



SQRH

Southern Queensland
Rural Health

2020

YEAR IN REVIEW

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:



Darling Downs
Health

South West
Hospital and Health Service

1,476

placements in 2020
(10% increase from 2019)



1,018

students



7,133

weeks spent by students
on rural placement

796

attendees at Student Supervisor
Training delivered face-to-face
and online to participants across
QLD and Victoria



**Supporting
nursing,
midwifery &
allied health
students
in rural
placements
across
Southern
Queensland**

With an emphasis on
Interprofessional Education



**students graduate work-ready
for rural practice**



47

rooms for student accommodation
in seven sites across our region

*Students have access to a wide
variety of placement opportunities
within the public health sector,
private health providers, Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Community
Controlled Health Organisations,
not-for profit providers and the
SQRH Interprofessional Education
student-led Health and Wellness Clinic*

119

high school students attended
Aspire2Health sessions



2

main training centres, in
Toowoomba and Charleville, as
well as a satellite office in Roma



34

SQRH staff



SQRH
Southern Queensland
Rural Health

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS



**Darling Downs
Health**



OUR KEY PRIORITIES

SQRH is funded to work across seven key priority areas.

- 1.** Deliver effective rural training experiences for allied health, nursing and midwifery students.
- 2.** Ensure rural training experiences are of a high quality.
- 3.** Develop processes to improve rural student recruitment.
- 4.** Engage with the local community to support the delivery of training to students.
- 5.** Maintain and progress an evidence base and the rural health research agenda.
- 6.** Support improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.
- 7.** Provide regional leadership in developing innovative training solutions to address rural workforce recruitment retention.



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SQRH has adhered to social distancing guidelines in our images however please note some images were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.



ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT

It is with much pleasure that I write my reflections of the incredible, valuable and vital work of Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) during 2020. Very few people fully grasped the impact that COVID-19 pandemic would not only have on the State of Queensland but worldwide, and sadly the pandemic impact continues today.

For the Advisory Board members, like many hundreds of thousands of businesses and organisations in Australia, we quickly learnt about the importance of having reliable, safe, internet service for zoom meetings and at times, weekly early morning meetings to ensure we kept abreast of what was happening for our student placements and for our dedicated staff.

Looking back, we were certainly very fortunate to be living and operating in Queensland. The lockdowns that occurred in our state compared with other states in Australia and of course other countries in the world were minimal, and therefore we were extremely blessed.

However, for many businesses even the reduced periods of lockdown that we experienced in April, May and June to some degree, saw closures and no return

to trading post the lockdown period.

In Australia, we were privileged to have a Federal Government that responded with JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments to help support thousands of struggling businesses and organisations.

At SQRH, with our federal funding in place we were well placed to work our way through the financial pressures that other businesses and organisations had to endure. This still meant that the Advisory Board in consultation with our Director Associate Professor Geoff Argus kept a very close eye on our monthly financial position.

The year 2020 was an extremely successful year for SQRH in many ways that will be covered by other contributors in this year's Review. For me as Chair, a major standout was the successful completion of our Charleville Clinical Training Facility and its highly successful official opening on the 19th November 2020. We can all be extremely proud of this achievement, which came about through vision, co-operation, commitment, dedication and the financial support of the Commonwealth Government, in making this new facility a "Real Game Changer for Rural Health" for years to come.



DEREK TUFFIELD OAM
Independent Chair

**A major standout
was the successful
completion of our
Charleville Clinical
Training Facility**



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Despite the obvious challenges presented to the world in 2020, Southern Queensland Rural Health has (SQRH) continued to grow its presence across the rural health landscape. SQRH staff rose to the challenge of rapidly providing student-led services via telehealth and bringing a range of our rural education workshops to an online format. The strength of the SQRH consortium structure again demonstrated how the strong, collaborative relationship between The University of Queensland (UQ), University of Southern Queensland (USQ), Darling Downs Health (DDH) and South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS) was able to ensure important clinical training opportunities for students were realised throughout the worst of the pandemic in Queensland.

One of the key highlights for 2020 was the construction of the SQRH Clinical Training Facility in Charleville. The facility provides critical infrastructure for the south west Queensland region to ensure that the training experiences for students in outback Queensland are of the highest quality and equivalent to what they have access to in more densely populated regions. Charleville as a community has embraced SQRH since its inception and it is a privilege to be able to contribute to this incredible community by increasing the opportunities for rural health training in the bush in such a welcoming place.

In 2020 we farewelled SQRH Advisory Board Member, Linda Patat, Health Service Chief Executive (HSCE), South West Hospital and Health Service. Linda has been with SQRH since it began in 2017 and has been a fierce advocate

for our University Department of Rural Health. Whilst Linda will be missed, she leaves an incredible legacy in the South West in the improvement of health service delivery and a culture focussed on educating the next generation of rural health professionals. With Linda's departure, we were pleased to welcome Matt Boyd, Acting HSCE for SWHHS onto the SQRH Advisory Board.

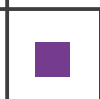
We also welcomed the release of the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program Evaluation and the National Rural Health Commissioner's Report on the Improvement of Access, Quality and Distribution of Allied Health Services in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia. We look forward to seeing the recommendations from these reports implemented to improve the health workforce outcomes for rural and remote Australian communities.

The success of SQRH lies with the dedicated and passionate staff we have within SQRH and the key stakeholders across the region, state and nation. The health professionals who provide rural health services and provide training opportunities for students undertaking rural clinical placement are the key to ensuring we have a work-ready rural health workforce. We are fortunate to have strong relationships with many stakeholders and look forward to strengthening those relationships into the future. I hope as you read our Year in Review, you will see on these pages the breadth of stakeholder support that contributes to growing a highly capable and professional rural health workforce.



The success of SQRH lies with the dedicated and passionate staff we have within SQRH and the key stakeholders across the region, state and nation.

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
GEOFF ARGUS**



BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS



PROFESSOR BRUCE ABERNETHY

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



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

The University of Queensland (UQ) is both one of the four core members of the Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) consortium and the holder of the University Department of Rural Health contract with the Commonwealth. We at UQ are delighted with the progress SQRH has made throughout 2020 and thrilled with the opportunities SQRH has created for our students and staff to gain exceptional rural and regional experience. 2020 by any measure was an extraordinary year and one that, through the COVID-19 pandemic, provided unprecedented challenge at all levels. In that context SQRH's performance in continuing to provide essential clinical training opportunities for the future rural workforce has been exceptional.

Throughout the course of the year The University of Queensland students in the professions of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, audiology, nursing, midwifery, dietetics, clinical exercise physiology, psychology, social work, and pharmacy have undertaken clinical placements in various parts of the Darling Downs and South West HHS footprints. This experience has not only brought the

opportunity of a future rural health career to the forefront of their minds but also helped sharpen their skills and preparation for such a career.

The completion throughout 2020 of the impressive clinical training facility at Charleville and the growing engagement with key stakeholders in both the South West and Darling Downs regions have been clear highlights for SQRH over the past 12 months and both will assist in providing even greater opportunities for students from UQ (and other universities) into the future. As an institution we look forward to working over the coming years with other members of the SQRH consortium to increase the length of the rural training experience for many students – and through that also helping further build health service capacity 'in the bush'.

As has been the case since the formation of SQRH as a University Department of Rural Health UQ values 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 2021.

**SQRH's
performance in
continuing to provide
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exceptional.**





I want to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of all SQRH staff.

PROFESSOR GLEN COLEMAN

Executive Dean,
Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences,
University of Southern Queensland



Despite the turmoil associated with the pandemic, SQRH had another very strong year in 2020. It is remarkable the amount of progress that Director, Associate Professor Geoff Argus, and the SQRH team were able to achieve in the face of so much uncertainty and upheaval. I want to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of all SQRH staff.

One of the immediate consequences of the pandemic was severe disruption to placements for nursing and allied health students across all of our programs. The networks established through our SQRH consortium, and the leadership provided by key members of the SQRH team, were pivotal in supporting our students during this time – both in terms of support for them while on placement, or when placements were disrupted, ensuring that they were able to maintain progress toward completions of their programs of study.

In the face of all the interruptions, SQRH continued to deliver in terms of its core mission of building interest in, and supporting the development of students toward, careers in rural nursing, midwifery and allied health.



The completion of the Clinical Training Facility in Charleville, and its official opening on 19 November, marks a key milestone. With that facility in place, the University of Southern Queensland is now working with South West Hospital and Health Service and SQRH to develop an end-to-end nursing program to be offered from Charleville. This pilot project will support students completing health programs from within their local communities and hopefully provide a template for pursuing this model in allied health disciplines.

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 arising from the SQRH consortium, will lead to stronger workforce pipeline for regional, rural and remote southern Queensland.

BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS



Darling Downs Health

Despite the challenges encountered due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, successful collaboration between SQRH and Darling Downs Health (DDH) staff continued to produce a range of positive outcomes for patients, students and staff in the DDH region.

SQRH and DDH staff worked in partnership to deliver a range of services at the Health and Wellness Centre in Toowoomba in 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions early in the year, Health and Wellness Clinic programs were transitioned to telehealth until on-site programs were able to resume. This innovative adaptation meant that program participants could continue working towards their health goals and students could complete placements as planned. Evaluation of the Health and Wellness Clinic's first year of operation showed that positive outcomes had been achieved for participants and students, with the 68 participants having achieved positive change in two thirds of their health goal and we look forward to building on this work in the future.

Work to support allied health, nursing and midwifery student placements in the DDH region continued in 2020,

including planning and implementation of extended placement opportunities. SQRH staff delivered Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE) sessions to students and supported DDH clinical educators to develop their student supervision capabilities. SQRH and DDH educators worked together to coordinate and facilitate a range of learning opportunities for both students and field educators/supervisors. DDH students were also able to access SQRH student accommodation, which increased access to student placement opportunities in the region.

SQRH and DDH staff worked together to deliver the SQRH Interprofessional Community of Practice, which enables workers in the education and health sectors to share learnings as they seek to implement Interprofessional Education and Practice activities. SQRH and DDH staff also continued to work together on a variety of research projects, and as part of the Darling Downs Innovation and Research Collaborative (DDHIRC). This group seeks to facilitate translation of research outcomes into practice by harnessing collective capabilities and opportunities in the DDH region.



We look forward to building on this work in the future.

ANNETTE SCOTT

**Executive Director,
Allied Health,
Darling Downs Health**





The South West Hospital and Health Service greatly values being a part of the collaboration that is Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) and, despite the unforeseen implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent necessary contingency planning to ensure our communities remained safe, congratulates the team on yet another wonderful year in ensuring rural and remote training experiences remain the highest quality.

It has been an exciting year and we were thrilled to be at the opening of the new SQRH clinical training facility at our Charleville Hospital campus. This will ensure even more students will benefit from exposure to the many and varied opportunities available in rural practice.

We pride ourselves on being leaders and setting benchmarks for delivering

quality rural and remote healthcare and a key part of this is growing our own workforce, as well as ensuring excellent rural placements for students looking to 'go rural' and gain real life experiences in the bush.

The dedicated student clinical placement co-ordinator position within Roma continues to be an important additional support mechanism for students, ensuring seamless integration into local communities for the duration of their placements.

We are committed to the consortium and look forward to continuing to work together in supporting and developing future generations of allied health, nursing and midwifery students for the benefit of rural and remote communities.



MATT BOYD

**Acting Health Service Chief Executive,
South West Hospital and Health Service**

**The South West
Hospital and Health
Service greatly values
being a part of
the collaboration that
is Southern Queensland
Rural Health**



NEW CHARLEVILLE FACILITY OPENS





Having secured funding for a new training facility in Charleville during 2019, SQRH rapidly progressed from blueprints to an official sod turning in March 2020 to construction and finally an official opening in November.

SQRH worked with Project managers Gripfast, architects Struxi and builders McNab to create a centre of training excellence.

The facility, located on the Charleville Hospital grounds, is equipped with clinical simulation rooms, telehealth studios, videoconferencing equipment, consultation rooms, training rooms, outdoor education area and other training resources.

With a significant local workforce sub-contracted to the building (approximately 75%), construction was completed in September and SQRH moved in to begin delivering training and student support.

Amid great community interest, an official opening was held on November 19. Working within a COVID-safe plan, the official opening was a hybrid of virtual and in-person attendance and saw the Federal Member for Maranoa and Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management David Littleproud MP proudly announce the building open for growing and developing the next generation of health professionals.

Minister Littleproud described the \$3 million facility as world class and was delighted to support an initiative that he credited as being a profound example of what rural and regional communities can achieve.

The South West Hospital and Health Service Board Chair Karen Tully was

equally impressed and took the audience on a journey that her grandmother, Sister Elsie Hamilton, began as a young nurse coming to the South West in the 1920s. Mrs Tully reflected that Elsie would warmly approve of the “cocoon of support” offered at the training facility.

The Federal Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government Mark Coulton MP sent a pre-recorded message of congratulations, encouraging South West communities to engage with SQRH on future health workforce improvements.

SQRH Board Chair Derek Tuffield OAM welcomed the 34 in-person and 38 virtual attendees and acknowledged the numerous South West Queensland stakeholders who support SQRH in its endeavours.

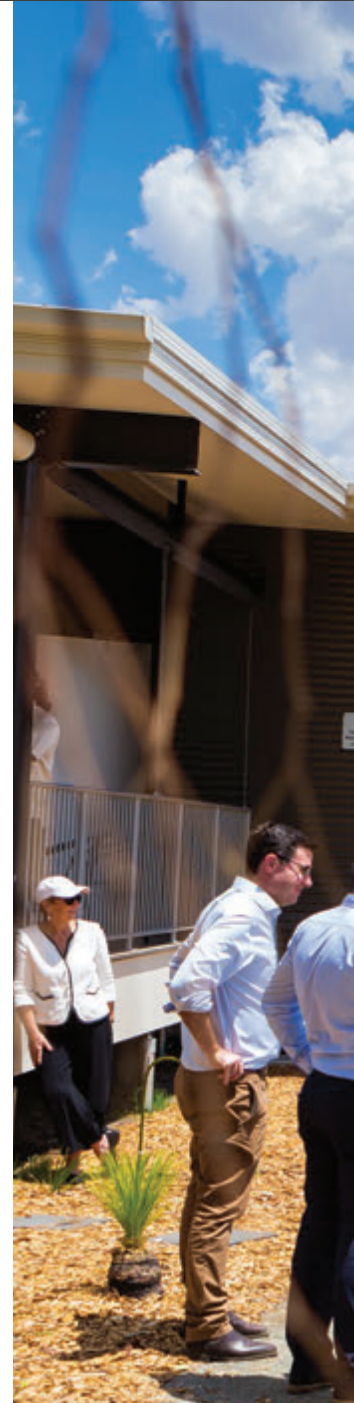
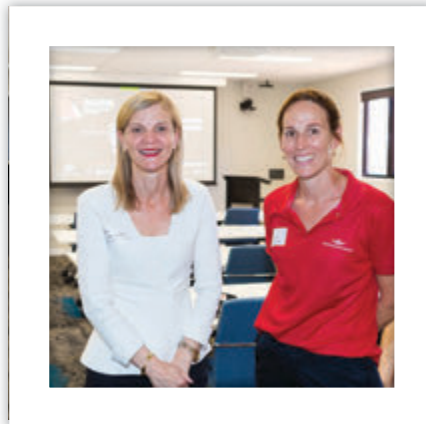
Among those who toured the facility were the National Rural Health Commissioner Professor Ruth Stewart and Royal Flying Doctor Service Queensland Section Chief Executive Officer Meredith Staib.

A highlight of the opening function was the Welcome to Country in language and smoking ceremony from Bidjara Elder Keelen Mailman. Keelen and Charleville and Western Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATISH) Chief Executive Officer Sheryl Lawton provided an official naming of the yarning circle and outdoor education area – Nalkamony (talking) Bindina (sitting).

...a profound example of what rural and regional communities can achieve.

Federal Member for Maranoa
David Littleproud MP

OFFICIAL OPENING





STUDENT CLINIC

The Toowoomba Health and Wellness Clinic started 2020 with a steady flow of incoming participant referrals from General Practitioners and a group of Semester 3 students delivering services in January and February.

With the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, there was a risk of imminent clinic closure and cancellation of student placements, however a brief but significant period of planning provided a one week buffer to prepare the clinic, the students on placement and the participants for a rapid change to a telehealth service delivery model.

It was a testament to the resilience, innovation and dedication of all staff in the clinic that SQRH was able to achieve this, and continue clinic services and student placements. The clinic was even able to offer additional placements to some students whose placements had been cancelled elsewhere, providing an authentic telehealth immersion to add to their rural placement experience.

After a short mid-year break, the Clinic restarted face-to-face services with a new, structured, block intake mode. The team also implemented a 14 week Group Education initiative, with students delivering practical information to participants about the modifiable risk factors for chronic disease.

At the end of the year, past participants were invited back for a progress review at six and twelve months post completion of the program. Participants' commitment to the program was clear, with almost all invited participants returning for their review, even though they had had no contact with the clinic for the preceding six or twelve months.

Overall a very successful year in the Clinic, overcoming huge hurdles to continue to deliver amazing outcomes for participants, and rich learning experiences for students on placement.



BY SAM PEEK
Health and Wellness
Centre Co-ordinator

**Less pain, more
energetic, more
positive attitude and
confidence.**



**...amazing outcomes
for participants,
and rich learning
experiences for
students on
placement.**



PARTICIPANTS

81

participants
received services

3,100

occasions of
service delivered

The average
participant was

61

years of age

9%

of participants identified
as Aboriginal and/or
Torres Strait Islander

STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT

60%

of student clinical activities
were interprofessional
in nature

70

students
completed a
placement

ON AVERAGE, PARTICIPANTS:

lost

2.1kg



reduced
their **waist**
circumference by

4.4cm



increased their six
minute **walking**
distance by

60m

experienced a

14%

increase in **quality of life**



Students completed

500

weeks of clinical
placement



Participants
achieved positive change in
two-thirds of goals.



100%

of participants who completed the
feedback survey would recommend
the program to a friend.

Being able to learn more about the other professions
has allowed me to gain a better understanding of
working with clients in that holistic approach, and
being able to feel confident to work with other
professions when treating the client.

- STUDENT

Results from the SQRH Health and Wellness Clinic first 18 months of operation. For more information, contact the clinic on **(07) 4699 8691**, email hawcadmin@uq.edu.au or visit www.sqrh.com.au

CLINIC COVID RESPONSE

LAUNCHING TELEHEALTH

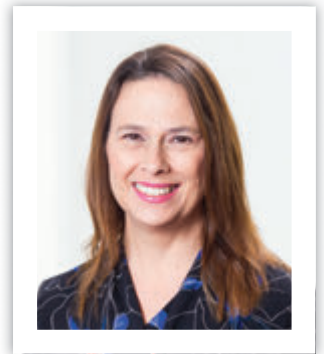
The Health and Wellness Clinic is a busy place at the best of times. With the global pandemic early in the year, clinic staff, students and participants shifted into the unfamiliar paradigm of telehealth service delivery.

It took merely weeks for the dedicated team to explore best practice models, adapt direct clinical services to authentic alternatives that were deliverable by telehealth and assist participants to engage with the changes enforced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

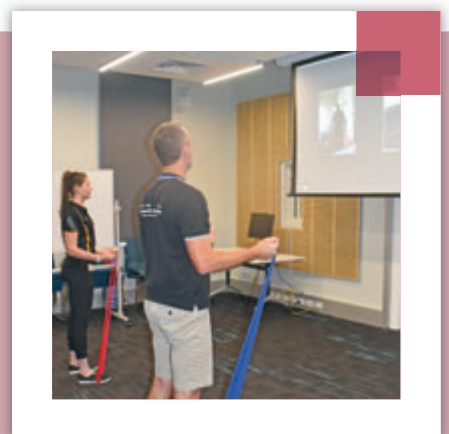
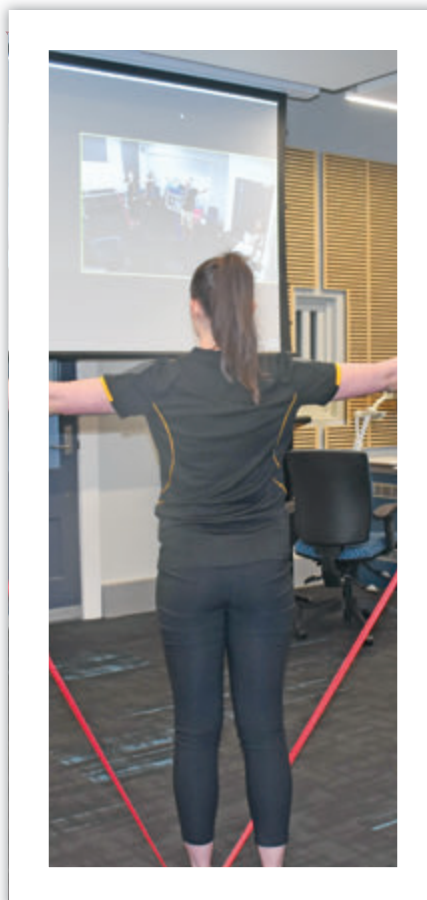
Our students and Clinical Educators stepped up to the challenge to deliver nursing and allied health interventions that continued to support people making changes to reduce their risk of chronic disease and improve their overall health.

We learned so much together through this experience as we explored the strengths of telehealth service delivery and we celebrated many wins. One group of participants enjoyed online group exercise class so much, they continued to meet following completion, enjoying the benefit of social support while exercising. They now meet in the community with the reduction of social distancing, continuing to support each other to exercise and live well.

With the transition to distance service provision, our tech-savvy students were able to support participants in troubleshooting communication platforms on various devices. Additionally, we were able to support vulnerable people through the pandemic that has significantly impacted people's lives, health and resilience. This unique experience has sparked a research study exploring the value of a telehealth model of student-led interprofessional health services and has been submitted for publication.



BY GINNY SNOSWELL
Clinical Educator
(Physiotherapy)



**...we explored
the strengths
of telehealth
service delivery &
we celebrated
many wins**

CARDIAC REHABILITATION

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, SQRH and Darling Downs Health (DDH) embarked on an agreement to collaboratively operate the Toowoomba Cardiac Rehabilitation Program from the newly refurbished Health and Wellness Centre on the grounds of the Baillie Henderson Hospital campus.

The agreement included the involvement of SQRH Exercise Physiologists, Kate Bell and Steve Woodruffe, as additional staff to the established DDH nursing and allied health team. Throughout the year a total of 11 Exercise Physiology students and five nursing students assisted with care delivery with relevant supervision.

The basic Model of Care included a gym based exercise and education program, rolling intake/discharge, a five-week duration and group exercise sessions.

The State and Federal Government COVID-19 pandemic restrictions put in place in March 2020 meant the model of care could not continue in its current form. The SQRH Exercise Physiology Clinical Educators made the suggestion to convert to a solely telephone/telehealth service delivered by the Clinical Educators and students.

Once protocols and processes had been developed, exercise and education sessions commenced on April 7 with three participants in one exercise session. Over the following 9 weeks, 10 patients accessed the exercise sessions with a total attendance of 85 occasions of services across all sessions delivered. Over the same period, 12 patients accessed the education sessions with a total attendance of 68 occasions of service across all sessions delivered.

The change in program structure provided patients with an opportunity to participate in a service to aid their recovery following diagnosis of their cardiac condition. Without this change, these patients would have received limited support during this time.



BY STEVE WOODRUFFE
Clinical Educator
(Exercise Physiology)



Without this change, patients would have received limited support

DURING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

EXERCISE SESSIONS



10

patients accessed the sessions

85

occasions of services across all sessions delivered

EDUCATION SESSIONS



12

patients accessed the sessions

68

occasions of service across all sessions



INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

SHARED LEARNINGS

In an effort to cascade Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice principles throughout healthcare in Queensland, SQRH staff were very excited to share their Interprofessional knowledge with their counterparts at the Centre for Rural and Remote Health (CRRH) in north west Queensland.

SQRH Clinical Educators shared resources and strategies for supporting students in Interprofessional Education and also discussed their experiences and learnings from the development of our Interprofessional Student-Led Health and Wellness Clinic. The practical implementation of the strategies into a clinic setting was especially helpful to the CRRH staff.

Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice serve as key drivers to healthcare improvements and having

both Queensland-based University Departments of Rural Health building skills together will pave the way for larger numbers of students entering the rural health workforce ready to help implement Interprofessional approaches to quality health care.

SQRH and CRRH saw the training as a great opportunity for both teams to take learnings from the experience and each look forward to collaborating closely together on other initiatives in the future.



BY **CHRISSIE O'CONNELL**
Clinical Educator
(Speech Pathology)



SQRH-supported nursing student Georgina Rudken got her rural nursing career off to a flying start after being accepted into the Australian College of Nursing Emerging Nurse Leader Program.

Georgina, who graduated from the University of Southern Queensland in 2020, applied for the program having received encouragement from others who had completed the training. She feels strongly that the nursing profession is now more than ever well placed to have the organisational power to make a difference in the health system.

Having completed rural placements at Stanthorpe and St George, Georgina described rural and remote nursing as providing a different experience and perspective of what nursing looks like. Georgina gained employment with the Westhaven Aged Care Facility in Roma and looks forward to expanding her skill set in rural nursing.



From working in triage at an Emergency Department to observing a hernia operation in theatres to assisting in patient care with paramedics in an ambulance, Sian Veivers saw it all on rural placement.

A University of Southern Queensland Nursing student, Sian completed a four week placement at Chinchilla Hospital in July and she felt 100% certain that going rural was the best learning environment.

“I like to do everything and being on a rural placement gave me that opportunity,” she said.

Sian was delighted when she learned she will take up a full time nursing role with Toowoomba Hospital Paediatric Ward in 2021.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

SQRH kept up momentum of its Interprofessional Education Community of Practice gathering via zoom to share ideas, discuss interprofessional strategies and develop joint programs.

The initiative is collaboratively hosted by SQRH, the University of Southern Queensland and the Queensland Health Cunningham Centre.

A Community of Practice is a learning group that shares and develops knowledge, builds peer support and promotes interprofessional practice as a concept in healthcare delivery.

During the year, a number of presenters inspired Community of Practice participants with their innovation in applying interprofessional collaborative practice principles to healthcare delivery.

The Centre for Rural and Remote Health (CRRH) Remote Pharmacy Academic Selina Taylor talked to the May meeting attendees about the history of CRRH, its role in supporting students and interprofessional training with SQRH. This session also featured SQRH Clinical Educator (Exercise Physiology) Steve Woodruffe who spoke about using telehealth to deliver health services while incorporating interprofessional approaches.

In July Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health Multidisciplinary Programs Director Tara Walker spoke

to the group about ways to increase involvement of key stakeholders in interprofessional education.

Representatives from Metro North Hospital and Health Service also gave great insight into their Integrated Student Placement Model Project where clinical staff worked to develop, implement and evaluate an interdisciplinary model of student placement, internship, work experience and graduate learning.

Our Community of Practice is a learning group that promotes interprofessional practice as a critical concept in healthcare delivery

RURAL PLACEMENT



BUT WHAT'S RURAL PLACEMENT REALLY LIKE?

SQRH hosted a zoom panel discussion for The University of Queensland (UQ) Social Work students designed to provide a venue for students and new graduates to talk to their student colleagues about their rural placement experiences.

The emphasis on the opportunities offered on a rural and regional placement provided an interesting and informative forum.

UQ Social Work student Jordan Simms told the panel her inspiring story of buying her first car to travel from inner city Brisbane to Roma, describing an amazingly diverse learning experience at Roma Hospital, having fun sharing a house with other nursing and allied health students, travelling to nearby local towns to play rugby on weekends and a desire to seek a rural graduate position.

The panel also heard from other UQ Social Work students on placement in Toowoomba, Roma and Kingaroy, two graduate Social Workers who had undertaken placements in Toowoomba and who were now working in Toowoomba, a rural social work Field Educator and SQRH Social Work Clinical Educator, Maryanne Long made up the panel.

University of Queensland Social Work Lecturer and Academic Lead (Field Education) Dr John Drayton moderated the Q & A session which generated numerous questions and enquiry about future rural placements.



BY MARYANNE LONG
Clinical Educator
(Social Work)



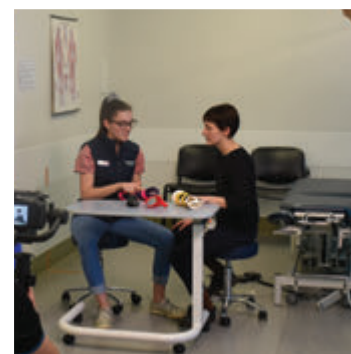
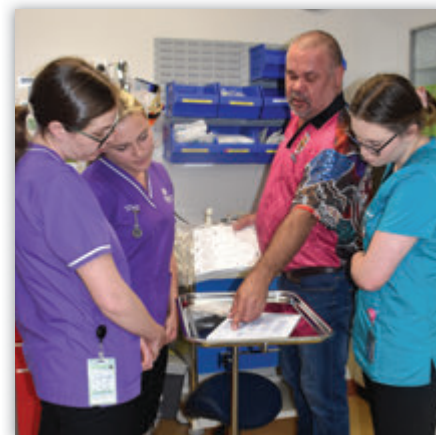


CAPTURED ON VIDEO

SQRH implemented several activities to encourage nursing, midwifery and allied health students to take up rural placements including the use of social media and video.

Students speaking in their own words about their rural placement experiences has been an important factor in providing authentic, engaging and interesting content.

One project in 2020 was the completion of a short video that showed students on placement speaking about their experiences as well as stunning footage of rural and remote landscapes. The video is available via the SQRH YouTube channel and the website.



PARAMEDICINE STUDENTS TAKE UP IMMERSIVE RURAL EXPERIENCE

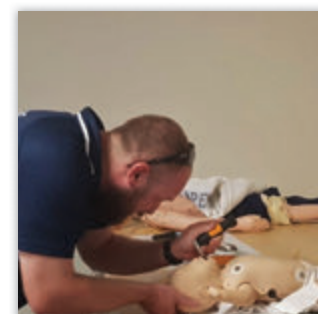
University of Southern Queensland (USQ) paramedicine students gained a unique first-hand perspective on the role rural health professionals play in regional, rural and remote Southern Queensland during a week of travel.

Travelling with SQRH and USQ staff, the students participated in a Paramedicine Observational Placement week, taking the opportunity to ask questions, join in simulation exercises and familiarise themselves with local health services.

The students visited the Morven Clinic, Kill for a Cuppa mental health support group, Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Charleville base, Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH), Lifeline

Charleville office, Charleville Healthy Ageing Program, Charleville Hospital, Queensland Ambulance Service Charleville and Roma, Augathella Multi-Purpose Health Service, Roma Lifeflight Base and Roma Hospital.

Feedback from students was that the experience was exceptional, with health professionals and community members welcoming them to the South West and taking time to understand their learning journey and career aspirations.



RURAL PLACEMENT

GROW RURAL

SQRH partnered with Health Workforce Queensland to deliver a three day GROW Rural South West Queensland event that saw 22 medical, nursing and allied health students experience comprehensive clinical practice in rural and remote settings.

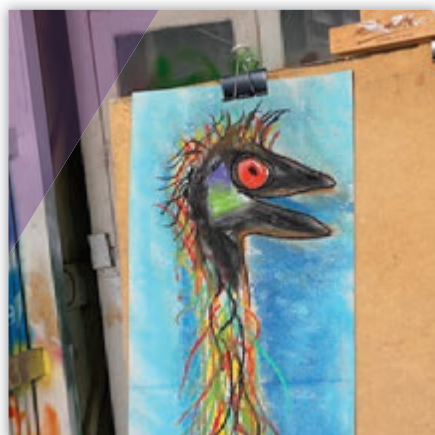
Touring Roma and St George, the students visited rural health services, learned about the clinical needs of rural communities, participated in clinical skill sessions, attended community social activities and established personal and professional relationships with rural health professionals.

Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive with many praising the clinical, cultural and social aspects to the program.

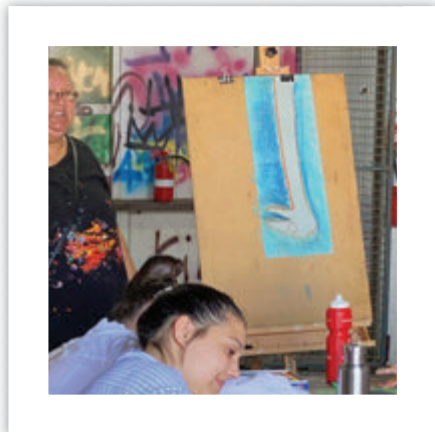
Highlights included the mismanaged diabetes clinical skills session and the virtual telehealth demonstration in St George along with the mobility

capacity assessment sessions and tour of the Maranoa Medical Centre at Roma.

The students also praised the Didgeridoo Story Telling session at St George, the cotton farm tour and the Big Rig Light Show at Roma.



**22 students
experienced
comprehensive
clinical practice
in rural and
remote settings**



STUDENT BURSARIES

As well as promoting relevant bursary and scholarship opportunities to students on rural placement, SQRH has worked with The University of Queensland Health Advancement Team to establish extra financial support for students.

Seven students were able to maximise their time in rural mental health placements across the Darling Downs and South West following the presentation of \$1,000 bursaries from the Aurizon Community Giving Fund.

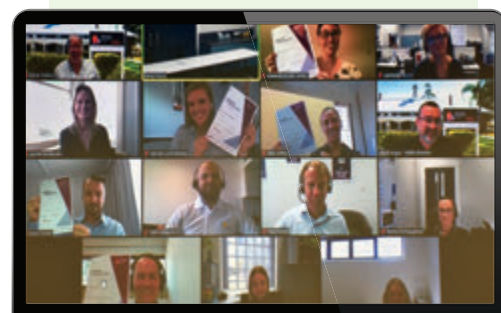
The bursaries were awarded to UQ students who undertake a rural mental health placement, with funds to be used to assist in learning and living in a regional or rural setting.

During a virtual presentation on October 9, the four Psychology students, one Occupational Therapy student, one Social Work student and one Mental Health Nursing student all expressed their thanks and gratitude for the bursary funds.

Social Work Student Owen Turner, who completed his placement at Sunrise Way in Toowoomba, said the bursary support enabled him to witness an alcohol and drug rehabilitation service in action and support residents to reclaim their social dignity.

Aurizon Principal Advisor Brand and Sponsorships Mark Maguire was delighted to see first-hand the benefit gained from the Aurizon Community Giving Fund.

Aurizon is Australia's largest rail-based transport business and its Community Giving Fund aims to deliver positive outcomes in the areas of Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety, Environment and Education.



7 students were able to maximise their time in rural mental health placements

Making it her mission to have a rural health career, The University of Queensland Dietetics student Taya McLaren-Hedwards achieved her goal with a comprehensive rural placement at SQRH Health and Wellness Clinic in 2019, graduating in 2020 and successfully gaining employment at Dalby Allied health.

She firmly believes the Health and Wellness Clinic prepared her for the job as she has worked interprofessionally, treated patients with chronic disease and focused on continuity of care in a regional setting. Her placement in Toowoomba had huge diversity – working at St Vincent's

Private Hospital Toowoomba and Meals on Wheels giving her an insight into patient care across the lifespan. Settling into her new job, Taya is a huge advocate for rural placement and has encouraged other health students to gain invaluable rural experiences.



RURAL PLACEMENT

STREAMLINING STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Having a “home away from home” for students on rural placement has been an integral part of providing extra support and opportunities for students from different professions to learn from each other as well as form friendships whilst on rural placement.

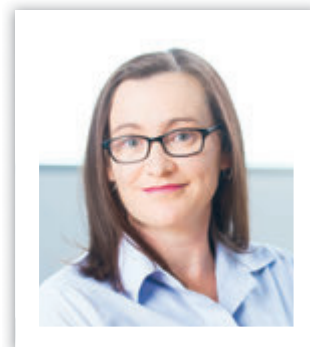
SQRH has 47 rooms for student accommodation throughout south west Queensland and the Darling Downs. Student accommodation is located at Toowoomba, Kingaroy, Chinchilla, Goondiwindi, St George, Roma and Charleville.

With an increase in rooms and student placements, SQRH implemented a cloud-based software called StarRez which provides effective management of student accommodation, as well as

producing fast and accurate reporting at the click of a button.

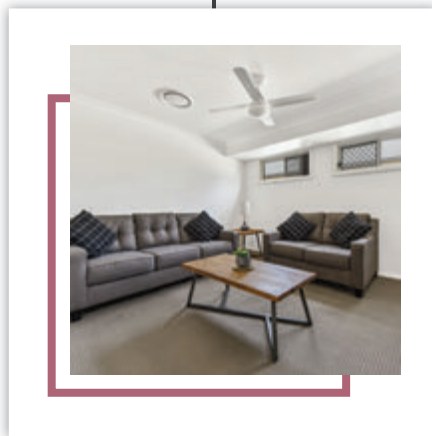
During 2020 SQRH implemented StarRez Web and the online student access point StarRez Portal X. StarRez Web allows SQRH staff to manage accommodation, student records and analysis of StarRez reports to explore data trends and future needs.

Progressing into early 2021, an addition to StarRez Web is the student interface Portal X. The portal enables students to



BY RACHEL MCNAUGHTON
Student Support Co-ordinator

apply for supports directly through the online platform from the SQRH website. Students have the ability to apply for travel, accommodation and workshop support, as well as to pay invoices through the Portal.





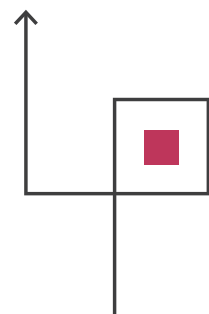
University of Southern Queensland Exercise Physiology student, Amy, has proved that rural placement experiences provide invaluable learning opportunities that can lead to full time employment.

Amy took up student placements with the SQRH Health and Wellness Clinic and Toowoomba Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation Program where she gained extensive experience in patient communication, transition to telehealth during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and clinic operations.

Amy graduated on November 20, then began work with MetPhys at Highfields

(Toowoomba) on November 23 and firmly believes her rural placements stood her in good stead for employment.

Having pictured herself working in a family business, Amy has realised her dream of working in a regional setting alongside an experienced team where patient outcomes are positive and long-lasting.



RURAL PLACEMENTS

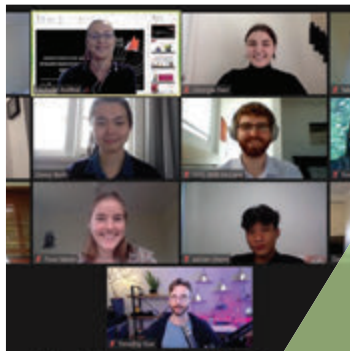
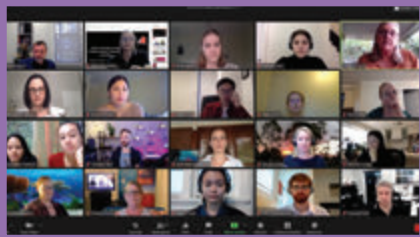


**a total of
10 students
participated in the
SQRH WRAP
Regional Solution**



BY MICHELLE ANIFTOS
Clinical Educator
(Psychology)

ZOOM CALLS



VIRTUAL PLACEMENTS – IT’S A WRAP

Every semester, UQ students completing the fourth-year psychology course Work and Research in Applied Psychology (WRAP) have the opportunity for an industry placement to apply their psychology competencies in a real-world project benefiting the host agency.

In 2020 SQRH accepted two students to commence a virtual placement project to review Goal Attainment in an Interprofessional Health and Wellness Clinic using the Goal Attainment Scale (GAS). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic a total of 10 students were redirected from discontinued placements to participate in the SQRH WRAP Regional Solution. Clinical Educator Michelle Aniftos established weekly online meetings for the students who were organised into four project groups. In addition to the initial GAS Project, program evaluations were proposed for the Mental Health Telehealth Trial and Summer Intensive Placement, both being SQRH Regional Solutions to engage post-graduate psychology students in novel rural and regional placements. The fourth project aimed to investigate strategies to Alleviate Social Isolation for Students on Rural Placement.

Week by week, the students presented updates on their project design and execution and were provided supervision and mentoring by an interprofessional team at SQRH. The students developed competencies for completing rapid literature reviews, applying ethical research practices, project design, and evaluation methods. In addition, the students' confidence grew to report their progress at weekly project briefings attended by their peers and various members of the SQRH team. The pinnacle of the WRAP Program at SQRH was the

Regional Solutions Forum that enabled the students to share their semester's work as an academic presentation in an online conference format. The students received jubilant praise and encouragement from Forum attendees. Guests from the Centre for Rural and Remote Health contributed to the program with Dr Sharon Varela providing the Keynote Address and Professor Sabina Knight providing critical feedback to affirm the students' efforts.

In their post-placement feedback, the students all spoke very highly of the diverse range of educational opportunities afforded to them by the SQRH placement. Throughout the semester, the students were exposed to some of the challenges experienced by regional communities as compared with metropolitan centres - limited human and material resources locally and increased need for remote access solutions. The students became familiar with a range of SQRH initiatives to deliver effective rural training experiences for allied health, nursing and midwifery students, and to improve rural student recruitment. Ultimately, SQRH provided regional leadership in its capacity to quickly adapt to the pandemic fallout with an innovative training solution for healthcare students, who subsequently reported greater appreciation of the healthcare needs and challenges experienced in rural and regional Australia, and the need to strengthen the rural workforce.

RURAL PLACEMENTS

FORGING REAL CONNECTIONS

Students attending rural and remote placements face social isolation and can experience profound disconnection from their peers and usual community.

The need to support student learning is understood, yet social isolation is often overlooked. SQRH has been welcoming students to rural and remote communities through an initiative designed to demonstrate social support and create a memorable and meaningful placement experience.

Bush placements can present new challenges, and both the student and community need support. The SQRH team believes creating a positive future requires professional and social support, encircling learning and supervision with community and connectedness. Bush communities are renowned for hospitality and strong support networks. Capturing this aspect of remote practice for students across 400,000 square km area in the short term is challenging.

The SQRH approach to students incorporates activities centred on local community immersion, building connection among new peers and providing a mainstay of social and

professional support. To help address the tyranny of distance SQRH has developed a customised online orientation. At placement commencement, students from diverse health professions gather in a virtual meeting space to form a small community. Led by educators, clinical staff discuss living and caring in a remote community, interprofessional learning and the challenges of isolation and homesickness. Students form social and professional connections with each other to create a small support network of fellow learners over the course of placement.

Ensuring a meaningful, community-immersive placement in rural and remote areas requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates both students and communities. SQRH works to reduce social isolation for students by establishing connections between each other, and between students and their communities. Such an approach works towards a shared vision of optimising rural placement and growing a robust, long-term rural workforce.



BY DR FLORA ROLF
Interprofessional
Practice Co-ordinator





CULTURAL AWARENESS





UNDERSTANDING CLOSING THE GAP

University of Southern Queensland nursing students joined The University of Queensland and Griffith University medical students for an informative and diverse UQ Rural Clinical School Cultural Awareness Tour at Cherbourg in January.

Visiting the Ration Shed Museum and Cultural Precinct, the students heard from Uncle Frank Malone about the history of Cherbourg, the treatment of Aboriginal people and importance of health staff in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The students were fascinated to tour the museum and talked to Ration Shed staff about the many challenges and incredible achievements of Cherbourg residents. As future rural health professionals, this

invaluable insight into Indigenous culture will help prepare students to be an informed part of Closing the Gap.

SQRH Indigenous Health Education Co-ordinator Wayne Williams, who organised the tour, encouraged health students to take every opportunity to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture while on rural placement, to ask questions and to seek the wisdom of elders.

IDEAS FOR EYE HEALTH

The University of Queensland nursing students Victoria and Kirra gained valuable experience during their Charleville placement by working with the Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH) team at the visiting eye health van.

The IDEAS (Indigenous Diabetes Eyes And Screening) Van, a Queensland Health funded initiative designed to sustainably reduce preventable blindness in Indigenous peoples with diabetes, came to Charleville with support from CWAATSICH.

The students assisted with patient reception and preparation, observed consultations and learned valuable skills in ophthalmic nursing from the CWAATSICH Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners.



STUDENT WORKSHOPS

INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

SQRH continued to deliver Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE) to students on clinical placement across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland.

These sessions provided students the opportunity to learn with, from and about each other's varying disciplines, and covered topics such as Role Clarity, Interprofessional Communication, Patient Centred Care, Team Functioning and Interprofessional Conflict Resolution.

SWIPE was delivered in both a one day and a three session (three hour) format and has proved extremely popular with students.

Students reported a significant increase in interprofessional competency having attended the workshops.

Learning to practice within an interprofessional framework, supports students to deliver patient centred care and promotes healthier work environments and a more sustainable workforce.



BY DAYLE OSBORN
Acting Interprofessional
Practice Co-ordinator

**I thought it was very
beneficial to my
student placement
and future practice**



FAIRHOLME COLLEGE HEALTH HUB ADAPTS TO PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

Clinical Educators and university students presented workshops to students at the Fairholme College Health Hub discussing the various qualifications and skills required for nursing, midwifery and allied health professions, delivered health skills stations and encouraged year 10 students to consider a rural career.

As well as face-to-face sessions, SQRH developed a zoom presentation in March when SQRH staff and students delivered workshop content from their respective home bases in Warwick, Brisbane, Dalby and Toowoomba.



ASPIRE2HEALTH

During 2020 SQRH continued its involvement in the Aspire2Health (A2H) project across the Darling Downs and Western Queensland regions.

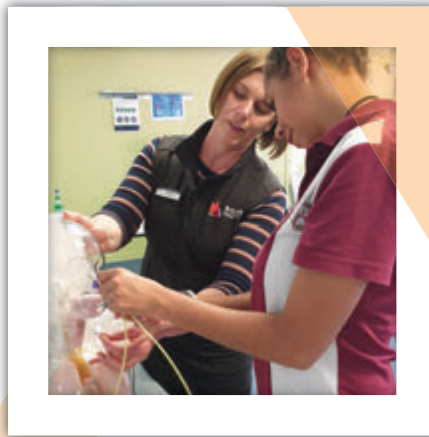
This program, funded through the Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network and the Western Queensland Primary Health Network, engages secondary school students to inspire them to consider a career in health.

A2H is a successful collaboration between SQRH and Rural Medical Education Australia (previously Queensland Rural Medical Education), Griffith University, University of Queensland Rural Clinical School, University of Southern Queensland, Queensland Ambulance Service and the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training.

Sessions delivered to school students included presentations, skill stations and

rural emergency scenarios with support from health professionals and students from medicine, nursing, paramedicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetics, speech pathology, midwifery, pharmacy, social work, psychology/mental health nurses and exercise physiology. Students from both state and private schools attended at six locations including Kingaroy, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Chinchilla, Goondiwindi and Charleville.

During 2020 the A2H program was attended by 119 students with feedback highlighting 92.9% of respondents would now consider pursuing a future career in health.



RURAL HEALTH RESEARCH

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

The aim of research at SQRH is to develop and strengthen an evidence-based rural health research agenda.

SQRH researchers are involved in research under three main priority areas - Rural Health Workforce (twelve projects); Rural Health Service (four projects) and Health issues impacting Rural Communities (two projects). And, despite restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the SQRH team presented research findings at five online conferences:

1. Are You Remotely Interested...?
Conference: Realising Remote Possibilities: **Introducing Nursing and Paramedicine students to rural interprofessional health care.**
2. Are You Remotely Interested...?
Conference: Realising Remote Possibilities: **Innovations during COVID-19.**
3. Australasian College of Paramedicine International Conference: **Introducing paramedicine students to rural interprofessional health care.**
4. Australian and New Zealand Social Work and Welfare Education and Research (ANZSWWER) conference: **Critically reflecting on applying trauma informed principles via telehealth: An emerging dimension of social work practice when supporting people living with chronic disease during COVID19.**
5. Darling Downs Health Innovation and Research Collaborative (DDHIRC) Interactive Showcase: **Learnings from a student-led, interprofessional health and wellness clinic in regional Australia.**

RESEARCH TRAINING

In July and September the SQRH research team, in collaboration with Professor Cath Haslam, The University of Queensland Research Integrity Advisor from the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, developed and delivered an interactive workshop on research integrity which was well received and generated extensive discussion.

I really appreciate the research training from the SQRH Research Team. Having worked as a clinician and clinical educator for many years this is first time I have felt supported and prepared to take up research in the field.



BY DR TONY FALLON
Research Officer



BY DR GENEVIEVE BARATIN
Senior Research Fellow

KEY RESEARCH

During 2021 SQRH responded to the COVID-19 national lockdown by developing a research project exploring Australians' attitudes and practices in relation to the pandemic.

Following a large community response to our research survey, we progressed to a second phase, leading a national collaborative of nine University Departments of Rural Health to interview willing participants about their

experiences of everyday life. SQRH is continuing to lead this large national research project and publish findings around Australians' daily life during a pandemic.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN RURAL RESEARCH

SQRH has achieved success in attracting students to be involved in research training vacation scholarships. The team welcomed its first vacation scholarship scholar as part of a three-week University of Queensland 2020 Winter Research Program, and an additional two students from the University of

Southern Queensland commenced a ten-week summer vacation research scholarship, one through the USQ RedTrain program and the other through the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences Undergraduate Research Scholarship Program.

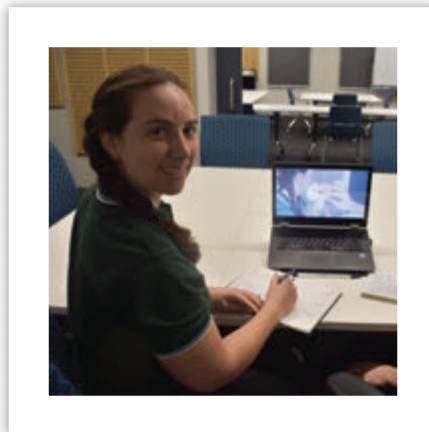
RESEARCH COLLABORATION

SQRH has joined the Nursing and Allied Health Graduate Outcomes Tracking (NAHGOT) study, and is collaborating with University Departments of Rural Health from the University of Newcastle, Monash and Deakin Universities, as well as investigators from the University of Southern Queensland and University of

Queensland. The aim of this longitudinal study is to examine the effects of rural background and rural placement experiences on the future likelihood of nursing and allied health graduates practicing professionally in regional, rural and remote areas.

Working with the SQRH research team has been an invaluable experience to further my own professional skills and personal interests in the fields of research, rural health and psychology. I was able to engage in research projects as well as receiving tailored training to boost my knowledge and help prepare me for my future employment opportunities.

- STUDENT



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE NURSE AND MIDWIFE

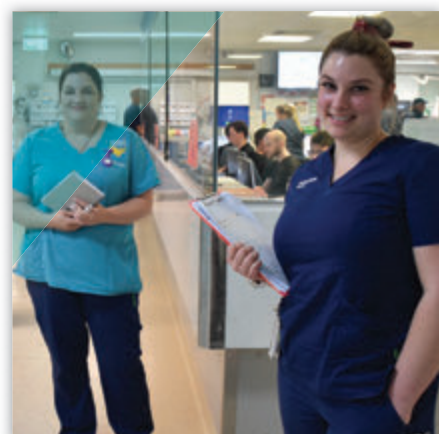
Throughout 2020 SQRH took the opportunity to promote and celebrate the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

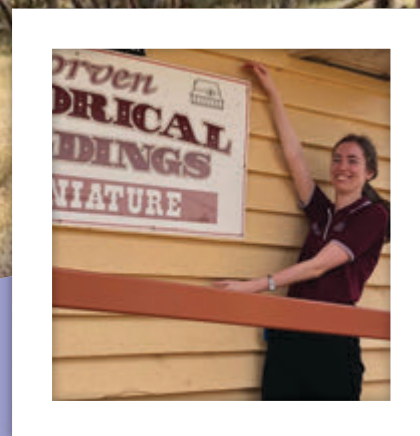
SQRH social media platforms featured profiles on nursing staff and students, zoom celebrations for International Nurses Day and International Midwives Day in May and a final celebration in November when nursing and midwifery representatives from the SQRH consortium members held an online morning tea.

Both the SQRH facilities in Toowoomba and Charleville set up displays about

nursing and midwifery, raising the profile of the professions through the theme “Champions of Change”.

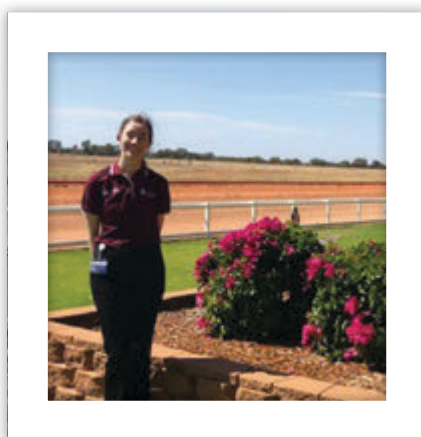
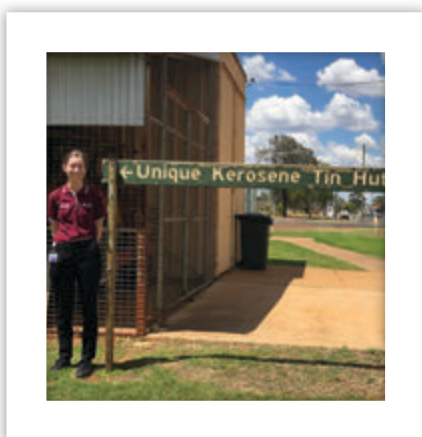
During a worldwide pandemic the importance of nurses and midwives was brought into sharper focus, especially the nursing and midwifery educators who support and mentor students on their journey to graduation and employment.





The University of Queensland Speech Pathology student Abbey Brown took the word “outreach” to a whole new meaning with her placement in the South West.

Working with Education Queensland Speech Pathology staff and gaining support from SQRH Clinical Education team members, Abbey helped provide speech pathology services to children in Morven, Charleville and surrounding districts. The placement inspired Abbey to apply for a regional job and she successfully secured a Speech Pathology position with Education Queensland in December.





WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

SQRH has many key collaborations that create opportunity for innovation, action and enterprise in rural health workforce development.





SQRH acknowledges the enormous goodwill to progress new initiatives in the rural health landscape and extend thanks to partners and collaborators throughout 2020.



