



SQRH
Southern Queensland
Rural Health

2022

YEAR IN REVIEW

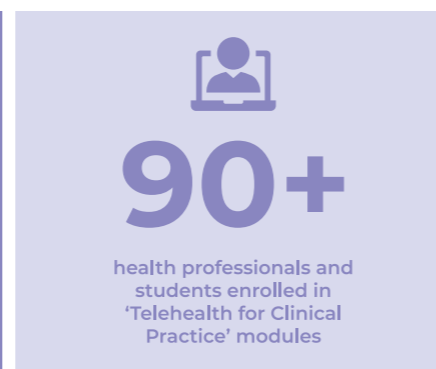
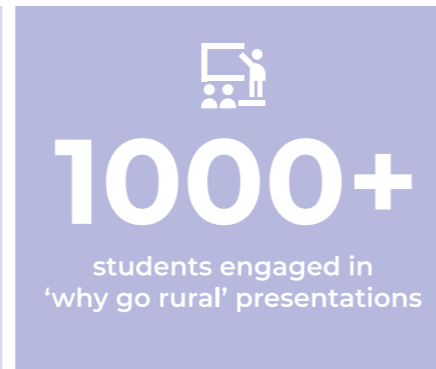
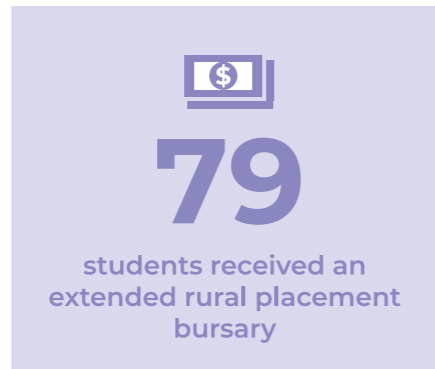
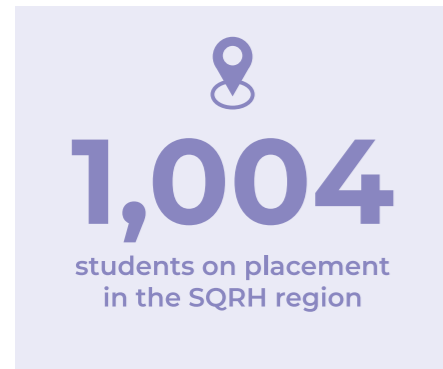
A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:



Darling Downs
Health



2022 AT A GLANCE



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■ ABOUT US AND OUR MISSION

Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) supports nursing, midwifery, allied health students and health professionals to develop a high quality and highly skilled workforce across regional, rural and remote Southern Queensland.

SQRH is a University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) and is a collaboration between The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service.

SQRH is funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health under the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program.

Since late 2017, we have worked tirelessly to build a strong reputation in rural health education and training, engaging with numerous valued stakeholders across the region.

Starting from a single office in the Toowoomba Hospital, SQRH has grown to:

- Cover 13 local government areas spanning across 400,000 square kilometres,
- Employ over 40 staff across the regions,
- Support over 1,400 nursing, midwifery, and allied health students per year,
- Establish education centres in Toowoomba, Charleville, St George and Chinchilla
- Supply over 60 rooms for student accommodation across the region to students on placement and
- Establish the student-led Health and Wellness Clinic in Toowoomba.

■ OUR KEY PRIORITIES

SQRH is funded to work across seven key priority areas.

Deliver effective rural training experiences for allied health, nursing and midwifery students.

Ensure rural training experiences are of a high quality.

Develop processes to improve rural student recruitment.

Engage with the local community to support the delivery of training to students.

Maintain and progress an evidence base and the rural health research agenda.

Support improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Provide regional leadership in developing innovative training solutions to address rural workforce recruitment retention.

■ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

SQRH acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we live, work and learn.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.



ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT

DEREK TUFFIELD OAM

Independent Chair

2022 has continued to be another challenging but highly successful year for Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) as you will see when you read through this year's Year in Review.

St George Allied Health Project

We were successful in securing Federal Government funding of \$1.9 million for the expansion of rural health multidisciplinary training programs in St George. This program will be delivered by SQRH in partnership with Goondir Health Services to support more allied health and nursing students training in St George. To assist students, we purchased a duplex containing two units, in St George for student accommodation. Each of the units has three bedrooms and have been extensively renovated to ensure they meet the highest standards of safety, fittings, and modern appliances.

Chinchilla Aged Care Project

We are partnering with Southern Cross Care Queensland to establish a new training and education centre to provide vital training

opportunities for people in the region who are embarking on a healthcare career. We were successful in securing federal funding of \$2.9 million for this project. This exciting new facility will help grow a local pool of qualified allied health and nursing professionals undertaking clinical placements in aged care. I am pleased to advise that our SQRH staff for this new training and education facility are now appointed and operational in Chinchilla.

Rural Visits

The SQRH Advisory Board continued its commitment to rural visits during 2022. In May we visited Roma and held our advisory board meetings at the new Roma Hospital. In late October, we met in Charleville at the SQRH training facility.

SQRH Advisory Board Strategic Planning

It is five years since the formation of SQRH. Discussions commenced in October at Charleville and work will continue with the Strategic Plan in early 2023.

Recruitment

Looking forward by the end of January 2023, SQRH will employ forty-two staff

across the Darling Downs and South West region and will have achieved almost 100% staff capacity which is exceptional given the current employment challenges existing in Australia today.

May I also acknowledge the level of dedication of our staff from across our extensive coverage area for all their efforts in helping to grow the vital work of SQRH over the past 12 months and for supporting the students engaging in rural placements.

In closing, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my fellow SQRH Advisory Board Members Professor Bruce Abernathy (The University of Queensland), Professor Glen Coleman (University of Southern Queensland), Dr Tony Brown Chief Executive (South West Health Hospital and Health Service) and Annette Scott Chief Executive (Darling Downs Health) for their support and commitment to SQRH.

Congratulations to our Director, Associate Professor Geoff Argus for his leadership, dedication and commitment to continued growth and success of SQRH over the past 12 months.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GEOFF ARGUS

Director



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In 2022 we celebrated five years of operations for SQRH. From humble beginnings in a small office at the Toowoomba Hospital in 2017, we now have over 40 staff, located across five locations.

The previous five years have been an extraordinary journey for SQRH which is now well-established as a key stakeholder in rural health across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland.

I thank the various representatives from The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service for their vision in establishing SQRH and the commitment to the communities across our footprint

Students undertaking clinical placements across southern Queensland are well-supported and enjoy rich educational experiences whilst on rural placement.

This year we were fortunate to establish two key partnerships to expand our activities. In Chinchilla we have partnered

with South Cross Care Queensland (SCCQ) to establish an aged care education hub at the Illoura Village aged care facility. SCCQ are in the process of a major site redevelopment to expand and modernise the facility. They have kindly provided a large space for refurbishment for the establishment of our dedicated education and training hub. Works on the education hub will commence in earnest in 2023 and in the meantime, SQRH staff are working from the existing facility to provide educational experiences to students alongside SCCQ staff. We are very excited about this ongoing partnership with SCCQ and what this will mean for the future of the aged care workforce in the Western Downs.

In St George we have partnered with Goondir Health services to establish a dedicated allied health education and training hub. This includes a student-led clinic which will operate from the Goondir Community Wellbeing Centre which is due for completion in July 2023. The vision of Goondir to create this space which will have various service providers offering a range of social, health and

wellbeing services and activities is a testament to Goondir's commitment to closing the gap and improving health outcomes for the community. We have also built a strong relationship with the Balonne Country Universities Centre who provide a beautiful space for students to study whilst in St George. We have purchased two duplexes, each with two, three-bedroom units for student accommodation. The units have been refurbished and these 12 rooms are an excellent addition to our accommodation offerings in southern Queensland.

The work of SQRH is only possible with the support of local communities and stakeholders across our region. We are committed to continually consulting with stakeholders to ensure that we are always positioned to respond to the needs of the communities we serve.

We recognise that it is through collaborative partnerships that we can collectively achieve the health outcomes we are striving for in rural communities and our motto of 'be part of the solution' reflects this.



BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS



PROFESSOR BRUCE ABERNETHY

Executive Dean, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, The University of Queensland



Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) had another outstanding year in 2022 and on behalf of the University of Queensland (UQ) I wish to extend our congratulations to Director, Associate Professor Geoff Argus and his wonderful team for what they have achieved over the past 12 months.

UQ is proud to be one of the four core members of the SQRH consortium in addition to carrying the responsibility of being the holder of the University Department of Rural Health contract with the Commonwealth.

We are delighted and most grateful for the opportunities SQRH has created for our students and staff in allied health, nursing and midwifery to gain exceptional rural and regional experience.

As we moved cautiously out of the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, SQRH continued to successfully deliver on its core mission of supporting and growing the clinical placement

experiences of allied health, nursing and midwifery students throughout rural southern and south-western Queensland.

For UQ this has meant students training in the health professions of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, audiology, nursing, midwifery, dietetics, clinical exercise physiology, psychology, social work, and pharmacy have had the opportunity to undertake clinical placements in various parts of the expansive footprints of Darling Downs Health and the South West Hospital and Health Service.

These placements 'open the eyes' of these future health professionals to a world of prospective work and lifestyle opportunities that are not only valuable to them but are also an important part of a broader strategy to address rural and remote health workforce shortages.

Year-on-year there has been a pleasing increase in both the number of students undertaking rural placements through SQRH and the average duration of these placements and this augers well for helping to build future health service capacity 'in the bush'.

“We are most grateful for the opportunities SQRH has created for our students and staff in allied health, nursing and midwifery to gain exceptional rural and regional experience.”

Rural training placements not only help alert students to the possibility of a future rural health career but has also helped sharpen their skills and preparedness for such a career.

As has been the case since the SQRH was first formed, we at UQ value enormously the partnerships that have been forged within and through SQRH and we look forward to the continued development of these partnerships and the scope and impact of SQRH's activities in 2023 and beyond.

SQRH has had another strong year in fulfilling its mission to develop a skilled nursing and allied health workforce through growth in the number and quality of rural and regional health placements. UniSQ is proud to be one of the four consortium partners of SQRH and is delighted with the benefits it is delivering for our students.

In collaboration with SQRH, South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS), Charleville State High School and Country Universities Centre (CUCs), the end-to-end UniSQ Nursing program at Charleville saw the delivery of our first nursing residential schools in 2022.

Programs like these allow rural students access to all aspects of their nursing training within their communities and it was pleasing to receive positive feedback from students including a thank you "for delivering this valuable education to us out in the bush".

This project would not have been possible without SQRH and the energetic support of the SQRH team and the local community.

SQRH's leadership in areas such as interprofessional education, telehealth and the tracking of health graduate outcomes are all feeding into and enriching the educational experience of nursing, midwifery and allied health students at this university.

I'm confident that this, combined with the collaborations with our colleagues at The University of Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service, is leading to a stronger workforce pipeline for regional, rural and remote southern Queensland.

For UniSQ, an important next step on that journey is the launch this year of our new programs in speech pathology, occupational therapy and social work.

Being able to leverage the expertise of SQRH and our partners has meant we have been able to design these programs so that graduates will be well aware of the challenges and

PROFESSOR GLEN COLEMAN

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), University of Southern Queensland



opportunities of health delivery in rural and regional Queensland.

My congratulations to Director, Associate Professor Geoff Argus and the SQRH team for their great work this year.

“SQRH's leadership in areas such as interprofessional education, telehealth and the tracking of health graduate outcomes are all feeding into and enriching the educational experience of nursing, midwifery and allied health students at this university.”

BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS



ADJUNCT PROFESSOR ANNETTE SCOTT, PSM

Health Service Chief Executive,
Darling Downs Health



Darling Downs
Health

The SQRH consortium members have continued their strong collaboration to optimise student numbers and placement experiences in 2022.

We value the relationship we have with our consortia partners in our fifth year and together we strove to enhance rural placement opportunities for students. This culminated in an increase in the number of placements; broadened the scope of placements and provided additional supports to students and supervisors.

Darling Downs Health (DDH) and SQRH built on the work that followed the Extended Rural Student Experiences Summit in 2021 and were able to offer additional extended placements in 2022. Students were also offered the SQRH MMM4-7 bursary which assisted greatly with their ability to remain on placement and engage with local communities.

DDH educators also participated in SQRH's research on extended placements which aims to better understand experiences of supporting extended rural placements in the Darling Downs and South West.

Workforce shortages are a key topic at all levels and there has been considerable work done locally, nationally and internationally in this space. This shortage has been across all disciplines and we are certainly not immune.

The aged care sector is an area with a significant requirement for staffing in light of the Aged Care Royal Commission recommendations. SQRH has partnered with Southern Cross Care Queensland to establish an aged care education and training hub at the Illoura Village in Chinchilla. The initiative is designed to address the workforce shortages in rural aged care and develop the next generation of rural aged care health professionals. Darling Downs Health has six residential aged care facilities and looks forward to this exciting initiative to develop our rural aged care workforce.

As we move towards 2023, DDH remains highly motivated to continue to achieve the goals of SQRH. The cultivation of student placements and interprofessional education alongside SQRH remains our priority.

Our last piece of work for the year was reflections on how our current

partnerships operate and how we can continue to strengthen infrastructure and foster learning opportunities for health staff and students. These reflections will springboard us into 2023 when DDH and SQRH commence workshops to identify further opportunities for collaboration and ensure we are maximising clinical placement, education and research opportunities.

“We value the relationship we have with our consortia partners in our fifth year and together we strove to enhance rural placement opportunities for students.”



DR TONY BROWN

Health Service Chief Executive,
South West Hospital and Health Service

South West
Hospital and Health Service

It has been a pleasure to be part of the SQRH board this year. I think the board has strengthened its governance processes. It is only through partnering that we can address the issues facing rural and remote healthcare delivery.

Despite times made difficult by the COVID-19 pandemic, SQRH has strengthened its operational delivery within its budget envelope.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not prevent the SQRH from delivering its objective to work across seven key priority areas.

Examples of this success are:

→ SQRH has expanded its training of allied health students especially in St George. SQRH is proud that through its partnerships it is known to be a national leader in the training of allied health professionals.

→ Students attest to the fact that their training in the South West is of high quality. In my travels across the SWHHS, the students I speak to talk highly of the quality of their training and enjoy their time in the South West.

→ Rural student recruitment is still growing aided by the provision of quality accommodation such as the Roma Student Facility. The Roma Student Facility had its formal opening this year and all that attended were impressed by the quality of the building and its amenities.

→ When I talk to community members about the current issues of health workforce supply the current programs of locally based training of health professionals is a bright spot. They know this is an important answer to developing the appropriately skilled workforce to deliver the health services of the future in the South West.

→ The capacity and capability to deliver research in the South West

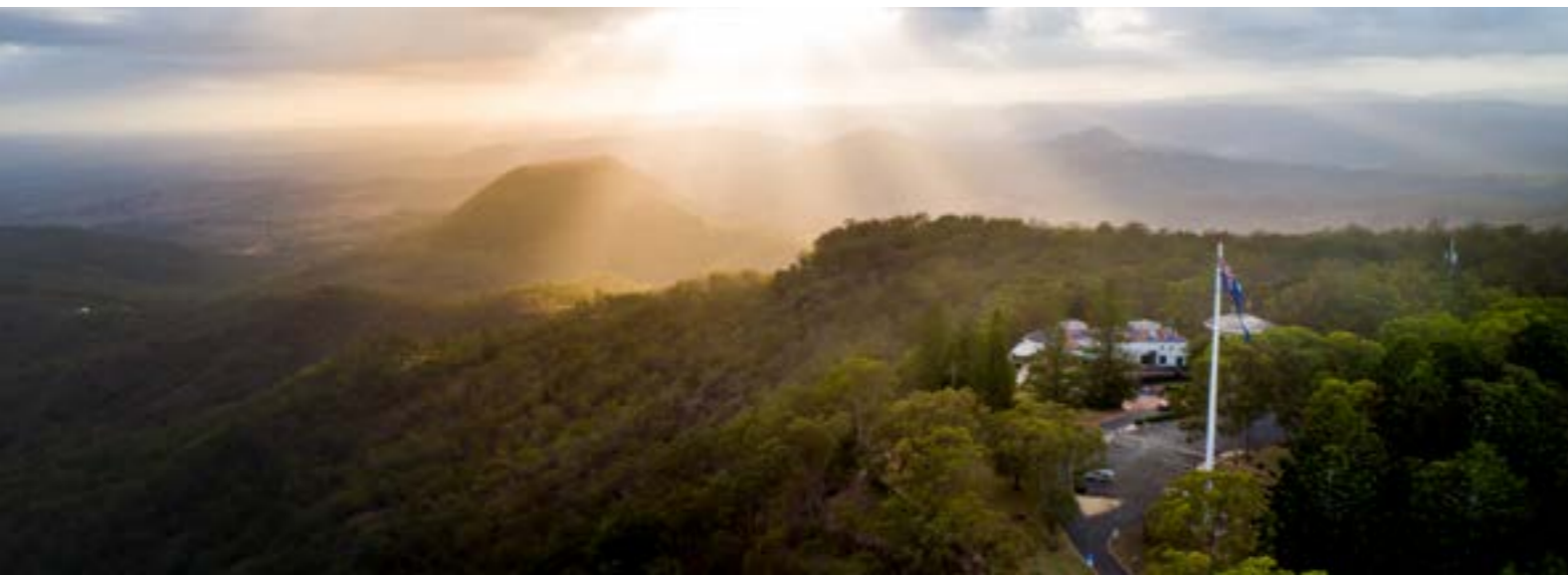
“SWHHS believes partnership with SQRH is providing leadership in developing innovative training solutions to address rural workforce recruitment and retention.”

is improving. SQRH is enabling this exciting development. Research is very metro centric in Australia and therefore has diminished relevance to the rural and remote context. Data and evidence through research will inform the development and resourcing of appropriate rural and remote health services into the future.

SQRH is an important partner in the implementation of the SWHHS Health Equity strategy. This strategy will drive our endeavour to close the gap in First Nations health outcomes.

SWHHS believes partnership with SQRH is providing leadership in developing innovative training solutions to address rural workforce recruitment and retention.

I am looking forward to working with my colleagues on the board of SQRH to future progressing the vision and mission of SQRH in 2023.



ENGAGING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

“ This is critical to ensure that we are a part of the conversation in meeting the health workforce needs of rural communities. ”



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GEOFF ARGUS Director

Relationships are at the heart of everything we do at SQRH. We work in and with the communities we serve across our footprint and highly value the relationships we have fostered.

Regular engagement with stakeholders allows us to seek important feedback on our activities to continually refine and improve our operations to meet the needs of communities, students, partners, stakeholders and our funders.

We meet regularly with representatives from Federal, State and Local Government to advocate on behalf of communities to engage in shaping rural health workforce policy. This is critical to ensure that we are a part of the conversation in meeting the health workforce needs of rural communities.

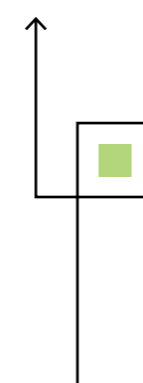
In May we co-hosted a stakeholder engagement event in Roma with the Darling Downs-South West Medical Pathway (DD-SW MP), which includes the four SQRH partner organisations and will see medical students undertake their education across rural southern Queensland. The event was attended

by over 60 stakeholders from Roma and surrounds and provided a great opportunity to showcase the work of SQRH over the previous five years and promote the new medical pathway.

In October we hosted an engagement event in Charleville with over 50 guests in attendance. We were joined by Professor Ruth Stewart, National Rural Health Commissioner and Professor Keith McNeil, Queensland Health Chief Medical Officer, and Shaun 'Zoro' Radnedge, Murweh Shire Mayor who all spoke favourably of the work being undertaken by the SQRH consortium in creating a workforce pipeline for across all health professions.

We have new partnerships with Goondir Health Services in St George and Southern Cross Care Queensland in Chinchilla to establish training and education hubs.

As such, a great deal of engagement has occurred with community members and service providers in these locations to ensure that the establishment of these two hubs meet the needs of these communities. We are very proud to partner with both of these organisations and look forward to long lasting partnerships into the future.



NEW HORIZONS AS SQRH EXPANDS INTO ST GEORGE AND CHINCHILLA



SQRH GROWS IN ST GEORGE WITH A NEW EDUCATION HUB IN THE WORKS

CLARA WALKER Principal Project Officer

SQRH has been successful in receiving an expansion grant to establish an Allied Health Education and Training Hub in St George.

SQRH are partnering with Goondir Health Services (Goondir) to deliver student-resourced allied health services at the St George Community Wellbeing Centre. Services will be delivered by allied health students who are completing clinical placements as part of their university studies, under the supervision of qualified SQRH staff.

SQRH will also collaborate with and support local service providers to increase the nursing, midwifery and allied health placement opportunities in the region.

As part of the grant, SQRH also received funding to purchase student accommodation for nursing, midwifery and allied health students on placement at St George.

A key focus of 2022 has been establishing partnerships, community and stakeholder engagement and planning for the commencement of the Allied Health Education and Training Hub in 2023.

Highlights for 2022 were:

→ Stakeholder engagement with Goondir, as well as the consortium universities (The University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland) as well as state-wide health organisations and St George service providers and community members.

- Providing input into the refurbishment of the St George Community Wellbeing Centre, where SQRH staff will be located student-resourced health services will be delivered in 2023.
- Purchase and refurbishment of 12 rooms of student accommodation for nursing, midwifery, and allied health students on placement at St George.
- The successful recruitment of two Clinical Educators to join the SQRH team in the St George area. Welcome to SQRH Maddy Greenhill, Karla Horlyck and Rob Satchell.



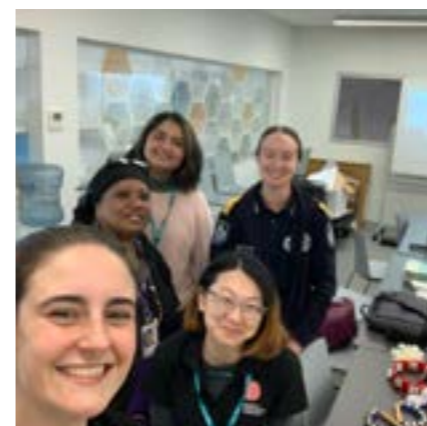
In February 2022, the government funding announcements were made for the Chinchilla and St George projects.



Stakeholders for the St George project including SQRH, Goondir Health Services, South West Hospital and Health Service and local service providers and community members had the opportunity in November to meet and plan next steps.



The St George Community Wellbeing Centre Research Collaborative have been hard at work to make sure the services delivered in St George will meet the needs of the community.



Clinical Educator Maddy joined SQRH in St George and has been instrumental to the project.



SQRH welcomed Clinical Educators Meg and Maree to the team to set up the education and training facility in Chinchilla.



Officials and members of Illoura community gathered to turn the first sod of the grounds where construction will begin in Chinchilla.



GROUNDBREAKING AGED CARE EDUCATION CENTRE IN CHINCHILLA WILL SET THE STANDARD

NICOLA COTTER Deputy Director – Darling Downs

SQRH was fortunate to be awarded a 2022 Commonwealth expansion grant to see the team set up an education and training centre in Chinchilla.

This is not only exciting for the SQRH team, but for the wider Chinchilla community who will see the benefit of an increase in students coming to the town.

The grant is one of only five awarded to University Departments of Rural Health across Australia and is the first of its kind which sees SQRH partner

with aged care provider, Southern Cross Care Queensland.

Grant funding has allowed SQRH to grow its team further with the welcoming of Clinical Educators for Nursing, Meg Chandler and Maree Wylie and in January 2023 Clare Dal Bon, Clinical Educator in Exercise Physiology.

The purchase of two modern, fully furnished houses allows SQRH to now support eight students at a time while on placement in Chinchilla.

Excitingly a major refurbishment of a large area within the Illoura Aged Care Home is about to commence and will be ready to welcome students in 2023 to a modern,

welcoming facility to best support their learning needs.

The entire project will be evaluated with the support of Professor Nancy Pachana, expert clinical geropsychologist and neuropsychologist as well as an extended team of interested academics from both UniSQ and UQ.

SQRH feels extremely fortunate to be partnering with Southern Cross Care Queensland who have already demonstrated a tremendous level of collaboration on the project. They have proved to really embody their vision of wanting 'to grow communities where best lives are lived'.



■ Bidjara artist, Alara Geebung, painted our yarnning circle blocks at the SQRH Charleville centre to create a gathering space with Indigenous peoples, communities and organisations.



CEMENTING PATHWAYS IN INDIGENOUS HEALTH



LEE LINGWOODOCK Clinical Educator (Indigenous Health)

Hi, my name is Lee Lingwoodock, I was born in St George and grew up in Gladstone. On my mother's side, my tribe is Mandandanji, on my father's side our tribe is Gubbi Gubbi.

I joined the SQRH team back in August and have been slowly finding my feet. I have met so many people so far, it's been amazing.

As I was born in St George, I already have family and community connections there, which helps in my role. I can find out many things just by asking a relative.

I have contacted key staff at both UQ and UniSQ that are involved with student placement in the rural sector, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students and had conversations with them about what they do and informed them of my role.

I have engaged with Indigenous and non- Indigenous staff from the Darling

Downs Indigenous Health Service, and the South West Hospitals both in Roma and St George.

I have had a road trip to both Charleville and St George.

I was invited to Charleville by the Health Workforce Queensland's Future Workforce Team Leader, Meredith Connor, to take part in their GROW Rural Program for three days. On my first evening there, I was lucky enough to attend a mental health event with guest speakers Shane Webcke and Wayne Bennett from the Brisbane Broncos.

On Day 2, I conducted cultural safety sessions with the students. Another activity myself and other staff and students did was a puzzle box game, this showed how well students worked together and co-operated. My team won.

At the end of Day 2, staff and students and special guests participated in a Yarning Circle, called 'The Ties That Bind Us'. One of the special guests was a reporter

for ABC, she brought along her son who played his guitar and sang us a song. He had a beautiful voice and spoke about good mental health to the students.

To date, I have attended many meetings and had meet and greets via Zoom.

I attended a Lecture by Professor Tracey Bunda at UQ St Lucia Campus around Indigenising Curriculum. I was very fortunate to meet Bronwyn Fredricks, the Pro Vice Chancellor of Indigenous Engagement on the night and have photographs taken with her and Professor Bunda.

As the year is winding down, I look back and reflect on what a great couple of months I have had with the SQRH team. It has been a big learning curve. Staff have been supportive from all our hubs. Director, Geoff Argus is passionate about working more culturally with Indigenous peoples, organisations and communities, so I feel I am in the right spot and I am looking forward to the future with SQRH.



INDIGENOUS ART HANGS PROUDLY IN SQRH CLINIC

Staff and students had the pleasure of hosting Uncle Colin Jones, Chair of Carbal Medical Services, to hang his artwork at the SQRH Toowoomba Health and Wellness Clinic.

Our Health and Wellness Clinic students spent the morning listening to the story behind each of Uncle Colin's pieces as well as an insight into his rich life experiences.

AN EYE OPENING EXPERIENCE INTO BIRTHING ON COUNTRY

Out of the 30,000 midwives we have working across Australia, 300 of them are Indigenous. This was a hard truth Midwifery Clinical Educator Telia Simpson came to learn at the Best Start to Life conference in Alice Springs in October.

The conference was an opportunity for around 270 health professionals, researchers, academics and delegates from across Australia to showcase new research and ideas, and to network and invest in a shared vision to address inequities in birthing services for First Nations mothers and babies.

Telia said it was a very valuable learning experience with the opportunity to witness a smoking ceremony for a baby.

"I'm looking forward to implementing the learnings and the inspiration I left Alice Springs with," Telia said.



A DEEP DIVE INTO REMOTE NURSING

For two weeks, Nursing Clinical Educator Kate immersed herself in remote nursing in the picturesque Katherine in the Northern Territory as part of the Transition to Remote Area Nursing course run by the Centre for Remote Health.

Kate embarked on an eye-opening journey where she learned about the history of the people and the area, all while gaining practical skills for triage, plastering and suturing in remote settings.

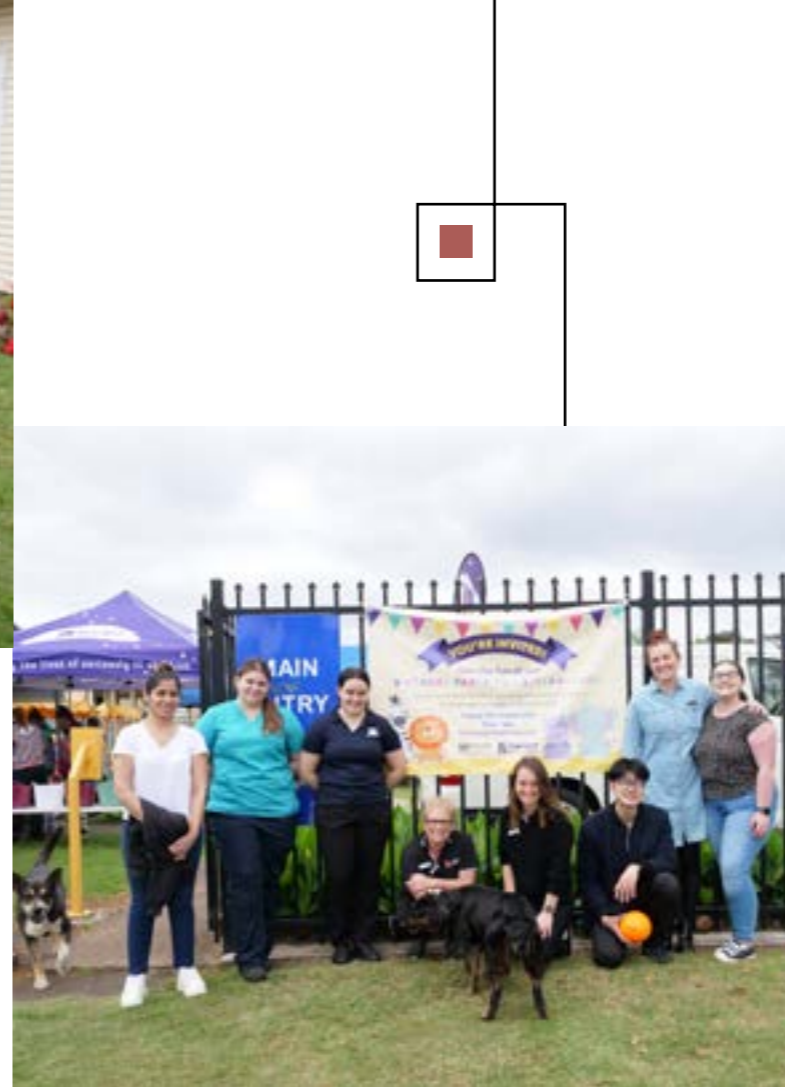
Kate said the biggest take home of the course was a better understanding of Indigenous people and the challenges they face to manage their health.

"The main message I will pass on to the SQRH staff and students will be about how we communicate with Indigenous communities, which is to be inclusive. We can't be thinking up great ideas and projects without any consultation. A blanket approach doesn't work," Kate said.

"Each individual community needs to be consulted separately to see what their needs are for it to have any real benefit."



CHERBOURG KIDS PARTY WITH IMPORTANT HEALTH CHECKS



SQRH were fortunate to be involved in the birthday party for three-year-olds again this year, which was another success in engaging the community and more importantly, the children, with local health care services.

Held at the Cherbourg hospital grounds, the kids were treated to games, healthy snacks and birthday cake with Captain Starlight and his crew providing plenty of entertainment.

This day is important for the health services and local community to strengthen relationships and foster positive experiences. The results being parents/carers and children learning more about their health and accessing services and treatment if needed prior to the children starting school.



KATE BEYER Clinical Educator (Nursing)

The birthday was coordinated by a number of services including Darling Downs Health, The Starlight Foundation, Cherbourg Council, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Fire Service, Cherbourg Regional Aboriginal & Islanders Community Controlled Health Service and SQRH.

Multiple health services were represented this year including Deadly Ears, DDHS Oral Health, Child Health, Dietetics, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Psychology and Social Work. Along with two of our SQRH Clinical Educators and health students from many of these disciplines, we conducted informal health assessments with the children in a fun and playful way to minimise stress for the children and their parents/carers.

Children can often experience stress or anxiety when visiting a health facility and being around strangers, which can hinder the ability of the health professionals to identify developmental milestone delays.

The purpose of the day was to identify any children that might need some follow up with health professionals, in a less confronting way.

It was a long day for our SQRH clinical educators and students as we travelled from Toowoomba, leaving very early in the morning and getting back late in the afternoon.

With many of the students having not had any experience or exposure to children's health or Indigenous health throughout their placements, it was a great learning opportunity for them with positive feedback from all involved.

Seats in our cars to travel to this event are hotly contested with this event being particularly popular with our students and clinical educators.

Starlight Foundation and Darling Downs Health Service are keen to continue with this event in the future and we are now in discussions about running this program elsewhere in our region.



PILOT UNDERTAKEN FOR GROUPS4HEALTH TO COMBAT SOCIAL ISOLATION



MARYANNE LONG Clinical Educator (Social Work)

Feedback from Health and Wellness Clinic participants over the previous three years reflects their experience of social isolation and the resultant debilitating experience of diminished social connection and loneliness.

Participants describe this experience as impacting negatively on the quality of their day-to-day life experience and self-management of their chronic disease.

This anecdotal feedback is supported by research evidence which tells us not only that one in four Australians are lonely, but also identifies loneliness as particularly challenging for older adults who experience later life transitions (employment, relationship status, family, accommodation, relocation) and may place them at increased risk of chronic disease and disability. In terms of disease burden, loneliness is viewed as increasing the risk of premature death by 30 per cent.

In response, we collaborated with students to review multiple strategies to strengthen the 'social connection' pillar

of student led clinic interventions in the Health and Wellness Clinic.

The literature review recommended consideration of psychosocial approaches as conventional approaches to addressing social isolation and loneliness have focused on treatment of symptoms (e.g., depressed mood), often with limited success.

Working with UQ's Professor Cath Haslam and her team, Health and Wellness Clinic staff and students undertook training in UQ's small group based intervention program, GROUPS 4 HEALTH (G4H) which targets social disconnection and loneliness.

Subsequently pilot programs were run in both semesters in 2022.

Using the G4H tools, students worked alongside Clinical Educators to support participants to construct an alternate group-focused narrative to open up new options for developing richer social networks.

Engagement levels were high with participant feedback and formal evaluation suggesting a positive impact. Participants advised that they had

developed a detailed plan to extend their social network. Further, it was their intention to work to maintain extra group based social connection post program as they now recognised the value of positive and high-quality social ties within groups in community.

Social Work and Psychology students uniformly noted a positive interaction within the small group experience. Students reported that both exposure to the G4H theoretical framework (social identity theory and self-categorisation theory) and the small group in vivo format had extended their learning outcomes in the social connection space.

The G4H group headed by Professor Cath Haslam has won (UQ) Health Research Accelerator HeRA funding for a five year GROWTH (Groups and Relationships to Optimise Wellbeing and Health) study to extend interventions to manage loneliness.

Excitingly, SQRH is one of eight academic and community partners to support Cath and her team to pioneer a new integrated, sustainable community-focused approach.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY KIDS IN THE OUTBACK



CHRISTIE-ANNE HUNTER Deputy Director - South West

SALLY GORMAN Clinical Educator (Nursing) - South West

SQRH and Charleville and Western Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH) have partnered together in 2022 to strengthen clinical service delivery and education provision.

SQRH are working alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners to develop and provide a healthy outback kids program to the local community. This program focuses on the first 5000 days of life and links women, families, and young children with local health services during this critical stage.

We are working together to build strong foundations for future physical health, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing.

The partnership has been invaluable, bringing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner, the Clinical Educator for Nursing, and members of the community together to identify, gain a greater understanding and provide support for local community needs.

Key priority areas of the program include maternal health and behaviour throughout pregnancy, child health and developmental checks, nutrition, healthy relationships, enhancement of confidence and the capability of families and social environments to support child development and better health outcomes.

Further support is provided as required, through engagement with parents and carers in the early identification of physical, developmental, social and emotional needs to support timely referrals and access to intervention with local health care services and visiting specialists, promoting population health through prevention of avoidable illness and disease.

The healthy outback kids' program will continue with the recommencement of the 'Mums & Bubs' program early in 2023.

SQRH and CWAATSICH will continue to collaborate with the local community to find innovative ways to engage with families and provide children with an annual health check and age-appropriate healthy outback screening.



Judi from CWAATSICH and Sally from SQRH are developing a close working relationship to strengthen outcomes for the community.

SNAPSHOTS



SQRH staff held a movie night in Charleville for students in the area.



The Brisbane Broncos visited the SQRH centre in Charleville and tried their hand at nursing.



Health students in Roma cooked up a storm with Jamie's Ministry of Food cooking classes.



Senior Manager - Operations Clare Schonfeld was awarded the Leadership Award for UQ's Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences. Congratulations Clare!

HELPING PEOPLE LIVE THEIR HEALTHIEST LIVES

HEALTH AND WELLNESS CLINIC LEADING THE WAY IN INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION



FROM THE HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC

DAYLE OSBORN Clinic Coordinator, Clinical Educator (Nursing & Mental Health Nursing)

The SQRH Toowoomba Health and Wellness Clinic (HaWC) has continued to go from strength to strength in 2022.

Now over three years operating out of the site on Baillie Henderson Hospital campus, the student led clinic continues to deliver health and wellbeing services for people with risk for chronic disease and provide a unique interprofessional placement experience for students.

Students from exercise physiology, physiotherapy, social work, psychology, dietetics, and nursing delivered services to improve people's movement, nutrition, social connections, and enable positive behaviour change.

Program participants continued to benefit from personalised plans tailored to their individual health goals.

With COVID-19 continuing to have an impact this year, telehealth delivery continued to provide an option for those participants unable to attend in person for some sessions.

Building on the formal program evaluation in 2021, the clinic expanded services offered during 6 and 12 month check in appointments.

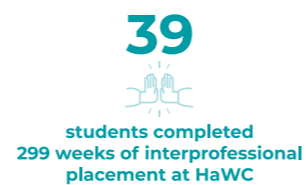
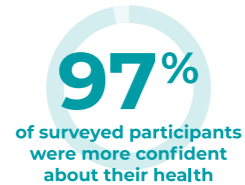
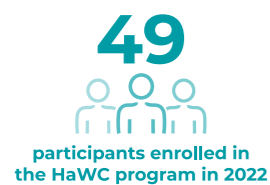
Program enhancements included 're-energise' exercise, nutrition and motivation sessions which were well received by returning participants.

Referrals into the program have continued to increase with many hearing via 'word of mouth' of the benefits of the program.

100% of participants completing the feedback survey in 2022 said they intend to maintain the healthy behaviours recommended at HaWC.

The clinic staff and students look forward to seeing these participants back for their 6 and 12 month re-energise check in appointments and celebrate their continued efforts in living their healthiest lives.

CLINIC STATISTICS:



On average, participants who completed the program:

- Increased the distance they walked in six minutes by 42 metres
- Improved their reported quality of life across both physical and psycho-social domains



Participants expressed that they:

- Appreciated contributing to learning for students
- Valued the connections made with fellow participants
- Felt a more positive attitude towards exercise



Students

- Students identified this experience as a diverse learning opportunity, in a positive environment that increased their confidence and understanding of how all professions can work collaboratively.

Participants said...

- "I feel less weighty, and my mental health has improved. I am happier."
- "I feel better in myself."
- "This is a 'one stop shop'."
- "I would like to say how much this program has helped me. Not just with working out in the gym, which I absolutely love now, but also the way I eat, the way I think, the way I see myself now and in the future. I am so grateful that I was able to do the program."
- "I didn't think I would make it past the first week but I did. Now I am going to keep the routine going. My family and friends have noticed such a change in me over the last four months. All I can say is WOW."

Students said...

- "It is a great environment, both supportive and full of educators with great knowledge and compassion. Great opportunity to collaborate with other professions and be able to provide patient centred care in a holistic approach."
- "The IPP is a very valuable and unique experience to have when so early on in your career. It has taught me skills that I had not had before."
- "Quite literally one of the best experiences of my life. As a student I felt valued and felt like I had a voice and was able to express my ideas in a safe environment. The student-led aspect allowed me to enhance my confidence more than I thought possible. I developed lifelong friendships and mentor relationships. I will never forget my time here and thank you to the SQRH team for making me feel valuable."

CARDIAC AND PULMONARY REHABILITATION COLLABORATIONS CONTINUE TO CHANGE HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY



STEVE WOODRUFFE
Clinical Educator (Exercise Physiology)

In 2022 the collaborations between SQRH and the Toowoomba Heart Care Team and the Toowoomba Hospital Respiratory Team continued to deliver high quality outpatient Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation services to Darling Downs Health patients.

The program was co-facilitated by SQRH Exercise Physiology Clinical Educators Kate Bell and Steve Woodruffe and Physiotherapy Clinical Educator Emily Rendell. The delivery of the program has a strong student-supported focus with University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland Clinical Exercise Physiology students actively involved in the delivery of both programs. Nursing and Psychology Clinical Educators and students also supported delivery of the program throughout the year.



JODY MCLEOD, UNISQ

The experience I have gained in the cardiac rehabilitation program has increased my knowledge of the heart and health complications which may occur regarding the heart. I have had the invaluable opportunity to develop the skills required to provide a complete exercise assessment and program to clients whilst under the guidance and supervision of a qualified Exercise Physiologist.

CARDIAC REHABILITATION

2022 marked the third full calendar year of co-delivery of the Cardiac Rehabilitation program.

In December a review of patient outcomes for the preceding 12 months was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the program. This was specific to patient's changes in quality of life, fitness and physical activity levels.

A total of 91 people commenced the program this year. Of those who commenced, 49 completed the program, representing a completion rate of 54 per cent, which is above the state average for 2020 of 41 per cent.

Based on two measures of quality of life: 'how would you describe your health at present?' and 'how would you describe your mood at present?', 48 per cent and 46 per cent respectively had identified an improvement over the course of the program.

Several indicators demonstrated an improvement in the participants' physical activity levels. The number

of participants completing guideline recommended exercise improved by 50 per cent. The median six minute walk test distance improved from 406 metres to 463 metres. This measure was endorsed with 79 per cent of patients identifying that their fitness had improved.

PULMONARY REHABILITATION

After commencing in August 2021, this year marked the first full calendar year of co-delivery of the Pulmonary Rehabilitation program.

Unfortunately, the lingering threat of COVID-19 variants impacted the ongoing delivery of the program throughout the year with a delayed commencement in April and an extended mid-year break from July to August due to health service restrictions on vulnerable patient movement.

Despite this, 2022 was a successful year for patient attendance with 25 patients attending at least one session. Ten of these participants completed the full eight-week program and at least nine

or ten patients will return in 2023 to complete their program.

Those that completed the program improved their six-minute walk distance by an average of 36 metres, with a range of 18 to 130 metres.

Patients also completed a quality of life assessment prior to commencing and afterwards. Participants who completed the program improved by nine points, with the minimum score of zero at the best and the maximum score of 40 as the worst.

POSITIVE SUCCESS STORIES

The feedback from patients attending both programs is always strongly positive.

Patients are grateful for the opportunity to receive high quality care from an experienced team of health professionals.

Patients also acknowledge the important role that students play as part of the delivery of the program, both in the improvement of themselves and the teaching and training opportunity for the students.

CARDIAC REHAB AT A GLANCE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Toowoomba Heart Care Team**
Joanne Thomae
Tim Brouwer
Jacinta McCartney
Lou Wilson
Ana Roeger
Jono Kelly
- Toowoomba Hospital Respiratory Team**
Carolyn Rae
Sarah Earle



CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS

FROM 2018 TO 2022:

33,874

PLACEMENT WEEKS

6,600

PLACEMENTS

1,607

ATTENDANCES AT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

762

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ATTENDED ASPIRE2HEALTH



2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

HIGHLIGHTS

ESTABLISHMENT

- The SQRH board was established.
- Established temporary offices in Toowoomba and Charleville.
- Student accommodation established in Toowoomba, Kingaroy, Chinchilla, Goondiwindi, Charleville, Roma and St George.
- The first student placements supported by SQRH took place.
- Partnered with the University of Toronto in Roma and Toowoomba to deliver Enhancing Health Professionals in Interprofessional Care.
- 23 SQRH staff recruited.

DEVELOPMENT

- The \$1.3 million refurbishment of our Toowoomba Training Centre at Baillie Henderson Hospital was completed.
- Funding for a new centre in Charleville was announced.
- Toowoomba Health and Wellness Clinic established.
- First supervision sessions and interprofessional student workshops conducted.
- MOUs established with service providers.

GROWTH

- The sod turning, build and opening of the SQRH Charleville Clinical Education Centre occurred. The build was completed by August.
- COVID-19 commenced and we moved the Health and Wellness Clinic in Toowoomba to a Telehealth clinic.
- 1476 student placements supported across the region.
- Partnered with Health Workforce Queensland for the Grow Rural South West program.

ADAPTATION

- The Charleville Staying on Your Feet falls prevention and balance program kicked off.
- Extended placement summit for universities and service providers.
- The first Aspire2Health school sessions were held in Charleville.
- Solar panels were installed on the SQRH Charleville Clinical Education Centre.
- Joined the Nursing Allied Health Graduate Outcome (NAHGOT) tracking study.

EXPANSION

- Chinchilla and St George expansion funding announcement was made.
- Commenced establishment of the Chinchilla Aged Care Education and Training Hub in partnership with Southern Cross Care Queensland.
- The St George Allied Health Education and Training Hub commenced establishment in partnership with Goondir Health Services.
- Supported 7691 weeks of health student placements.
- 42 SQRH staff employed in total.

STUDENTS EXCEL WITH INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION



WORKSHOPS DELIVER CAREER SKILLS FOR EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

KIRSTEN MIDDLETON Clinical Educator (Allied Health) – South West

The Clinical Education team delivered eight Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE) to 50 students on clinical placements across the South West in Charleville, Roma and St George.

Students showed great enthusiasm and collaboration to learn more about interprofessional practice, and how this is essential for best health care, especially in rural health.

The topics covered included role clarification, effective communication, team functioning, conflict resolution and patient centred care. The students were able to consolidate their learning escaping from the briefcase at the end of the day. SWIPE workshops are a great way to provide our future rural health workforce with the key skills in interprofessional collaborative practice and are thoroughly enjoyed by the students and clinical educators alike. Thank you to our partner organisations for supporting student attendance at these workshops.



NEW BRIEFCASES FOR ESCAPE ROOM EXERCISES

KATE BEYER Clinical Educator (Nursing)

The popularity of our Escape Room in a Briefcases continues to grow. They have travelled many kilometres this year across the Darling Downs and South West.

The briefcases continue to be a popular activity with our students as they consolidate their knowledge of Interprofessional Practice. Students on a rural placement have had the opportunity to participate in the escape room in a briefcase activity as part of the SWIPE program.

The activity is based around a clinical scenario yet the students do not need any clinical knowledge to solve the puzzles. They just need to bring a curious and open mind to find success with solving the puzzles and reaching the end with their team.

Our Clinical Education team has embarked on a full research project with the Escape Room in a Briefcase which will run over a two year period. The key areas they are investigating are its success in consolidating learning of interprofessional principles and facilitating teaming skills all within a rural context. Our clinical education team continue to promote the activity within professional circles with the most recent presentation delivered by Pharmacy Clinical Educator, Lucy Parker at the Society of Hospital Pharmacists Medication Management Conference, which was well received.

Due to the positive outcomes from the pilot study in 2021, we were keen to have more briefcases developed to provide us with more flexibility to run the activity across the SQRH footprint. We have been able to find a local provider to build four more briefcases by mid 2023.

Pauline's Quilter's World (PQW) is a local business that has international recognition in the quilting world. But with their engineer, Simon on board their team, they had the skills, knowledge and equipment to design and build us what we needed.

Our Escape Room in a Briefcase working group has thoroughly enjoyed working with Simon and Pauline as we have worked on creating the new briefcases.

Currently we have one new briefcase ready to go with three more due by the end of June 2023. Each briefcase is trialled in real time with students to ensure the timing and functionality of all the parts and we have greatly appreciated the help of the students for their time and valuable feedback during this process. Needless to say, look out students – there are some fun times coming your way in 2023!

A WORD FROM SWIPE STUDENTS

- “Fantastic and valuable learning experience.”
- “It was a great experience. I learned a lot. It helped me gain insight into diverse roles.”
- “The workshop encouraged me to increase my confidence in collaboration.”



SKILLS FOR SUPERVISORS SUPERCHARGED



NICOLA COTTER
Deputy Director – Darling Downs

Supervision skills have been not only supercharged but mastered this year as the SQRH clinical education team expanded their suite of education.

In response to the needs of student supervisors in the region, the team developed a masterclass level suite of workshops which compliment and build upon the 'Supercharge Your Supervision Skills' workshops.

Workshops have been offered regularly online and are appropriate for any discipline.

In addition to the masterclass workshops, the interprofessional collaborative practice and education modules have been further expanded to allow even more flexibility in delivery to teams across the region.

A series of weekly 1.5 hour interprofessional collaborative practice workshops were completed by a large group of St Vincent's Private Hospital Toowoomba (SVPHT) nursing and allied health staff.

Allied Health Team Leader Wendy Callcott said, "Interprofessional training provided a comprehensive platform for allied health and nursing staff at SVPHT to develop greater understanding of each other's roles, and to collaborate in a number of hospital project initiatives. The fortnightly sessions, facilitated by the SQRH team were well structured and informative. Thanks so much SQRH."

Hannah, an attendee, said, "I found interprofessional training very comprehensive. It gave me a fresh enthusiasm to work more closely with the whole hospital team with a patient centred care mindset. Loved it!"

The culmination of the series was presentations of interprofessional projects which the participants are now working to implement throughout the hospital. This was a rewarding and exciting opportunity for the SQRH team to see their work playing out into real world team functioning, making a difference to how healthcare workers contribute to patient outcomes and their own work satisfaction.



SQRH clinical educators delivered interprofessional workshops at St Vincent's Hospital, Toowoomba.

MASTERING TELEHEALTH: ENABLING ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE

CHRISSIE O'CONNELL Clinical Educator (Speech Pathology)



SQRH, in collaboration with The University of Queensland's Centre of Research

Excellence in Telehealth and Centre for Online Health, released online education modules in 2021 that are designed to boost the skills and knowledge of health professionals and health students in using telehealth services.

With a growing expectation for health professionals and health students to be proficient in telehealth, this education program provides learning opportunities about best practice, service development, and the effective use of telehealth.

Health professionals across the University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service have accessed these modules and also participated in practicums offered by SQRH on completion of the online modules.

The practicums have enabled health professionals from a diverse range of disciplines and experiences to share their personal experiences, troubleshooting strategies, and discuss ways to enhance their delivery of healthcare via telehealth.

Throughout 2022, the University of Southern Queensland Nursing program, recognising the importance of learning about telehealth, enrolled all students completing their Transition to Rural and Remote Practice course into these modules.

Learning about telehealth through these modules creates a strong foundation for their clinical skills that will enhance their clinical placements and their future careers in rural and remote communities.

Additionally, students on placement in the Darling Downs and South West, including the Health and Wellness Clinic, participated in this training.

Exercise Physiology students have been able to demonstrate these new skills within the clinic and the Staying on Your Feet program – a telehealth program delivered to people from the Charleville community.

Telehealth is an essential component to health service delivery and enables increased access to healthcare for everyone.

These education modules enhance best practice and support both students and health professionals to gain important knowledge and skills and prepares them to deliver effective telehealth services across our health services.

SNAPSHOTS



SQRH staff and students donned their purple outfits and ate delicious purple cupcakes to honour Wear It Purple Day on August 26, celebrating diversity and young people from the LGBTIQ+ community.



In September, we checked in with each other for R U OK Day.



In September, we wore our favourite jerseys to raise awareness for organ donation on Jersey Day.



In April, we welcomed UQ Vice-Chancellor Professor Deborah Terry AO to the Toowoomba Health and Wellness Clinic. Dayle Osborn, Clinic Coordinator gave Professor Terry a tour of the Clinic where she was able to meet some of the students undertaking placement.

SMILES ALL ROUND FOR STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM



SOUTH WEST

HANETTE NEETHLING Student Support Coordinator – South West

The year started with excitement as the new Roma Hospital Student Accommodation Precinct opened its doors to students and SQRH increased its capacity from seven rooms to ten rooms in Roma.

Students based in Charleville had a few opportunities to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the Royal Flying Doctor Service base and be involved in the Charleville Career Expo in March 2022.

All students loved their welcome packs with SQRH merchandise as a warm introduction to their new placement homes.

We kept regular communication with students to ensure they felt supported throughout their placement and in communities.

COVID-19 kept everyone on their toes and made for some tricky logistics to ensure students were isolating and kept as comfortable as possible if they became unwell. Quite a few contactless care packages and grocery shops had to be delivered to students who were unwell.

GROW Rural was another event in Charleville where members of the local community and SQRH staff shared their rural and remote outback stories with students on the pathway. Students reported that those stories were very inspiring and gave them pause for thought to consider a rural career.

Two allied health students who completed placements in Charleville liked the rural lifestyle so much that they decided to make it home and took up positions at the Charleville Hospital and Lifeline.

We look forward to expanding in 2023 and supporting more students in the South West.



Our houses in Charleville were filled with positive energy from our students on placement through the year.



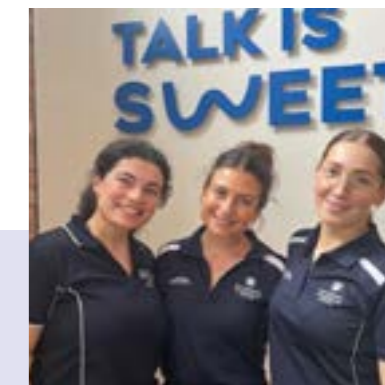
Nursing student Zoe loved Charleville Hospital.



Students from our two Kingaroy houses enjoyed a trivia and pizza night to get to know each other.



UQ pharmacy students had a blast while on placement in Kingaroy together.



UQ dietetics students explored local cafes in Toowoomba while on community placement.



DARLING DOWNS

CI-AHN VOGLER Student Support Coordinator – Darling Downs

The Darling Downs was abuzz with new rooms and more students than ever to support while on rural placement.

We added nine new rooms to the Darling Downs region in 2022. This included five in Toowoomba and four in Chinchilla.

We held a pizza and trivia night in Kingaroy, which was long awaited after not being able to hold events for so long. The students had a great night with a 'house vs house' competition with quizzes like 'name that neck' featuring photos of famous celebrities' necks. The night gave students a chance to get to know each other more and take some well-deserved time out from their busy studies. The trivia night also gave us a chance to talk to the students further about any issues they may be facing and to hear ideas and suggestions from them to implement in our processes or to pass on to Clinical Educators or placement teams. We look forward to holding more events like this in 2023 to help students enjoy their rural experiences even more.

We also left trivia boxes in each house for them to hold their own trivia nights together.

To support friendships and connections, we have introduced 'get to know you' boards in the student houses. These are a great ice breaker where students can write fun facts about themselves for their fellow housemates to read. We also ask them what they would like to do in the area and many housemates find they have a goal in common they can do together.

We added new kitchen items such as hand mixers, sandwich presses, blenders and French presses, making sure students have everything they need in their home away from home.

We always welcome suggestions from students so we have also left suggestion boxes in each house. We have seen some great feedback coming through and new ideas to implement in 2023.

The new house in Chinchilla had a fresh coat of paint, with extra lighting installed and furniture set up, ready for students in the new year.

In 2023, I look forward to developing our student support systems and processes further to support the expansive growth of SQRH. With the number of students we will see in the future in our regions, we want their experience to be one to remember.

SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT



ASPIRE2HEALTH GETS EVEN MORE INSPIRING IN 2022

NICOLA COTTER Deputy Director – Darling Downs

Aspire2Health continues to inspire high school students right across the SQRH footprint to pursue a health career.

A total of 260 students participated from Toowoomba to Charleville, seeing the team getting out and about on some long, straight dusty roads, doing what they do best; inspiring careers in health.

The program underwent yet another expansion this year by hosting the inaugural event in St George. This now means that all three major hubs in the South West have their own event meaning students don't have to travel nearly as far to participate.

The program also underwent an update to add consistency across the events and ensure that every minute of the program is

utilised to offer the most relevant, real life experience to students.

Once again though, one of the major highlights for the team was the road trips, with not only SQRH colleagues but the collaborative partners including Rural Medical Education Australia and the University of Queensland's Rural Clinical School.

This year the team were also lucky to welcome along University of Southern Queensland, Bachelor of Nursing student ambassador Annabelle who joined the road trip for most of the rural events. Annabelle took on the adventure with great enthusiasm and by the end of the 13 workshops across the region, was just like another team member, inspiring the future generation towards a rewarding career in health.

FAIRHOLME COLLEGE PUT SKILLS TO TEST



In 2022 SQRH continued its work with Toowoomba Fairholme College Health Hub students. A 'Rural Health Skills' event was held at the SQRH Toowoomba training facility showcasing Nursing and Allied Health professions. Sessions were delivered by SQRH Clinical Educators and Exercise Physiology undergraduate students, and the Fairholme students had the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and practice a variety of rural health skills.

Feedback from students and some Fairholme parents was very positive with comments including the day reinforced their desire to follow a career path into health.

Pictured are Kate Beyer and a Fairholme student at an intravenous cannulation skill station.

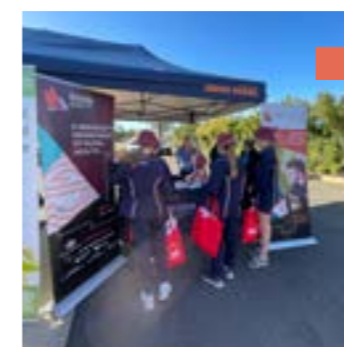
MURGON STUDENTS EXPERIENCE HEALTH CAREERS

SQRH partnered with the Barambah Youth Group to showcase health careers to local Murgon High School students. Students from grade 10, 11 or 12, with an interest in a health career were given an opportunity to try their skills out with a range of activities related to different health professions. The day started with Cultural Awareness training delivered by Indigenous Liaison Officers and Indigenous Health Worker students from Darling Downs Health Service, which really set the scene for an informative and interactive day. Health students from medicine, pharmacy, nursing and social work helped us out on the day and really enjoyed the interactions with the school students.

Feedback from the high school students was very positive and it was great to see some budding health professionals really get involved with the activities.



STUDENT CAREER DAYS IN THE SOUTH WEST



Our team went along to student career days in St George, Roma and Charleville with South West Hospital and Health Service, University of Southern Queensland, University of Queensland and Griffith University and were joined by students on placement in the South West.

Our team provided information on health careers, pathways to health careers and placement opportunities. University health students provided insightful and practical information about their pathways to their university studies to all who visited the stalls.

It was great to see the students' brains ticking about the endless opportunities that rural health has to offer them after they leave school. Hopefully one day we will see their faces working in our rural facilities and clinics!

SPARKS IGNITED CAREERS IN RURAL HEALTH



PLACEMENT TO POSITION

UQ nursing graduate Emily Ebbage-Miller landed a position in Stanthorpe after completing her university placements in the small town, so we asked her to share her experiences that led to this monumental moment.

DID YOU EVER THINK THAT YOU WOULD END UP GOING RURAL?

“Once I did my first placement in Toowoomba with SQRH, I always had a bit of an appeal for rural nursing.

And then definitely, once I did my first placement in Stanthorpe. It got to applying for grad positions and there was no question about whether I wanted to go rural or not, it was just a question of where.”

WHAT IS THE APPEAL FOR GOING RURAL?

“I think the people. The community is very close and everyone is there to support you. And also that you just get to go through so many clinical areas. Your skillset is just huge, it’s not pigeonholed in one area. You get to learn everything. That was the most exciting thing for me, was getting to experience all the different areas. There were endless opportunities.”

HOW WAS THE RURAL EXPERIENCE FOR YOU PERSONALLY?

“My most recent placement out there was probably the best one because I already knew people from being out there the first time. I got to be part of the volleyball team and we all went out to the races. We also went camping and hiking at Girraween National Park, and went to the Stanthorpe Apple and Grape Harvest Festival on one of the first weekends.

I think living in the quarters also made it more fun because there were nurses and doctors and other students out there that wanted to experience the town and what it had to offer.”

TELL US ABOUT YOUR NEW POSITION

“Mid this year, we had to apply for graduate positions, and I currently work at a Brisbane hospital. Everyone kind of expected me to stay on and it was hard to tell them I was applying to go rural to Stanthorpe.

I threw everything at my application and I was offered the graduate position there. They only take two graduates a year and they had around 200 applicants, so I was very happy. I start in March 2023.”



It got to applying for grad positions and there was no question about whether I wanted to go rural or not, it was just a question of where.



WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO STUDENTS CONSIDERING GOING RURAL?

“Definitely give it a shot. I think people don’t really know what opportunities it does have to offer. You get to go in the acute ward, the emergency department and the operating theatre. What other grad would ever get to do that? Whether it is for a graduate position as a nurse or on placement, it just opens up your scope and your experience so much. So I definitely wouldn’t knock it back, I would give it a go. Even if it was just for a small placement, I think they would even get to see what clinical area they like in a metro setting, because you get to experience so much out there.”

ANNABELLE MCADAM

Nursing student, UniSQ

2022 was a year filled with meeting new people, creating unforgettable memories, going to new places and doing what I love.

In 2022 I was fortunate enough to work with SQRH as a Nursing Student Ambassador from the University of Southern Queensland. At the beginning of the year, I was approached by SQRH asking if I would like to participate in facilitating nursing Aspire2Health sessions for school students across the Darling Downs and South West regions.

As a Student Ambassador, I have had the opportunity and privilege to introduce students to the wonders of nursing and careers in health. What made Aspire2Health even more special was introducing these careers to students growing up in rural communities who might not have thought about

the possibility of becoming a health professional but now lighting that spark.

Throughout the year, I accompanied SQRH staff to Chinchilla, St George, Goondiwindi, Charleville, Roma, Stanthorpe and Warwick. These trips opened my eyes to the rural communities and the opportunities available for healthcare professionals out west.

While working with the SQRH team, I not only helped facilitate Aspire2Health sessions but was lucky enough to explore the different towns and some of the iconic landmarks like the Big Bottle Tree in Roma and the Big Red Chair in Charleville.

I have always had an affinity for going rural, and seeing firsthand what some of these towns offer to those studying and working in rural towns has further encouraged me to shift to rural nursing. Working with the team and building interprofessional relationships has

greatly benefited me as I approach my final placements and near the end of my degree.

As I enter the last year of my degree, I hope to complete several rural placements to further immerse myself in the experience of going west with the plan of completing a graduate program in either the Darling Downs or South West region.

In 2023, I will have the incredible opportunity to complete a placement in rural Vietnam, following up with a placement in St George. I look forward to seeing how rural Queensland compares to ‘rural’ in another country.

The experience gained from working with Southern Queensland Rural Health has been invaluable. As I continue my role as a Student Ambassador in 2023, I hope I am lucky enough to work with the team again.



'STAYING ON YOUR FEET' PROGRAM SPREADS ITS WINGS

STEVE WOODRUFFE Clinical Educator (Exercise Physiology)



In 2022 the balance and falls prevention program was expanded to include more student involvement.

Commenced in 2021 with delivery primarily by clinical educators and ad hoc student involvement, the 2022 delivery of 'Staying on Your Feet' was primarily student led. Exercise Physiology students from the University of Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland, under the guidance of Clinical Educators Kate Bell and myself delivered a number of programs via telehealth to participants in Charleville. The program was greatly managed on the ground by Charleville based Clinical Educator for Allied Health, Kirsten Middleton and Administrative Officer Perri Volz.

The program is another example of unique service delivery being championed by Southern Queensland Rural Health to promote health services to rural Queenslanders.

The student-led, telehealth delivered, falls prevention program is an opportunity for

students to develop their clinical skills in telehealth to a community where exercise physiology services are quite limited. Prior to delivering the program, students completed training in telehealth service delivery via UQ online modules and a practical session.

During 2022, three programs were conducted twice-weekly across two five-week periods. A total of 15 Charleville residents participated in the program throughout the year with 12 completing the program. All participants completed a balance and mobility assessment comprising the BOOMER (Balance Outcome Measure for Elder Rehabilitation) and a timed ten metre walk test, to assess current baseline balance and mobility. These tests were repeated at the end of the five-week period. The majority of participants demonstrated an improvement in these measures during the program.

Throughout the program participants were provided with 'Aging with Vitality' printed resources to accompany the online instructions provided by

Students and Clinical Educators. These resources provided a foundation from which the program was prescribed and updated, based on participant feedback and progression.

Participants were also provided with lengths of theraband (resistance band) to assist with completion of activities during sessions and at home. During the program, participants were strongly encouraged to integrate activities into their daily routine at home, such as standing on one leg while the kettle boils and to continue these activities after the program ended.

Participants of the program were very appreciative of the opportunity to participate in such a unique program. Benefits of the program were not limited to just physical improvements in balance and mobility. Several participants cited great improvements in their overall confidence in meeting other people, getting around in their community and a sense of belonging.

Students who co-facilitated the program were also very appreciative of the

opportunity to deliver a program via telehealth to rural participants.

Telehealth delivery presented particular challenges, but pre-program training and close supervision by qualified Clinical Educators ensured a positive learning experience for students.

Students learnt several skills specific to telehealth delivery that they will take with them into future clinical practice.

The program will continue to be delivered into 2023 with plans for the next block to commence in February.



MACKENZIE DURBRIDGE, UQ

Participating in the 'Staying on your Feet' Telehealth program was a fantastic element of an already very valuable placement experience. The program itself was very well organised, and the staff and additional training we received contributed to its smooth running. I was given enough independence to develop confidence and creativity in my prescription of exercises using whatever is available (ie. chairs, food tins), rather than strictly gym equipment, as well as my verbal cueing and technical trouble-shooting skills, but enough supervision that I felt supported in my own learning experience.

These skills have enhanced the quality of my practice in my graduate job as a corporate health Wellness Consultant, and I'm sure will continue to be useful throughout my career as an Exercise Physiologist.

MAKING WAVES IN RESEARCH

SNAPSHOTS



SQRH staff cover a lot of kilometres travelling to visit providers, students and partners. Deputy Director, South West, Christie-Anne Hunter stopped for a photo in front of the water tower on the way to meet with the Augathella Multi-Purpose Health Service (MPHS).

Dr Adam Hulme delivered a keynote speech on the need for systems science methods in rural health at the Darling Downs Health Research Symposium in November.

DR ADAM HULME, PHD Research Fellow

The year gone by has certainly been a busy one for the SQRH Research Team.

Not only has the team contributed valuable new knowledge through existing projects and work, but entirely new possibilities – including the use of systems science methods in rural health – are also emerging on the research horizon!

Dr Tony Fallon has been actively involved in research examining the recruitment and retention of the rural health workforce. Through the Health Workforce Retention Project, a research team comprising investigators from SQRH, our consortium organisations and UQ Rural Clinical School, are examining the retention of public sector health professionals in the SQRH footprint. This information will provide health services with retention benchmarks for health professions and information for planning workforce retention strategies. With the assistance of a grant from the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation, data have been prepared for analysis. Preliminary results from allied

health workforce data were presented at the UniSQ Centre for Health Research Symposium in November 2022 and well received by those in attendance.

In keeping with the recruitment and retention research agenda, SQRH has been actively involved in the Nursing and Allied Health Graduate Outcomes Tracking (NAHGOT) study. This multi-university longitudinal project uses linked data from existing administrative databases to track the professional practice location of graduates from relevant health courses. It will provide evidence about graduates who choose to practice in regional, rural and remote areas. Data collection on this project has begun in earnest, and we look forward to continuing with NAGHOT activities as 2023 rolls around.

The year 2022 was also an exciting one for our Health and Wellness Clinic (HaWC). Established in 2019, HaWC is a student-led interprofessional education clinic that has improved the lives of over 180 people at risk of chronic disease. Major HaWC milestones this year have included

the development of a new research plan, including minimum dataset requirements and full ethics approval, allowing us to undertake a series of valuable studies reporting on key health and behavioural outcomes among our patient cohort. The SQRH Leadership and Research teams warmly welcome collaborations with other external researchers and Honours students from partnering universities to use these data to answer health and health education-related research questions. A special mention goes out to our very own Clara Walker and Dr Bahram Sangelaji and the passionate team of HaWC clinical educators who have worked tirelessly throughout 2022 to bring this vision to life.

Since joining the SQRH research team in April 2022, I have hit the ground running. I have networked with SQRH partners and established new national and international collaborations to advance research in systems and the complexity sciences. Throughout the year, I published journal articles promoting the need for systems science methods in rural health;

presented this work at the Darling Downs Health Innovation and Research Collaborative (DDHIRC) research symposium; and submitted Category 1 research grants to national funding agencies. One grant includes an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Early Career Researcher Award which aims to explore how climate change and extreme weather events may impact the recruitment and retention of the rural health workforce over the next 25 years using systems science approaches.

The research team at SQRH looks forward to 2023 with great anticipation. The promise to build on the effort and contributions made this year is one that will require the same ingredients that have led us to this point – a solid foundation of teamwork, an injection of passion, a pinch of curiosity, and a large dose of genuine care for our regional, rural and remote health workers and communities. We would like to show appreciation for all SQRH staff, stakeholders and partners who have played a role in SQRH's research activities throughout 2022.



SQRH staff in the South West met in Charleville in April to plan for an expansive 2022.



The Australian Rural Health Education Network held its Board meeting at the SQRH office in Toowoomba in May. The Board members enjoyed viewing our facilities and learning about our successes.



NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE CREATES OPPORTUNITIES

UDRH staff from across Australia gathered at the NRHC.



MARYANNE LONG Clinical Educator (Social Work)

The National Rural Health Conference (NRHC) was an exciting opportunity right on our doorstep – enabling ten SQRH staff including members of the Senior Leadership team, Research staff and Clinical Educators to attend the strongly interprofessional conference with sessions arranged around key issues, not around specific professions.

Additionally, SQRH provided financial sponsorship for an interprofessional cross section of 13 students to attend the conference, all of whom had previously identified a potential graduate pathway to working rurally or remotely.

SQRH staff were able to interact with a broad base of delegates including consumers, health and other professionals, students, researchers, and policy makers from all sectors engaged with health and wellbeing: education, transport and housing, economic development, the environment, and community services.

Aligned with NRHC's multisectoral approach, conference themes and presentations reflected a strong focus on the social determinants of health and wellbeing, and on innovative health service delivery models that work well in rural and more remote areas.

Key themes included significant big-ticket items for rural and remote health including:

- human rights,
- indigenous health,
- cultural safety,
- mental health,
- climate and health,
- rural workforce capacity and training,
- arts and health
- and healthcare research and innovation.

A conference highlight was the presentation by SQRH Midwifery and Nursing Clinical Educator colleagues, Helen Goodwin and Dayle Osborn.

Their presentation 'Using virtual reality as an innovative approach to imminent birth rural education' was well received with positive audience engagement.

The presentation has led to conversations around potential future collaborations.

Attendance at the conference provided an unparalleled opportunity for SQRH staff to have face-to-face interaction with our University Department of Rural Health and health service colleagues from across Australia which acted to strengthen existing collaborations and further leverage opportunities for future innovation and research.

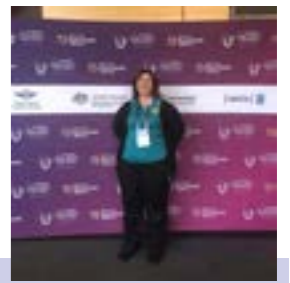
The sponsored students brought a special energy and their student lens to this opportunity to kick-start the development of their interprofessional graduate network.

Unanimous feedback from the student group focused on a unique opportunity to listen, communicate, and connect with an extended group of rural health professionals from across Australia.

SQRH's exhibition booth was a hub of activity with staff fielding enquiries, answering questions, extending networks and distributing SQRH merchandise. It provided the ideal location for SQRH staff and students to share stories and build relationships.

The conference showcased well-researched evidence that live music and art is an essential element in the healing process and supports the general wellbeing of patients, staff and public in hospitals and medical centres.

Delegates were offered multiple opportunities across the conference for 'hands on' engagement in music and arts activities including a drumming workshop, Queensland Ballet Parkinson's Dance group, an artist in residence demonstrating their work and street performances.



RICHELLE WATT, UNISQ

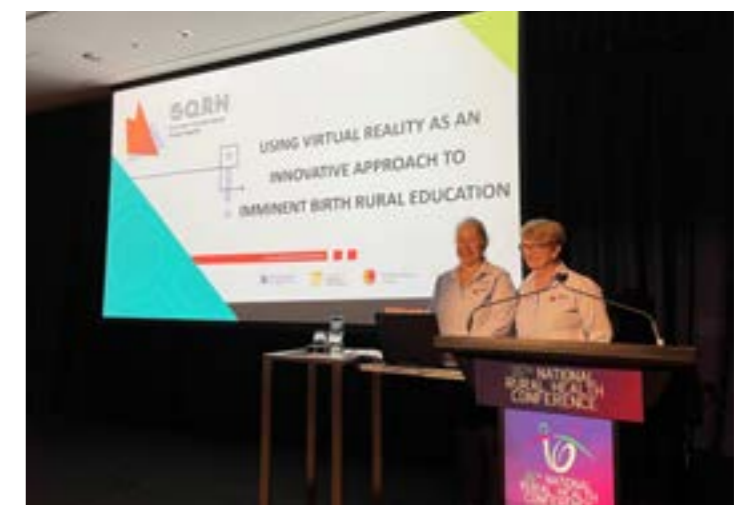
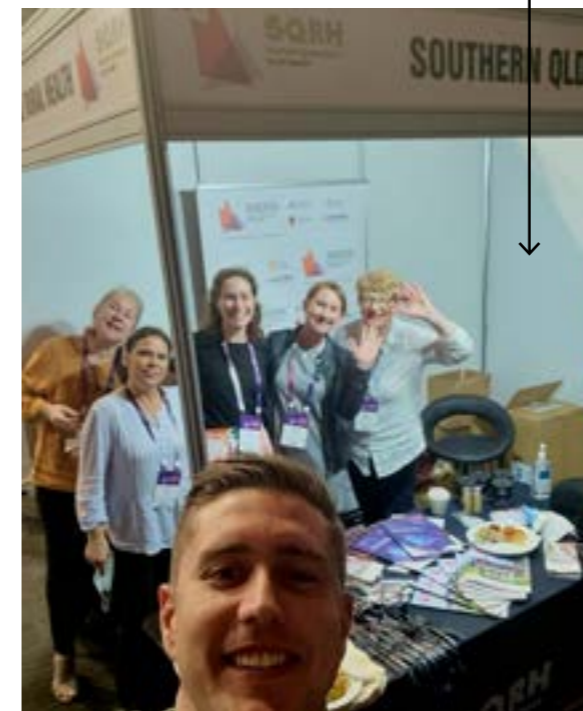
My name is Richelle and I'm a third year nursing student. After completing my Aboriginal and Torres Strait health subject I felt passionate about rural health and was lucky enough to be able to attend the Rural health conference in Brisbane.

This then lead me to self select a placement in Toowoomba at Goolburri Aboriginal health and my upcoming placement at Roma.

I am excited to see where rural health takes me in my nursing career also being able to contribute to improving health care in rural communities.



Deputy Director, Darling Downs, Nicola Cotter met keynote speaker Stan Grant.



Clinical Educators Dayle Osborn and Helen Goodwin presented their cutting edge research regarding the use of virtual reality in education for rural midwifery students, nurses and practitioners.

SHANNON FAGG, UNISQ

I feel so privileged to have been sponsored by SQRH to attend the NRHC. There were so many amazing people that I met and the information and knowledge that I gained through all of the seminars will be invaluable in my study and career. Thank you for the sponsorship and opportunity to grow and develop so that I will be able to make my own contribution to rural health.





KIRSTEN MIDDLETON Clinical Educator (Allied Health) – South West



CHRISTIE-ANNE HUNTER Deputy Director – South West



GROW RURAL PROGRAM PLANTS SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

GROW Rural (South West) is a three year rural immersion program, developed by Health Workforce QLD that exposes students to clinical and social activities within South West Queensland.

Thirteen nursing, midwifery, allied health and medicine students arrived in Charleville to spend four days learning the way of rural life and rural health care in Charleville thanks to SQRH and Health Workforce Queensland in October 2022.

Charleville and Western Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH) CEO Sheryl Lawton, Practice Manager Ellaine Wingate, board members and clients provided valuable insights in Indigenous health care provided within an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Patricia Fraser, CWAATSICH Social and Emotional Wellbeing Liaison Officer and local Bidjara women, provided the students with a bush medicine education

session discussing the traditional uses of tea tree, eucalyptus and gumbi gumbi which all grow widely in the Charleville area. The students had the opportunity to try a gumbi gumbi tincture brewed by a local elder- a widely used traditional medicine.

Bidjara artist, Alara Geebung, led the students through an indigenous painting activity. Alara utilises contemporary methods to achieve traditional designs. Alara kindly spent time showing students how to use traditional fire sticks- with success all round!

The students were engaged in skills stations facilitated by the Royal Flying Doctors Service, SQRH clinical education staff and local private practice clinicians. These stations saw the students follow a patient case from retrieval, as well as skills in inpatient care and discharge, focusing on interprofessional practice, cultural safety and rural health care; unpacking the skills required in working with patients in rural areas.

Students participated in a talking circle with Health Workforce QLD staff, SQRH South West staff and Charleville locals providing insights to life in a remote QLD town- including some of the challenges, but importantly the benefits and joys of rural life.

The students also got to see some of the sights of Charleville- including the famous billies and Cosmos Centre (although the clouds didn't play the game!).

Thank you to Clinical Educators Christie-Anne Hunter, Lisa Baker and Lee Lingwoodock, Student Support Coordinator Hanette Neethling and Administration Assistant Perri Volz who assisted with the organisation and facilitation of the program.

SQRH congratulates the GROW Rural South West cohort, who graduated on the last day of the program in October.

We look forward to working with you in rural health care in the future!

BACHELOR OF NURSING PROGRAM ON TRACK FOR FIRST GRADUATES

SQRH partnered with University of Southern Queensland and the South West Hospital and Health Service to deliver a Bachelor of Nursing program here in Charleville, giving local students the opportunity to develop their home-grown love for rural health.

2022 saw a total of 12 student enrolments from the local area across first and second year with a mixture of online education and face-to-face residential schools here in Charleville. The program was delivered by Jessie Elliot, UniSQ Lecturer and Charleville Program Coordinator, supported by clinical educators at SQRH.

During this time, they were able to participate in hands on learning through skills based training and immersive simulation experiences utilizing the SQRH facility and clinical equipment.

The local program delivery saves students a minimum of 15 hrs travel to and from the nearest university campus and facilitates placement opportunities within the local health service.

Students completed placements across the South West Health Service in a variety of health care settings including hospitals, multipurpose health services, general practice, mental health services and primary and community care settings.

With 12 local students, six residential schools and a variety of first and second year placements across the South West area, the program provides a unique opportunity for students to live, work, study and complete clinical placements within their own rural communities.

The program highlights the commitment from the local area to support the growth of its rural workforce, with the first cohort of students set to graduate at the beginning of 2024. We are looking forward to celebrating this achievement.

What was one great thing about the residential school?

- Learning new things with a great teacher who is very informative.
- Small class size.
- Catching up face to face with educators.
- The hands on approach is invaluable, being able to carry out skills with real equipment in a clinical setting.
- Being able to laugh and learn at the same time.
- I have absolutely loved being part of the first Charleville cohort and would recommend it to anyone considering enrolling!

Tell us why you chose this program?

- I chose to study through the Charleville campus as I believed it would be a great opportunity to learn in my hometown and follow my nursing passion.
- I want to stay with my family but be able to work as a professional here.
- It saves me having to go all the way to Toowoomba and then have to pay to attend res school.
- Closer to home - Thank you for bringing to the South West!

DAVID

Bachelor of Physiotherapy,
University of Queensland
Five week placement,
SQRH Clinic, Toowoomba



I had a five week placement at the SQRH Health and Wellness Clinic in Toowoomba. I was initially hesitant about my rural placement and being so far from home. However, these feelings immediately disappeared upon arrival as I was welcomed with open arms.

My favourite part about my SQRH placement was the strong focus on interprofessional collaborative practice. I got to work together everyday with many different health disciplines including psychology, exercise physiology, dietetics and social work.

Thanks to SQRH I have a much better understanding of these disciplines and their scopes of practice which has made me much more confident with knowing when it is appropriate to refer to these professions.

For anyone wanting to learn about other health professions and experience what it is like to work in an interprofessional team, check out SQRH.

VICTORIA

Bachelor of Midwifery,
University of Southern
Queensland

Eight week placement, Kingaroy



I have always wanted to experience rural placements and finally having this opportunity really concreted my passion to work in rural settings.

My placement experience was a highlight in itself. I was part of Midwifery Group Practice and their first year in Kingaroy and it was great to feel part of a team for my placement weeks.

A huge thank you to SQRH providing accommodation for myself and other students in the same field, it was what I needed. Being away from family and friends was hard, however, living with other students from other universities, we were able to make friendships, share our experiences and debrief if we had had a bad day.

I loved living in a rural setting – the air is fresher; the people are nicer and you get the opportunity to build professional relationships that last.

I searched for local activities to do and took the opportunity to go to those places. We also organised other students from the other student houses to come over for a meal when we could all fit in.

My advice to other students is - just do it! The best thing is, it's only a placement, and you may like it, or you may not, but what an incredible opportunity to find out and do so while you're still a student!

HANNAH

Bachelor of Speech
Pathology, University of
Queensland

Six week placement,
Toowoomba Catholic Schools



For six weeks, I was placed at the Toowoomba Catholic Schools office with three talented speech pathologists, also spending a week travelling out to schools in Cunnamulla, Charleville and Quilpie.

I had no expectations when I arrived my first day, but right from the get go I was greeted by a wonderful team and began working in the Catholic primary schools across Toowoomba. My placement was filled with incredible experiences and I met so many amazing people across the six weeks.

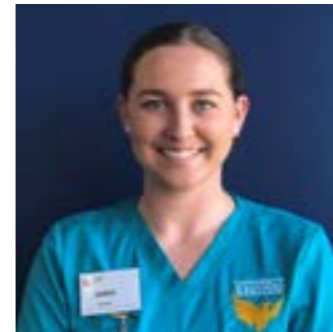
Placement can be incredibly overwhelming, especially being far from home but I am so great full for the support provided by SQRH both with my accommodation and providing access to other students to promote general wellbeing.

Rural placement is a daunting prospect for many, but I cannot highlight enough the rewards it provides, and the lifelong lessons that can be learnt from working in these communities.

SARAH

Bachelor of Nursing,
University of Southern
Queensland

Four week placement,
SQRH Clinic, Toowoomba



SQRH Health and Wellness Clinic is by far the most welcoming place for students. I felt a part of the team straight away and was well supported by all the staff.

Being a mother of three young boys, this was the perfect placement for me. Family friendly hours and regular check-ins from staff to ensure I was coping with the balance.

It was the perfect environment to grow and develop my confidence as a nurse through developing a deeper understanding of health concerns, by then putting it into practice collaboratively with psychologists, exercise physiologists, physiotherapists, dietitians, and social workers.

I believe working interprofessionally impacts people's lives immensely both physically and mentally. What I enjoyed most was being able to connect with individuals and be their safe space to feel comfortable and supported through their health journey.

I even had the opportunity to travel to a rural town alongside the team to deliver education around health care jobs to school students. The opportunities and avenues in rural health are endless, SQRH is the perfect place to start your journey!

GEMMA

Master of Dietetic Studies,
University of Queensland

Nine week placement,
Darling Downs



I embarked on a nine week rural placement with one of my best friends. Although I was a bit nervous about being away from home for so long, I am extremely grateful for the opportunities and self-growth.

The first block was a five week acute care placement based at Warwick Hospital. We also travelled to Goondiwindi, Texas, Inglewood and Stanthorpe to deliver consults. I believe the greatest advantage of a rural placement is not being allocated to a specific ward. I really enjoyed being apart of the collaborative rural hospital team and working closely with all health professionals. I believe the rural acute care experience has significantly developed my skills as a dietitian.

Our second block was a community nutrition placement based between Warwick and Toowoomba Base Hospital where we were able to immerse ourselves in the community. I really enjoyed the more relaxed pace of this placement as we were able to meet locals and work from lovely cafes.

For anyone who is considering a rural placement, I promise you will not regret it. I am extremely proud of myself for completing a nine week rural block of placement and believe it is an invaluable opportunity for any healthcare student who wishes to make a positive impact on the lives of a rural community.

JUSTIN

Bachelor of Psychology,
University of Southern
Queensland

16.5 week placement,
Lifeline Charleville



Having now completed my postgraduate studies and training, I can confidently rate my stint in Charleville as one of my high points in my training.

My confidence in my own abilities was tested from the outset, as one of a handful of people in the town who do the work that I do.

However, the enduring support I received from Lifeline helped me feel comfortable in stretching myself professionally and personally.

Embracing the professional and social life in a town as small as Charleville has also greatly enhanced my learning and development, which would have been less likely had I remained in Toowoomba throughout my Masters degree.

Although I may not be a rural boy at heart, the fact that I am open to returning as part of some form of fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) service, speaks volumes about how much I value my time in Charleville.

LACHIE'S ADVENTURE



“If there is no reason not to, then you just should.”

Having never explored out west before, Lachie's keen sense of adventure was the reason he decided to say 'yes' to a rural speech pathology placement in the outback town of Charleville.

As a third-year speech pathology student at the University of Queensland living in Ipswich, an eight week rural placement meant Lachie could dive deep into some incredible experiences, both professionally and personally.

Lachie said the biggest reason he wanted to go rural was to get as broad an experience as possible.

“I wanted to see as much as I could within the spectrum of speech pathology work,” Lachie said.

“From a career perspective, I wanted a placement that could really touch on every single different aspect.

“But also from a personal perspective, I've never been out west. I've lived in Australia my whole life but I've never really seen this side to it. So I was very curious to see what life is like out here, what you can do and what the people are like. I wanted to have a really cool life experience.”

A BROAD PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Lachie said his rural placement at the Charleville Hospital gave him a chance

to put his education and skills to use across many areas and to find which niche interested him the most.

“I have got to do pretty much everything you can imagine to do with speech. The majority of our case load has been paediatric outpatients in the hospital, working on literacy and speech. Then we will go up to the wards to see inpatients who come in for swallow reviews or communication assessments.

“Every Tuesday we do outreach. We've been to Quilpie, Augathella, and Cunnamulla. When we do outreach, we will travel and be there for the day at the hospital, maybe some home visits, and you can just see anything that walks through the door. We might work with a few returning patients or review patients under the National Preventive Health Strategy or at the aged care homes.”

THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

For his first block placement, Lachie was a little apprehensive about travelling eight hours drive away from his home, but he said he was pleasantly surprised by how much there is to do.

“One thing that surprised me a lot is that you're out kind of in the middle of nowhere, and it's very far from Brisbane, but there has not been a single weekend where it hasn't been busy. There has been so much to do if you put in the effort,” Lachie said.

“One weekend we did a camping trip. We left Friday, went out to Quilpie, camped at the lake, watched the sunset there which was just unreal. The countryside is so isolated, and just so beautiful.

“We got up first thing and drove on to Eromanga which was a further two hours out. And that was really cool to see because it's a tiny little country town and it is the furthest town in Australia from the sea. We went to the pub for lunch and saw the dinosaur museum.

“We also did a hike at Quilpie to a place called Baldy Top. We watched the sunrise from there. It was such a good view of the outback which was really special to see. They have the old Aboriginal carvings and paintings at the top of the mountain.”

A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Lachie said the accommodation has been a highlight considering he has an en suite and a walk-in closet, better than his own set up at home.

“The entire accommodation has been provided and free from SQRH. And it's been really good. I couldn't fault it. I'm currently staying with two nursing students and a psychologist. You have your own area, spacious and it is well equipped in terms of appliances, and pretty much everything you would need while here,” Lachie said.

“Given my placement is a little bit longer, there have been a few people come and

go at the house. It's pretty transient. But everyone has been so cool, easy to get along with. And it just fits in with the community out here, everyone just gets along with everyone.”

A BRIGHT FUTURE AFTER GRADUATION

Lachie isn't sure what life looks like for him after graduates in a year's time but he is keen to keep following his sense of adventure and enthusiasm for helping people.

“From this placement I have been exposed to all the aspects of speech pathology. The part that has interested me the most has been swallowing and the acute care side. I definitely want to explore that more hopefully on future placements. But I've also enjoyed the paediatric work so much. I could also see myself working there. I'm not too sure which part I enjoy the most, but this placement made me realise I enjoy all the work no matter what,” Lachie said.

“This placement has definitely made me consider going rural after graduation. It comes with its difficulties in terms of being away from family and being isolated. But it's also made me realise how easy it is to stay in touch. You're so connected nowadays and the time goes by quick. It really doesn't feel like you're that far out.

“It also made me realise how practical it is in terms of getting home. So many people will go home for a weekend. It's opened my eyes to how easy it can be, so it's definitely something I would consider more now following this placement.”

A SAD GOODBYE

As Lachie finished up his eight weeks away on placement, he said he was so glad he grabbed the experience with both hands.

“I always wanted to do a placement like this just because it was an opportunity I saw and wanted to make it a proper rural placement, which is why I ended up selecting Charleville,” Lachie said.

“But I was a bit apprehensive at the start, like it's a long time to be away. I've realised being here, especially in a place like Charleville which is relatively small, is that if you put a bit of effort in, there's always something to do, and it's always worth doing.

“If there's no reason not to, then you just should.

“I'm so glad I've done that because the things I've seen and the stuff I have learnt and the people I've met, have just been amazing.

“And really, it changes your perspective on things. Having lived and grown up in the city, it's such a different lifestyle.

“The communities are so welcoming and friendly. They take the time to get to know you and you seem them all the time, like the same people at the coffee shop and they remember your name and your order. It's the little things that really make your day.

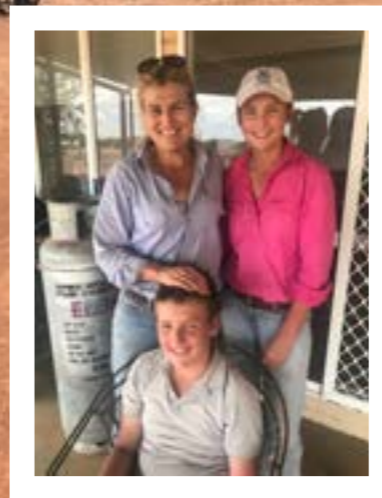
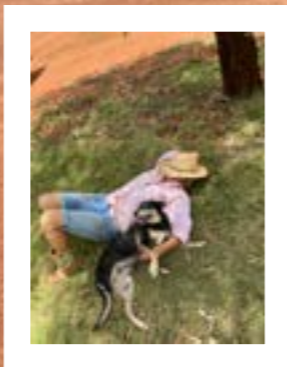
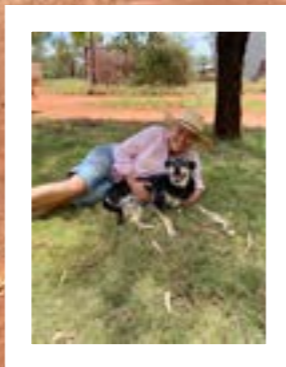
“Somehow it's my last few days, eight weeks feels like forever but it feels like I just got here.

“It's been awesome, really special. Professionally, it's been so beneficial. But it's been the lifestyle change I have appreciated the most. You really do learn so much in eight weeks.”





A LOVE OF THE LAND LEADS TO A CAREER IN RURAL HEALTH FOR ALEX



University of Southern Queensland Master of Clinical Psychology student Alex Donoghue's love for her rural backyard and its people is infectious.

A career as a mental health occupational therapist has led her to expand her skillset to soon become a psychologist to help the people in South West Queensland.

Alex says her preoccupation with how people tick began when she was practising remedial message therapy when she was younger.

"I had a longstanding interest in the body, the mind and the integration of the two," Alex said.

"I was doing a neck release with a lady who had whiplash. As the muscles released, the trauma memory of the accident (which had been held as muscle memory) was also released and she burst into tears. She reported feeling lighter, and more comfortable emotionally and physically. My obsession with emotional processes, their physiology and how to support emotional release was born."

Alex completed her occupational therapy degree in 1994. After working

in Australia and in the United Kingdom in intensive psychiatric care units and forensic settings, Alex settled in South West Queensland.

"I've always been rurally orientated. I grew up in northern New South Wales," Alex said.

"I drifted back to my rural roots and increasingly enjoyed the challenge and reward of working in rural and remote mental health."

Alex is passionate about the mental health of people in the bush, a group that are often isolated and face extreme hardships.

"Human beings are wired for connection. When you step into that space with somebody, you create brain change. There are neurochemicals that are released that have a calming effect. So just being there and getting it before you even open your mouth is helpful," Alex said.

"People can be very charismatic and interesting. There's a real range in the bush in terms of personalities and attitudes. People are naturally resourceful, and I find that inspiring.

"It's important to be client-centred and to meet the client where they are at. That literally may be at the back of a truck. I've

had client sessions at Dirranbandi Truck Stop, it may be over bacon and eggs."

Since 2013, Alex has had a private practice as a mental health occupational therapist in St George, co-located in the St George Medical Centre.

"I decided to go back and get my stripes as a psychologist, just to upskill that little bit to bring those skills to my community.

"It's been ten years part time and I have just a few months to go. That sounds daunting but that's because I did it very slowly."

In 2022, Alex completed a placement doing psychometric assessments, while remotely supervised by a clinical psychologist. The assessments supported GPs, paediatricians, and psychiatrist, informing their diagnoses and treatment and in some cases facilitating access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Alex said she was able to complete the placement in St George, only 130 kilometres away from her cattle property where she lives with her husband and teenage children.

"This speaks to one of the nuances of rural and remote placements, we actually created the placement," Alex said.

"I worked with UniSQ and we recognised that there was a gap and a need for specialist psychological assessment services.

"I had a couple of clients that received a diagnosis of ADHD, ADD and various learning disorders which enabled them to access supports such as the NDIS and medication that was quite literally life changing. It was hard work, but it was very rewarding. I certainly learnt a lot.

"I was happy to source the assessments and to take responsibility for driving the program. The university endorsed it as a placement that was very specific to a psychologist's skillset.

"So it was a collaboration between UniSQ, SQRH, local services on the ground, myself, and my supervisor, Dr Aaron Osmachenko.

"For the end of my studies, I am in Roma with Lumsden Psychology providing much needed psychological supports. This has been a placement filled with diverse opportunities, and rich daily learnings. I have been very well supported.

"Psychologist and Director of Lumsden Psychology Marguerite Lumsden has been a source of great practical clinical knowledge, through supervision with a strong rural lens. Michelle Anifto

from SQRH has also provided me with supervision with a strong focus on the science-practitioner model. My university placement co-ordinator Dr Rebecca Black from UniSQ has always been a phone call away. I have been spoilt surrounded by senior clinicians ready to share their support and knowledge.

"I have found that my university has been really supportive and has actively promoted rural placements.

"They have been prepared to be creative, to find solutions, and have consulted with the community to make sure that they are meeting a need when organising placements. It's not just a placement for a placement's sake."

Alex's story is inspirational for anyone thinking of changing careers or heading back to study later on down the track when life is full of responsibility.

When asked how she feels about the term 'mature age student', she said, "I'll own it, it is what it is."

Alex said that there are difficulties studying later in life, but they can easily turn into positives.

"You have to be assertive, you have to be flexible, you have to take responsibility, you have to be resourceful," Alex said.

"But I think they are professional skills you've got to develop anyway, particularly in rural areas. I think the challenges for mature age students are not greater than for younger students, just different."

With graduation in sight, Alex's future looks bright.

"In the future, I want to pursue my clinical endorsement as a psychologist and expand my mental health OT practice to be a private psychology practice, from operating out of my clinic," Alex said.

"To the best of my knowledge, I will be the only private psychologist west of Goondiwindi, that permanently resides out here."

Alex encourages health students to take the opportunities rural placements or positions can have to offer.

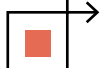
"Be open minded, stay humble and be prepared to be innovate and open to creative solutions to challenges."

"Don't forget to enjoy your surrounds. Stop and smell the roses. There are beautiful sunsets, interesting people, dynamic activities on the weekend like camp drafting.

"If you're going to make the effort, particularly to go west, enjoy it. Enjoy everything it has to offer and get amongst it."



SQRH
Southern Queensland
Rural Health



A COMMONWEALTH-FUNDED UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF RURAL HEALTH **A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:**



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