

# Centre for Rural Health BULLETIN

**December 2018**

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## 2018 Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium, Launceston

The Centre for Rural Health hosted its annual Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium in Launceston on 20 September 2018 at the Penny Royal.

The symposium brought together research students, staff and collaborative partners to share their research projects, meet and network in a friendly environment.

The program included 43 high quality presentations addressing one of the following themes:

- Rural Health Workforce Development;
- Rural Training Strategies;
- Innovative Rural Service Delivery Models to Enable the Provision of Health Services to Meet Community Needs;
- Improving the Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People;
- Research with the Potential to Improve Rural Health

The event attracted media attention from the local newspaper as well as ABC radio. Attendees and stakeholders rated the value and quality of research being conducted and connections being formed.

One hundred people from all over Australia attended the full day event which concluded on a high note with the University of Tasmania's Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), Professor Brigid Heywood, offering two \$3000 'People's Choice' travel awards for the best presentations by an early career researcher.

Eligible presenters were nominated and an online voting survey tool was circulated to attendees. After the votes were counted, the People's Choice Awards went to Dr Terry Cox for his presentation - 'One Aboriginal community's focus on dementia', and to Dr Simone Lee for her presentation - 'Factors associated with bowel cancer survival in Tasmania: A data linkage study'.

We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's symposium.



Photo: King's Bridge Launceston by Darren Grattidge



Photos from top: Professor Brigid Heywood; Dr Stephen Myers; Dr Simone Lee; Dr Terry Cox; Dr Rowena McKean

# News and Activities

## Allied health students enjoying rural placements

Attracting allied health professionals to live and work rurally is a major challenge and the Centre for Rural Health (CRH) has been actively encouraging interstate students, from a range of disciplines, to undertake a rural clinical placement in Tasmania. In 2018, the introduction of a targeted scholarship scheme, coupled with free accommodation, has been instrumental in a large increase in allied health students coming to the state – both in terms of absolute numbers as well as in the range of disciplines represented.

So far this year, the CRH has provided support to a total of 48 interstate allied health students undertaking placements in rural Tasmania. This represents increases in the number of physiotherapy and radiography students as well as 10 oral health students who undertook placements in Deloraine, 4 nutrition students, 2 speech pathology students and an audiology student – all placed in the north-west.

While the benefits and attractions of a rural placement are obvious to those working in rural areas, financial incentives have been an effective way of encouraging students to find out first-hand what those benefits are. When asked what contributed most to students' educational experiences, three main themes emerged: the quality of supervising staff, the increased learning opportunities which arise from working

in a smaller health setting and the variety of clients.

***"I think what contributed most to my educational experience was the diversity of people, communities and experiences I was able to observe and take part in."***

A sense of community, the people and the ability to live in a rural town all helped make rural placements attractive. Students consistently referred to friendly people, a caring community and a slower pace of work and life which contributed towards a good learning environment. Students appreciated being provided with accommodation which was close to their health service, with less traffic and fewer parking issues than in metropolitan areas making commuting a breeze.

***"I enjoyed the atmosphere in the hospital – it was much more welcoming and friendlier than any of my other placements. I felt respected and valued as a student. Everyone was very supportive."***

There were however, aspects of rural placements which interstate students found challenging: being apart from friends and family, limited public transport options and not knowing other students. Several students felt a real sense of isolation. The provision of accommodation does go some way

to mitigating these feelings and allows students to meet students from other universities and disciplines.

***"The accommodation and other students there, provided a welcoming environment that assisted in making the experience a positive one."***

While an increase in allied health student placements has provided clear benefits to students, it is hoped that rural communities will benefit as well. Having had a taste of rural practice and rural life, and the experience of working in a smaller health setting, the CRH would like to see students return to Tasmania as fully qualified allied health professionals. Forty-three (43) students agreed that their placement had encouraged them to consider living and working in a rural or remote location after they graduate.

***"Overall, amazing experience. I have learnt so, SO MUCH as part of this placement. I feel comfortable living in a remote area and will be applying for jobs here once my course is complete."***



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## Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program: student expansion project

### Quality student remote Professional Experience Placement: Flinders Island

Felicia's PEP experience at Flinders Island was beyond her expectations. The quality of her placement was enhanced with the support from the Whole of Community Facilitator (WOCF) who encouraged social activity and adventure on the island. This is exemplified in her statement:



Photo: Alanna Cowley (WOCF) and Felicia Clarke (nursing student)

***"My 6 weeks on Flinders Island has been one of the greatest experiences I have had. Outside of working in the rural facility I was warmly welcomed into the community during my stay here. I have learned how to drives utes, gone to gun club, been out to the pubs, sat on the beach and watched sun rises and sunsets, climbed mountains, fed baby calves, explored the island and created lifelong friends. Everyone is really friendly, and it is these people that have made my experience very special."***

### Collaborative Partnerships: Project Update and Visions for the Future

An information session and workshop was conducted on 19 October, 2018 at the Grange, Campbell Town for supervisors and organisational managers in rural facilities. The workshop included information about the life cycle of student placements, workforce research, support of allied health students, the role of the fieldwork coordinator and the project findings from the evaluation.

Attendees identified opportunities, gaps and challenges related to student placements and supervisor support. The attendees valued the opportunity to network, share ideas and contribute towards the Rural Multidisciplinary Training Program student expansion project.



Photo: Information Session and Workshop participants



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## ARHEN Regional AGM in Launceston

The Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN) annual regional meeting was held on 18 and 19 September at the Newnham campus in Launceston. This is the first time the event has been held in Tasmania.

The ARHEN Board, together with 4 staff network groups, held meetings over the two days within their respective groups as well as 3 of the network groups, presenting to the Board. There were also opportunities to visit the Australian Maritime College (AMC) simulator on campus, enjoy a cultural walk around Cataract Gorge guided by Aboriginal Elder, Aunty Patsy Cameron, and network at organised social events.

At the Board meeting, Department of Health (DoH) representatives, who were also in attendance, discussed a range of issues including the foreshadowed Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT)



Program evaluation which will take place over the next 2 years. It was emphasised that the evaluation was part of good program management and essentially a stocktake to see how well the program was delivering outcomes. An external consultant will be appointed to carry out the evaluation according to terms of reference which have yet to be developed in consultation with ARHEN and all rural health activities that are part of the RHMT will be in scope for the evaluation.

Key ARHEN activities during the year, were reported on which included a number of submissions to government inquiries and hearings. One of these was the ARHEN National Director and representatives from the Mental Health Academics (MHAs) staff network appearing before the Senate inquiry into accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia. The Board commended the MHAs on the quality of

the paper they jointly developed for submission.

The Board discussed the next ARHEN Strategic plan which will focus on activities to support the RHMT Program evaluation and emerging issues including broadening the current medical focus of the program and developing further support and pathways for early career allied health graduates.

Given the high level of interest expressed at the meeting, the Board also agreed to re-establish the Service Learning Staff Network.

The location for the next annual regional meeting is yet to be decided, however The Centre for Rural Health, UTAS has raised the bar high with this year's event deemed a great success.

# News and Activities

## Big Bowel tours Tasmania to raise colorectal cancer awareness

Bowel Cancer Australia's Big Bowel made its first ever tour of Tasmania to kick off this year's Bowel Cancer Awareness Month (1-30 June).

The interactive journey through the 7m long and 2.6m high inflatable Big Bowel provided locals with a fun and unique way to learn about bowel cancer and how it can be prevented.

The exhibit travelled throughout the state, stopping off in Launceston, Burnie and several different spots around Hobart including the iconic Salamanca Markets.

Bunnings, Launceston, proved to be one of the most well attended locations on the tour with many locals stopping by to check out the exhibit and ask for information. Bowel Cancer Australia says, "these 'one-on-one' sessions have traditionally been very useful in raising awareness as visitors can explore the various stages of bowel cancer and clarify any questions they might have."

Dr Simone Lee, Dr Katherine Kent and Associate Professor Tony Barnett from the Centre for Rural Health, all took the opportunity to explore the Big Bowel and agreed that it was a fantastic way to engage the community around such an important issue.

"Incidence and mortality rates of bowel cancer in Tasmania are the highest in the country" said Simone, "so anything that promotes awareness about the prevention and early detection of bowel cancer is a great thing!"

Simone was recently awarded a seeding grant of \$10K from the University of Tasmania, Data, Knowledge and Decision Research Theme, to look at factors influencing bowel cancer survival in Tasmania.

"Anecdotally, we know that some people in Tasmania are waiting up to 12 months for a colonoscopy. Through data linkage, we are hoping to find out whether people living in rural Tasmania are more disadvantaged when it comes to timeliness of bowel cancer diagnosis, and what effect this may have on their long-term survival. If we can better understand the problem, we can more easily identify areas for improvement in the health system."



Photo: Dr Simone Lee visits the Big Bowel at Bunnings, Launceston



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## The Landscape of Dementia Inclusivity

Dr Pauline Marsh, in collaboration with Dr Helen Courtney-Pratt (Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre) and Ms Marina Campbell, recently published the results of their research into the impacts of supported community gardening on people living with dementia.

The full article can be found in *Health & Place*, 52 pp. 174-179 doi:10.1016/j.healthplace.2018.05.013.

Pauline and Helen have also produced a poster to help take the research findings to the broader community. They were delighted to be the overall winners in the poster competition at the 3rd Tasmanian Dementia Symposium and Public Lecture held recently in Hobart.



## Using film to improve rural health outcomes

Videography is growing in popularity as a research method, now that technology has made it so easy to capture video footage. It is particularly useful for conveying emotion and visual cues of people who are unable to speak and it provides a richness to dialogue that is sometimes lost in audio transcriptions. Video is also a useful way to translate research findings and make academic work accessible to a broad audience.

Pauline Marsh has been using videography to capture participant reactions to therapeutic horticulture activities in community gardens. Two short films have been made for the DIGnity project, one of which recently shared the first prize in the film competition at Therapeutic Horticulture Australia's, Therapeutic Landscape Conference at Southern Cross University. You can see the film at: [www.utas.edu.au/rural-health/news-all/news-items/in-the-heart-of-the-garden](http://www.utas.edu.au/rural-health/news-all/news-items/in-the-heart-of-the-garden)

Pauline has been running workshops with Health Promotion staff across the state to help them feel confident using video to document and promote their projects. If you would like to know more about using video as a research method, or to support your rural health project, please get in touch.



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## Rural Pharmacy Liason Officers (RPLOs), Bunnings and World Pharmacy Day

International World Pharmacist Day is celebrated on September 25th. This year, Mandy Cooper, Kehinde Obamiro and Anne Todd organised an all-day event at Bunnings in Burnie.

They were assisted by 5 pharmacy students, a PhD candidate, the Burnie Rotary Club and Dianne Kerr from Wilkinson's Pharmacy. The pharmacy students took 92 blood pressures and discussed medication management with Bunnings customers, together with pharmacy services.

The Burnie Rotary club provided an all-day BBQ and raised money for Rural Relief NSW, Drought Relief.

Of the 92 blood pressures measured, almost half (42 persons) were referred for further health advice, having a recorded blood pressure of more than 140/90.

Two customers recorded very high blood pressures of greater than 180/110 and were referred for immediate treatment.

It was a very successful day, enjoyed immensely by all participants.



Photo from left to right: Kehinde Obamiro, Anne Todd, Bonnie Kelly, Diane Kerr, Michelle Dieu, Jessica Dias, Amanda Cooper, Lucy de Vries and Alexander Licht



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## Bunnings "Tradie" Breakfast – Pharmacists out and about

Diane Kerr (pharmacist) and Annabel Peach (health promotions co-ordinator), attended the Bunnings Breakfast for tradespeople in the Burnie region on 25 July 2018. It was a chilly morning at 7am but it was a warm atmosphere around the BBQ breakfast hosted by the Bunnings crew.



Bunnings host tradies breakfasts every week and offer a raffle for attendees. A tool box and portable lights were the prizes on offer this time. This was

encouraging to observe as we often supply door prizes for our worksite health promotions.

This was our first promotion with Bunnings. It was a great opportunity to develop new contacts and build rapport with a predominantly young male demographic who do not normally visit the pharmacy. Bunnings staff also participated in the promotion. We conducted blood pressure (BP) checks on 25 people in 2 hours. There were 5 individuals we recommended to follow up with their GP or encourage ongoing monitoring in-store at a pharmacy.

There was lively banter between attendees and a friendly competition developed to see which individual had the lowest BP reading. Attendees were given Self Care cards and OMRON BP record cards if ongoing monitoring was recommended. A slight negative was that the batteries died in both BP monitors. Luckily, we were able to purchase new batteries onsite and continue.

Attendees were also asked if they were smokers. This prompted me to ask Rachel, the co-ordinator, if perhaps we could conduct a smoking cessation health promotion utilizing the "smokalyser" spirometer. The response was hugely positive, and we look forward to establishing another promotion in the near future.



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# News and Activities

## Tasmanian Bereavement Care Network - Launceston Forum

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

In November, the network held a full day forum in Launceston, that brought together a range of professionals with an interest in bereavement care to meet, share experiences and to learn with and from each other. The event was attended by around 40 participants who heard about 'diversity and inclusion in bereavement', the 'benefits of touch', 'self-care' strategies and 'health promoting palliative care in rural Tasmania'. Participants also contributed to an analysis of gaps in bereavement care services across the State. The event will be followed by regional meetings of network members that will identify priority areas

for work in 2019.

The impetus to establish a BCN in Tasmania stemmed from previous consultation, research and policy development in the broad arena of palliative care. Bereavement care is integral to palliative care and involves both formal and informal bereavement care and support services. Recently, the Government of Tasmania released an overarching framework for palliative care, *Compassionate Communities: A Tasmania Palliative Care Policy Framework 2017-2020* that emphasises the need for, and importance of, bereavement care across the community.

The BCN is underpinned by Asset Based Community Development principles through which individuals, community groups and local service providers work collaboratively to identify strengths and weaknesses and build connections between each other to improve services. As part of its work, network members have also developed a set of values and principles that should underpin the provision of high quality bereavement care by both formal and informal service providers in Tasmania.



Photo: Stephanie Thompson, Pauline Marsh, Di Carter (Chair, BCN Tasmania), Merylin Briggs, Pam Claxton, Tony Barnett and Sharon King



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## WELCOME NEW PRACTITIONERS

### Health Practitioner Research Development Program 2018 (HPRDP)

Six new Health Practitioners began work on projects in 2018 with 12 finishing tasks from previous rounds of the program. The HPRDP offers health practitioners the opportunity to develop research skills by working on a particular task of a research project in the CRH, including developing ethics applications, completing literature reviews and presenting research findings at local conferences. Overall, the program has been successful and feedback from practitioners has been exceedingly positive. After completing the HPRDP, two practitioners have gone on to begin a PhD with the CRH with one practitioner successful in receiving a scholarship as well.

Below is a little about three of our new Practitioners. Our other Practitioners are Vanessa Kearney, Elizabeth Giles and Melanie Van Twest.



### Further Information

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## NEW STAFF

### Dr Suzanne Mallick

Dr Suzanne Mallick joined the Centre for Rural Health in July 2018 as a researcher. Suzanne is a Sociologist and Registered Nurse. She has worked in the acute care and primary health care settings in Australia and the U.K. She received two awards for her Honours thesis on understanding women's experiences of poverty in Tasmania. Her Doctorate thesis at the University of Tasmania, focused on patterns of social inequality in Australia, particularly the social distribution of new technology use. She has recently undertaken a Masters of International Development Practice at Monash University and completed field work in Sri Lanka on gender and workforce participation in the garment industry.



Suzanne has worked for the Australian and Tasmanian Governments in senior social policy roles focused on migration, multiculturalism, population growth, housing and homelessness, sustainable development goals, young people and women. She brings experience in program development and service system design as well as evaluation in the government sectors. Suzanne also led the housing and homelessness service review that resulted in the Housing Connect model in Tasmania.

Recently, she contributed to the Red Cross national evaluation of the support service for forced marriage in Australia and brings expertise in applying research findings to a wide range of policy issues, such as youth justice, homelessness, workforce participation, poverty and migrant and refugee wellbeing in the State. Her particular research interests include migrant and refugee wellbeing, especially around issues of forced marriage; social inclusion and inequality; and workforce barriers and service system evaluation and design. She is currently teaching Race and Ethnicity in Sociology and working on the new graduate workforce study with the CRH.

### Dr Kehinde Obamiro

Kehinde has worked extensively as a community and hospital pharmacist and has developed expertise in identifying and resolving drug therapy problems. He also has experience working with a United State Agency for an International Development (USAID) project providing access to medicine and pharmaceutical care to people living with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. He has recently joined the Centre for Rural Health as an academic and his research interests include rural health issues, public health, cardiovascular research and clinical pharmacy.



Kehinde completed a Bachelor of Pharmacy at the Ahmadu Bello University in 2008 and a Masters in Clinical Pharmacy at the University of Lagos, Nigeria in 2013. In late 2014, he moved to Tasmania to undertake his PhD, which focused on assessment of oral anticoagulation knowledge and adherence in patients with atrial fibrillation, at the University of Tasmania. He completed his PhD in 2018 and took up the lecturer appointment in the same year.

Kehinde also functions as a Rural Pharmacy Liaison Officer (RPLO) to support students on placement and improve collaboration between pharmacists, pharmacy students and the university community, and to promote professional development and networking opportunities as required.

Kehinde has tutored statistics to undergraduate students and provided supplementary tuition as a Riawunna tutor to students of Aboriginal and Torres Island descent. Kehinde is currently in a research intensive position but contributes to teaching at the School of Health Sciences when required.

### Karina Heywood



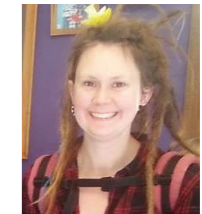
Karina has been working with Dr Heather Bridgman on a pilot project examining the 5+1 Psychology Training Pathway. Karina has managed qualitative and quantitative datasets, conducted statistical analyses on the pilot research data and provided inferences surrounding the research findings. Karina also created a summary report of research findings to distribute to affiliated colleagues and contributed to the preparation of the research for a seminar presentation and for publication. "This has been an incredible and invaluable opportunity to be involved in such a rich research experience, further enhancing my research skills and assimilating my learning of research methodology". "I feel privileged to have worked alongside a team of inspiring and talented professionals and my heartfelt thanks for their support and encouragement throughout the placement goes to them". Karina has two degrees and whilst undertaking the placement, concurrently completed her Honours year in psychology. "Participating in this program has built my confidence in my research abilities and cemented my desire to pursue a PhD".

### Sara Wright



I began studying at the University of Tasmania in 2012 and completed a Bachelor of Behavioural Science in 2015. I am currently completing a Masters of Play Therapy through an interstate university. In addition to my time as a Practitioner with the Health Practitioner Research Development Program (HPRDP), I also work in private practice as a Behavioural Therapist, working with children with disabilities. I began the Practitioner program in June, working with Dr Lyndsay Quarmby and Laura Smith on a project reviewing best-practice trauma informed interventions for refugee children in Australia. So far, I have been busily working away, chained to a computer, completing a systematic review of the current and available literature. After a few months of reviewing literature and compiling data, I am looking forward to moving on to the next stage of the project and writing up my findings.

### Hannah Fielder



Hi, I am Hannah Fielder. I have recently graduated with a Bachelor of Dementia Care from the University of Tasmania and have also previously worked as a Care Assistant in a dementia-specific ward of a care home. I am now running a market garden and a wholefoods business with my partner, undertaking Honours in Public Health at UTAS part-time and working away at my research project with the Health Practitioners Research Development Programme. I am passionate about how communities can become resilient, the effects of an ageing population and being supportive to increasing numbers of people living with dementia. In my project I am evaluating the barriers and enablers that people living in a rural residential aged care facility, face in attending a supported gardening activity at their local community garden.

# Graduate Research

We have been progressing the year with great news and many achievements from our Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates at CRH.

## Graduations

Two of our PhD candidates proudly graduated in the winter graduation ceremonies in August 2018.

**Dr Rowena MacKean** investigated the peer-run community organisations and their contributions to older people's perceived health and wellbeing. Rowena's supervisors were Drs Peter Orpin and Jess Woodroffe (CRH's former academic staff).

**Dr Sancia West's** thesis is entitled, "Policy, Politics and Patients: Public Policy and Radiation Therapy Services in North West Tasmania". Sancia's supervisors were A/Prof Tony Barnett, Dr Elaine Crisp & Dr Elizabeth Shannon.

Congratulations Dr Rowena MacKean and Dr Sancia West and supervisors for your great commitment and hard work! We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.



Photo: Rowena MacKean accepting her certificate of graduation



Photo: Sancia West (middle) with A/Prof Tony Barnett (right) and Dr Elaine Crisp (left)

## Conference presentations

We had a number of our HDR candidates present at our successful annual Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium in Launceston on Thursday 20 September 2018. Our candidates confidently shared their work-in-progress or completed projects.

Jacqueline Goode presented a paper entitled, "Strategies to improve the oral health of homeless people living in rural Australia: A grey literature review"

Ali Morse presented a paper entitled, "Nurses' experience of enablers and barriers associated with state-wide implementation of the Social Attention and Communication Surveillance-Revised (SACS-R) Instrument".

Shahrukh Khan delivered a presentation on, "Reducing dental caries and its impact on quality of life through application of Silver diamine fluoride in residential aged care facilities".

Tamara Reynish shared her research project entitled, "Mental health experiences of marginalised sexual and gender minorities and sex workers in rural or remote Tasmania".

Melissa Kirschbaum presented a paper, "Understanding the 'respectable addict': an exploration of over-the-counter codeine dependence using Q methodology".

Dr Rowena MacKean shared her completed research project entitled, "Peer-group participation as a preventive health strategy".

Many thanks to all candidates for your wonderful participation in, and contribution to, our successful symposium.



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## New HDR candidates

We have recently welcomed seven (six PhD and one Masters) HDR candidates. These candidates' research topics include mental health, oral health and training strategies for health care professionals and students. The new candidates have started their research journey with a lot of enthusiasm, motivation and commitment. Welcome all of you to our HDR community!



Photo from left: Edwin Paul, Tamara Reynish, Vandana Bhagat, Priya Bindall, Dzung Trung Bui and Shoaib Hamrah



Photo: Abhinav Acharya

Student	Degree	Supervisors	Project
Shoaib Hamrah	Masters	Ha Hoang, Jon Mond and Stuart Auckland	Depression and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Among the Immigrant Population in Tasmania
Dzung Trung Bui	PhD	Tony Barnett, Ha Hoang and Winyu Chinthammit	Remote Clinical Skills Training of Health Care Professionals and Students Using Augmented Reality Technology: A randomized control trial
Priya Bindall	PhD	Tony Barnett and Ha Hoang	Improving the Oral Health of Community Dwelling Elders in Rural Tasmania
Tamara Reynish	PhD	Ha Hoang, Heather Bridgman and Brona Nic Giolla Easpaig	Mental Health Care Among Marginalised People in Rural and Remote Tasmania
Vandana Bhagat	PhD	Len Crocombe, Ha Hoang and Lyn Goldberg	Build Workforce Capacity – Understanding Staff Attitude and Knowledge Towards Oral Health of Elderly and Identifying Issues in the Provision of Adequate Dental Care in Residential Care Facilities
Edwin Paul	PhD	Tony Barnett, Merylin Cross and Belinda Jessup	Rural Health Care Professional Training Strategies
Abhinav Acharya	PhD	Len Crocombe and Ha Hoang	Access to oral health care on older population by socio-demographic factors

## Visiting research scholar

Shahrukh Khan, a PhD candidate at the Centre for Rural Health, was awarded a visiting research scholar position at the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health at the University of Adelaide.



His position involved upskilling himself by learning sophisticated statistical techniques of sequential mediation analysis. He worked with Dr Murthy Mittinty from the School of Public Health, University of Adelaide and Professor Marco Peres from Griffith University towards learning these techniques and implementing them in his PhD research project which focuses on establishing obesity and periodontitis causal relationships.

He presented the outcome of this work at various forums at the University of Adelaide as well as a research seminar at the Centre for Rural Health, University of Tasmania.



# Projects

## Study into aged care oral health

A/Prof Leonard Crocombe has been awarded a two-year NHMRC Translating Research into Practice Fellowship which is supporting him in his quest to improve the oral health of older Australians.

He said that, "many people admitted to aged care facilities have high levels of oral disease and poor oral health has a significant influence on quality of life and on systemic health". He gave examples of aspiration pneumonia, diabetes, coronary heart risk and rheumatoid arthritis.

"There is an increasing demand for places in aged care facilities by "baby boomers" with natural teeth who will be increasingly frail and will require high levels of care." A/Prof Crocombe said. "Their diets may include high sugar comfort foods and residents often take medications that cause dry mouth and oral hygiene and access to oral and dental care for residents is poor".

A/Prof Crocombe describes this combination of factors as, 'the worsening aged care oral health crisis', that results in unplanned dental visits often involving elaborate and risky dental procedures, unplanned visits to aged care facilities by general practitioners or by residents going to hospital emergency departments.

The grant has allowed him to give and learn from presentations at state, national and international conferences, as well as undertake two units, one on Translational Research and Health Service Innovation and the other on The Australian Health System in Context. A/Prof Crocombe said that the conferences and units had been helpful in understanding the issues faced when implementing change in the aged care sector.

In collaboration with researchers and oral health practitioners from Tasmania and interstate and in partnership with Oral Health Services Tasmania, he is developing a trial to improve the oral health of people living in aged care facilities. The project proposal utilises two-person teams of oral health therapists and dental assistants (dental nurses) trained in aged care oral health that regularly visit aged care facilities to motivate and train carers in assisting with residents' twice-daily oral hygiene, undertake quality of life oral and dental care within the facility, oral and systemic health screening and advise the Director of Nursing when referral to a dental service or another health provider is required. Also offered will be continuing professional development to dental service providers on minimally invasive dental treatments as well as to GPs and allied health practitioners on the importance of oral health to systemic health and their roles in oral health.

This translating research into practice research project will lead to improved resident quality of life, oral and systemic health. It will also lead to reduced health care costs, improved knowledge of the importance of oral health and its association with systemic health by aged care facility staff, medical and allied health practitioners.



### Further Information

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## Progressing the Circular Head Aboriginal community dementia education initiative

Over the last year our innovative dementia care education project has progressed in partnership with the Circular Head Aboriginal community (CHAC), the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre, and with Federal Government Department of Health - Dementia and Aged Care Services (DACS) funding. The Centre for Rural Health staff involved in the project include Terry Cox, Ha Hoang and Merylin Cross.

Eight Aboriginal students are currently undertaking university study for the first time through the Wicking Centre's online Bachelor of Dementia Care (BDC) program, and seven are simultaneously completing a vocational TasTAFE Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing, Home and Community). The students are therefore gaining tertiary knowledge about dementia alongside vocational and job ready training in dementia care. The project was specifically designed for students to remain connected and supported by family and community members while undertaking their education pathways. A number of people have also been crucial in supporting the student cohort; particularly Dianne Baldock (CHAC), Jodi Jones (Senior Project Officer), Lyn Goldberg (Wicking Centre), Vera Powell (TasTAFE) and Caleb Nichols-Mansell (Riawunna Centre).

Ultimately though, the success of the project is attributed to the dedication and commitment of each student, particularly with meeting the challenges of 'first-time' tertiary study, online learning, and completing the required Bachelor of Dementia Care (BDC) and TasTAFE



assessments. The project represents an important community health initiative. Building a skilled Aboriginal health workforce in Circular Head is vital to providing quality, culturally appropriate care for family and community members living with dementia. Students are thriving in this community-based learning environment. Jess Miles describes the project as an opportunity to use her cultural heritage and dementia care training to provide better community health care:

**'It is important that members of our community who have dementia, have the support of people with that shared cultural heritage and background, so they know someone is there who understands their thoughts and the way they process things.'**

Another student had a baby in Semester One, without missing any TasTAFE or BDC assessments. Students are now completing their TasTAFE practicum experiences at Emmerton Park, the local Residential Aged Care Centre. Emmerton Park staff report the students are well-prepared and work impressively with the residents, many of whom have dementia. The students will then gain more practicum experience through the Circular Head Aboriginal community health programs. The project provides numerous flow on benefits, including, Aboriginal people's improved access to vocational training,

higher education and health career pathways, building the Aboriginal health workforce and supporting the local Aboriginal community. TasTAFE and BDC staff are also developing important cultural safety skills.

We look forward to hearing more good news from the students, and the community's assessment of the project. We are also hopeful our project has translatable value for other Aboriginal communities and international Indigenous populations due to its high levels of community control and in its design.

Photo: BACK ROW: CHAC general manager Tony Smart, Leah Quinn, Megan Evans, project officer Jodi Jones MIDDLE ROW: TAFE instructor Vera Powell, Dr Lyn Goldberg and CHAC CEO Di Baldock FRONT ROW: Cherie Brown, Jess Miles and Jacinta Brown with daughter Maddelyn West. Picture: the Circular Head Chronicle.

## Oral microbiota and aspiration pneumonia

A/Prof Leonard Crocombe has recently been awarded a Wrigley Company Foundation and Australian Dental Health Foundation 2018 Community Service Grant to assist Sangeeta Khada with her PhD study to document the effect of oral hygiene on the oral microbiota of adults living in two residential aged care facilities in Launceston, Tasmania. A microbial diagnostic protocol will be prepared and validated to identify the types

and load of microbial population associated with aspiration pneumonia among older people with dementia. The same species of microbe (for example, Streptococcus pneumonia) act as a normal oral flora in the healthy state but are also the sources of infection in aspiration pneumonia. Very few studies show the association between poor oral health and aspiration pneumonia in this age group.

The main aim of this project is to decrease cases of pneumonia among residents living in aged care facilities. They will develop a simple tool to predict which residents of aged care facilities, are likely to suffer from aspiration pneumonia or other forms of ill health.



Photo: Sangeeta Khada

## Cloak of Dementia

*Tattered remnants hang despondently  
like dreams that could not last  
shreds of hope connecting  
forgetfulness of the past  
Colours of the rainbow  
interspersed with grey  
just wisps of hair upon a garment  
waiting to be plucked away  
Within a wrap of comfort  
lies a wad of 'once-has-been'  
awkwardly draped within the roll  
loosely covered with a seam.  
Snatches of cotton flutter hopelessly  
broken thread no longer binds  
material lost to make complete  
the wheel no longer winds  
Waning strength to piece together  
cobwebs swinging in the breeze  
just a patch to offer comfort  
like shade beneath the trees  
Cloak once held strings together  
studs clipped it all in place  
beneath that piece of 'nothingness'  
a body - in outer space.  
Still among the tattered threads  
once pleading to be whole  
precious loved - one with a spirit  
clinging to a soul.*

**Ruth Poke-Moore, 2017**

The author gave her permission to publish her poem.



### Further Information

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# Grants and Research

## Enhancing Disaster Research Opportunities and Outcomes in Tasmania

Tasmania is vulnerable to a range of natural extreme weather events. Predictions from the Climate Commission reveal that Australia will experience extremes of weather more often and that the impacts such as bushfires, flooding and drought will be more severe. In addition to this dire prediction, Tasmania faces additional challenges such as an ageing population that will impact on how individuals and communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters.



The Centre for Rural Health, in partnership with The College of Science and Engineering and the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, received an internal University of Tasmania Grant to conduct a one day disaster workshop in August 2018. The aim of the workshop was to bring together a range of stakeholders including researchers, emergency services personnel, service providers, business representatives and community members to hear about recent and current research in disaster and emergency response.

Almost 50 emergency stakeholders attended the workshop held at the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies in Hobart, Tasmania. The workshop began with presentations related to risk assessment, the changing profile of risk caused by changes to the climate, theories of adaptive and resilience capacity of individuals and communities to natural hazards, community engagement strategies and issues related to providing health services in rural settings during a natural hazard event.

Following the presentations, workshop delegates were invited to participate in round table discussions to explore research needs, teaching or training gaps specific to emergency stakeholder needs, collaboration and funding opportunities. Over the two hour round table discussion period, participants had collectively identified 34 research needs, 24 teaching and training needs, and 31 potential funding sources. The workshop evaluation also identified a number of additional collaborative

research ideas with some projects already entering the planning stages. Additional funding has been granted to build on the success and energy generated through this workshop.

Professor Rufus Black, Vice-Chancellor, University of Tasmania, concluded the workshop with remarks highlighting the important role the university can play in disaster and emergency management within Tasmania into the

future.

The workshop represented the first step towards a more collaborative, system-wide response to future research and project activities, a role in which UTAS can make a significant contribution.



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## Resettlement experiences of former refugees in Launceston: A qualitative study

A team of investigators from the Centre for Rural Health (CRH) and School of Social Sciences at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), along with the School of Medicine at Western Sydney University (WSU), has been studying the resettlement experiences of former refugees in Launceston, Tasmania.

The research, which is a collaboration with the Migrant Resource Centre Northern Tasmania (MRC), has involved a series of focus groups and in-person interviews with former refugees in the local community including adults, young people and service providers. The research was designed to elucidate both positive and negative aspects of the resettlement experience as delineated by the study participants.

Preliminary findings, reported at the 2018 Annual Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium in Launceston and the 2018 Rural and Remote Mental Health Symposium in Hobart, have highlighted the role of two factors in particular as both enablers of, and barriers to, successful resettlement, namely, access to employment and access to English language learning facilities. Other factors highlighted included access to housing and transport, whether people felt safe, a sense of belonging, experience of discrimination and level of support from community, family and services.

The research will make an important contribution to the currently limited evidence base concerning the experiences of former refugees who have resettled in rural and regional areas of Australia and will inform the conduct of local, culturally sensitive health promotion programs. It will also provide a voice for the study participants and a platform for future research collaboration between MRC, other key stakeholders and UTAS.

Investigators on this study include Dr Jonathan Mond, Ms Laura Smith, Dr Ha Hoang, Ms Tamara Reynish and Mr Stuart Auckland, from CRH, Dr Chona Hannah from the UTAS School of Health Sciences, Dr Kim McLeod from UTAS School of Social Sciences, and Dr Shameran Slewa-Younan from the Western Sydney University School of Medicine.



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## Recent Graduate Research Project

Rural and remote areas of Tasmania, and indeed the rest of Australia, have traditionally faced difficulties recruiting health professionals to fill job vacancies. With the growing number of health graduates available to potentially fill these vacant positions, the Centre for Rural Health is currently implementing a study to explore job opportunities across Tasmania specifically for recently graduated nursing and allied health professionals, together with the willingness of employers to give recent graduates a 'go'. The unique pathways recent health graduates are taking to obtain employment in Tasmania is also being investigated.

After gaining ethics approval in May, the project team have been busy collecting and collating data. So far, the project team have:

- Identified and stored over 3500 job advertisements for nursing and allied health professionals across Tasmania gathered from online websites;
- Interviewed employers of recent nursing and allied health graduates from all over the state to discuss their recent recruitment experiences and their views on graduate employment;
- Surveyed recent nursing and allied health graduates working in Tasmania to find out how they came to be in their current position;
- Interviewed recent nursing and allied health graduates working in Tasmania to explore their pathways to employment in more detail; and
- Completed focus groups with final year students in paramedicine, social work, exercise physiology, nursing, pharmacy and psychology that explored their ideas around job prospects and strategies to gain employment after graduation

Data collection is expected to continue until 31 December, 2018, so there is still time for participants to be involved if they wish. If you are involved in recruiting nursing and allied health professionals and would be happy to talk to project staff about recruitment or graduate employment in your specific discipline, please contact Dr Belinda Jessup on the below details, to arrange an interview. If you have graduated from a nursing or allied health degree anywhere in Australia in the last three years and are currently working in Tasmania, we would love for you to complete a short survey -

<https://surveys.utas.edu.au/index.php/337655?lang=en>

Following the completion of data collection, it is anticipated that analysis will commence in the new year with publications to follow shortly thereafter.



### Further Information

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## CRH Awarded Tender for Evaluation of the Tasmanian Component of the National Suicide Prevention Trial

Staff from the UTAS Centre for Rural Health (CRH) have been successful in a tender for evaluation of the Tasmanian component of the National Suicide Prevention Trial.

Tasmania is one of 12 sites across Australia participating in the trial, the long-term goal of which is to reduce the occurrence of suicide attempts and deaths by suicide in the Australian population.

Implementation of the trial activities is being coordinated by Primary Health Tasmania, in conjunction with the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, the Tasmanian Health Service, the Black Dog Institute and various local government and non-government agencies and organisations.

The focus will be on men aged 40-64 and men and women over the age of 65. The trial activities will be conducted in three regions, Launceston, the three North-West region municipalities of Burnie, Central Coast and Devonport, and Break Of Day.

The activities will be designed to build community capacity to support people facing, or who are at high risk of facing, a suicide crisis and thereby reduce the occurrence of suicide attempts and deaths by suicide.

Using a participatory action research approach, the evaluation team will work with the participating sites to assess whether and to what extent, the trial activities were successful in achieving these goals along with process outcomes such as perceived barriers to, and facilitators of, program implementation.

The local evaluation will accompany, and inform, a broader National evaluation being conducted by researchers at the University of Melbourne.

Work on the project, led by Dr Jon Mond, Mr Stuart Auckland and Ms Laura Smith, all from CRH, and Dr David Lees from the UTAS School of Nursing, began in July 2018 and will continue through 2019 and, potentially, beyond.

Dr Mond noted, 'The project is a unique opportunity for CRH staff to work with key local stakeholders in health service provision and members of the local community in contributing to a major health promotion initiative with tangible benefits for the Tasmanian population'.



### Further Information

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# Events and Conferences

## Visiting research fellowship strengthens collaboration between CRH UTAS and ECU

Dr Katherine Kent was a recipient of the 2018 Visiting Researcher Fellowships at Edith Cowan University and made a trip to Western Australia for two weeks in October. The fellowship was granted to strengthen the collaboration between public health nutrition researchers at the Centre for Rural Health, University of Tasmania and the School of Medical and Health Sciences at Edith Cowan University (Western Australia).

The fellowship provided a timely opportunity to progress a current collaborative research project between the two sites. The project has been designed to measure and compare the consumption of regionally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, and to identify the barriers and enablers to access and consumption of these foods in both South-West Western Australia and Tasmania. The two regions are working collaboratively due to similarities between the agricultural productivity and demographics of the two regions. Additionally, Katherine gave lectures to ECU staff and students around her current research projects, hosted a community forum in Bunbury related to regional food systems, and engaged various WA stakeholders who will be instrumental in the continued fostering of collaborative projects related to strengthening regional food systems in both Tasmania and Western Australia.



Photo: Dr Stephanie Godrich, Lecturer of Nutrition at the School of Medical and Health Sciences, Edith Cowan University with Dr Katherine Kent



### Further Information

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## 6th Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium, Canberra

The 6th Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium in Canberra was coordinated by the National Rural Health Alliance and sponsored by 11 universities including UTAS, to mark 20 years of Commonwealth Department of Health funding for University Departments of Rural Health. Almost 300 delegates including key rural health stakeholders, clinicians, administrators, politicians, and policy advisors attended the symposium where 118 research papers were presented.

The symposium provided an opportunity to showcase rural health, network, and publicise forthcoming events and conferences. We had a strong presence with UTAS sponsoring the conference dinner and two Centre for Rural Health (CRH) staff, one from the Rural Clinical School, along with two Higher Degree Research students presenting papers and posters.

Key stakeholders included:

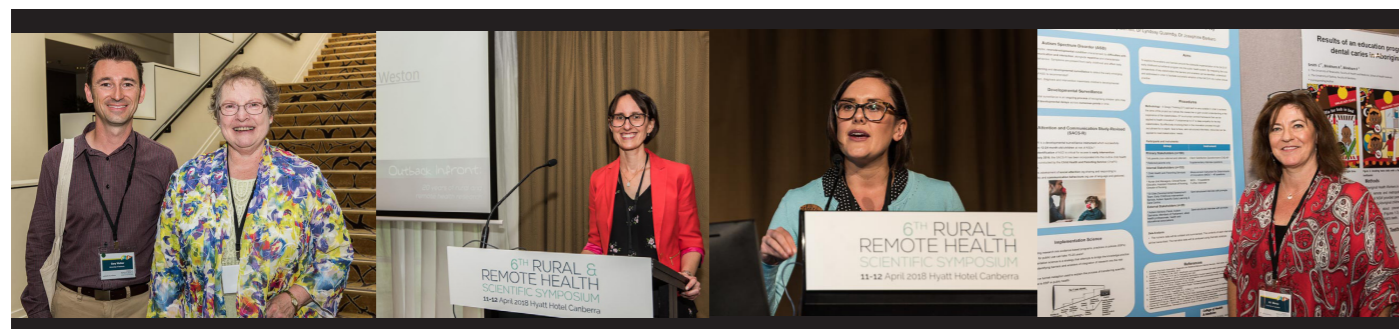
- Dr Michael Worley, the Rural Health commissioner
- Bridget McKenzie, the (then) Minister for Rural Health

- Mark Diamond, CEO National Rural Health Alliance, the peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health
- CRANA+ (Council for Remote Area Nurses and other professions)
- PHCRIS (Primary Health Care Research and Information Service),
- Directors and staff of ARHEN (Australian Rural Health Education Network)
- FRAME (Federation of Rural Australian Medical Educators, the peak body representing Rural Clinical Schools (RCS) and Regional Medical Schools (RMS)
- Australian College of Nursing and ANMF
- SARRAH – Services for Rural and Remote Allied Health



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## 2018 Rural and Remote Mental Health Symposium in Hobart

The annual Australian Rural and Remote Mental Health Symposium was held in Hobart from 15-17 October, 2018. Celebrating its 10th Anniversary, the conference theme was "Past, present, future: The Remote possibilities".

Heather Bridgman (Lecturer in Rural Mental Health), was part of the conference organising sub-committee. Three staff members from the Centre for Rural Health presented at the conference. Laura Smith presented on, "Mental Health of Former Refugees in Launceston: A Qualitative Study", Stuart Auckland and Heather Bridgman presented on, "Evaluation of a Tasmanian Community-Based Rural Mental Health Program" and Heather presented a poster on, "Evaluation of headspace in Tasmania: Methodological Approach and Key Learnings"

The conference had a strong focus on Suicide and harm prevention, physical health, digital and low intensity mental health, child and youth, supporting the mental health workforce and consumer focused recovery. The pre-conference workshop was attended by 130 delegates and focused on suicide

prevention. This was facilitated by a panel of rural Tasmanian practitioners including, Robert Waterman, CEO, Rural Health Tasmania; Ms Tracey Martin Cole, Director, Psychology CAFFE and Mr Charlie Anderson, Intentional Peer Worker, Wellways, who led an engaging and insightful discussion.

The CRH team came away from the conference with several learnings including the importance of:

- Embedding cultural practices in community suicide prevention strategies;
- Responding with both clinical and non-clinical approaches to address mental health problems;
- Bringing the voice of lived experience into suicide prevention approaches; and
- Not assuming that all rural areas are homogenous, and to recognise site differences.

There were two other useful learnings: For user-friendly data on suicide rates in Australia, Mindframe has produced a snapshot of the ABS Cause of Death data release 2018 – access at: [www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/mindframe-abs-snapshot](http://www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-suicide/mindframe-abs-snapshot). Also, Tasmania is the first state to adopt the new National Communications Charter. The Charter brings the community sector together with government and people with lived experience promoting a common language around mental health, mental illness and suicide in Tasmania. Both individuals and organisations can sign up to the charter online at: [www.tascharter.org](http://www.tascharter.org).



Photo: Dr Heather Bridgman, Ms Laura Smith and Mr Stuart Auckland



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## Agfest used to promote CRH nutrition research

The Centre for Rural Health used Agfest to promote a new project exploring the accessibility and consumption of Tasmanian-grown fresh produce. Agfest is a renowned annual agricultural field day attracting thousands of Tasmanians from around the State.

Researchers from the Centre for Rural Health and the School of Health Sciences, surveyed the event's Tasmanian patrons to uncover what regionally grown produce they are purchasing, and explored the barriers preventing them from eating the fresh fruit and vegetables which are grown in the State.

Dr Katherine Kent attended the 3-day event with support from many other CRH staff members, using Agfest as an opportunity to pilot the survey before rolling it out further afield. The event led to the collection of over 120 surveys, providing the basis for a presentation at the Public Health Association of Australia's Food Futures Conference 2018.

This research is the next step in a number of projects led by the CRH which explore food availability, cost and affordability. The team also includes other lead food and nutrition researchers in Stuart Auckland and Sandra Murray from the University's Centre for Rural Health and School of Health Sciences.



Photo: Dr Katherine Kent and Ms Sandra Murray

# Director's Report

***The Federal Government Department of Health has accepted our 2018 mid-year progress report for the new Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program and we are busy preparing materials for both our annual and 3-year report that will summarise activities and outcomes achieved over the current funding period 2016-18.***



These will be reports combined from the CRH, the Rural Clinical School, the College of Health and Medicine's Professional Experience Placement (PEP) unit and from the "HUB" project. The primary focus of the RHMT program remains of course, on the clinical placement of students, recruitment and retention of health care professionals and on improving health services and health outcomes for people living in rural and remote areas of Tasmania. We are optimistic that by the end of this year, we will have been able to double the total number of student placement weeks over this 3-year funding period. Such an outcome augers well for our bid to secure Commonwealth funding for 2020 and 2021.

***In addition to the placement allowances provided by the CRH to assist students with the costs associated with a rural placement, this year, we introduced an 'Allied health student supplementary rural placement allowance'.***

This provides a great level of financial support to students who undertake rural placements in areas of allied health workforce shortage. The project supported a total of 34 students including 13 Physiotherapy, 8 Radiography, 5 Occupational Therapy and 4 Podiatry students from the mainland. We are all hoping that many will return to rural Tasmania to work at some stage in their career.

The regional Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN) regional meeting was held on 18 & 19 September in Launceston together with 4 ARHEN staff network meetings (Executive officers, Student Placements group, the Aboriginal Staff Alliance and the Mental Health Academics group).

***It was the first time the ARHEN had met in Tasmania since the CRH was first established here in 1997.***

These meetings were followed by a successful 2018 Rural Health and Collaborative Research Symposium held on the 20th September. The event attracted over 100 participants.

CRH staff have been actively engaged in several new, externally funded projects. Grants received this year included \$97,450 from the DHHS and the Tasmanian Community Fund to continue and further develop the Tasmania Bereavement Care Network (hosted by Palliative Care Tasmania).

A/Prof Len Crocombe was awarded a NHMRC TRIP fellowship of \$179,118 for work on 'Sustaining oral and systemic health in Residential Aged Care Facilities' and the oral health team secured funding of \$69,722 from Southern Dental Industries for the SMART (Silver Fluoride Modified Atraumatic Restorative Treatment) Clinical Trial and \$8,122 from the Australian Dental Health Foundation to develop a laboratory protocol for analysing oral swabs for pathogenic or key microbiological flora.

Dr Simone Lee's team secured \$22,860 from Cancer Council Tasmania for 'Using electronic clinical prompts in General Practice to increase bowel cancer screening participation in Tasmania: A pilot study' and Dr Ha Hoang, with others, was awarded a Department of State Growth (Tas) Grant with the Migrant Resource Centre of \$23,235 for a project titled, 'Made in Tasmania by new Tasmanians'.

***Congratulations to everyone involved!***

Welcome to 2 new full-time academic staff members – Dr Suzanne Mallick, who joins us as a lecturer working on our 'recent graduates' workforce study and Dr Kehinde Obamiro who strengthens our work around pharmacy practice.

Welcome also to 7 new research by higher degree students who have recently joined us to work on projects related to rural health workforce and health services: Edwin Paul, Tamara Reynish, Vandana Bhagat, Priya Bindall, Dzung Trung Bui, Mohammad Shoaib Hamrah and Abhinav Acharya.

Congratulations to A/Prof Len Crocombe who has recently been awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Federal Council of the Australian Dental Association. Len has been an active member and served on the Council and various committees of the ADA for some decades.

***As we head into the festive season, I would like to thank each member of staff at the CRH for their hard work and many achievements over the last 12 months and extend my sincere thanks to our supporters and partners who have all been critical to this effort. I wish you, your family and friends a happy and safe Christmas.***

**Tony Barnett (Director)**

