40% of these appeared in Q1 ranked journals (source: Clarivate Analytics).

A very big congratulations to everyone involved!

Supported by the CRH, the Tasmanian Bereavement Care Network aims to link and improve support for people working in bereavement care across rural, regional and remote areas of Tasmania. 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. Monthly lunch time meetings by zoom were held for members over the latter half of 2021 and plans are underway to continue with these in 2022. The network is moving forward under the enthusiastic leadership of Madeleine Ball (madeleine.ball@utas.edu.au).

Last year, we bid a sad farewell to three staff members. **Karla Peek**, who was a long-standing member of the CRH and played a key role in setting up and then managing our rural health student accommodation sites (now in 19 different locations across rural and remote Tasmania), **Dr Terry Cox** who worked on a number of projects in association with the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation in NW Tasmania, and **Dr Jon Mond** who played a key role in building our mental health research capacity.

We sincerely thank them for their past contributions, their ongoing commitment to the work of the CRH, and wish them all the very best for the future.

Whilst there have been some farewells, we are very pleased to welcome **Grant Todd** (Rural student placement support project officer), **Dr Carrie Lethborg** (Senior lecturer) and **Dr Melissa Bell** (lecturer) to the Centre.

I'm sure they will make a great contribution to rural health.

Tony Barnett (Director)



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