



SQRH
Southern Queensland
Rural Health

2025

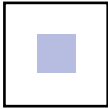
YEAR IN REVIEW

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:



Darling Downs
Health





2025 AT A GLANCE



8,883

placement weeks



1,546

total placements



72

students received an
extended placement bursary



420

students stayed in SQRH
accommodation



3

successful research grants



13

peer-reviewed research
publications



2,549

weeks of SQRH supported
accommodation



270

school students attended
Aspire 2 Health



313

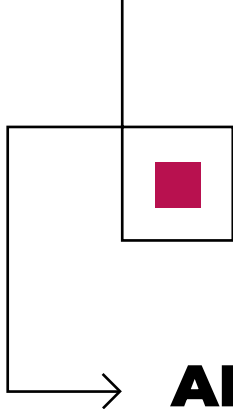
attendance at health workforce professional development sessions



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ABOUT US AND OUR MISSION

SQRH exists to increase rural health education and training opportunities for nursing, midwifery and allied health students and health professionals in regional, rural, and remote communities across Southern Queensland.

SQRH is a University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), delivered through 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, Disability and Ageing under the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program.

Since 2017, through education, training, and engaging with allied stakeholders across the region, SQRH has grown from a single office in the Toowoomba Hospital, to:

- Covering 13 local government areas spanning across 400,000 square kilometres
- Employing over 40 staff across the regions
- Supporting over 1,400 nursing, midwifery, and allied health students per year
- Operating education centres in Toowoomba, Charleville, St George and Chinchilla
- Providing more than 60 rooms for student accommodation across the regions
- Establishing student-led health services in Toowoomba, St George and Chinchilla



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.





OUR KEY PRIORITIES

- 1 Deliver effective rural training experiences for allied health, nursing and midwifery students.
- 2 Ensure rural training experiences are of the highest 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.

**A HUGE THANK YOU TO
THE TEAM AT**

SQRH



ACTING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NICOLA COTTER

It has been both a pleasure and an honour to lead SQRH through a period of transition between our inaugural Director Associate Professor Geoff Argus leaving and our incoming Director Associate Professor Melissa Taylor commencing.

The establishment and ongoing achievements of SQRH over the period of October 2017 to August 2025 must be credited to Geoff through his relentless commitment to achieving growth in both capability and capacity of rural student placement opportunities throughout the region. The plethora of SQRH established supports which we have seen time and time again result in real workforce outcomes for the region is truly a success which he should be celebrated for. This work would obviously not be possible without the dedication of the nearly 40 strong SQRH staff who dedicate their time to thinking innovatively, creating change and forming and maintaining genuine relationships with our stakeholders.

The strength of the consortium is more important than ever as workforce continues to be one of the top challenges facing rural health not only in the SQRH footprint but across Australia. Our university and health service partners continue to adapt and evolve within an increasingly complex and challenging environment. I would personally like to thank them for their ongoing commitment to challenging traditional approaches and working collaboratively with us to embrace opportunities where flexibility and innovation drive meaningful change.

Starting from an innovative idea, the ongoing success of the End to End Bachelor of Nursing Program in

Charleville is a credit to the value of commitment to doing things differently to create real world outcomes. This year saw five graduates complete the program, demonstrating a sustainable model for strengthening the rural health workforce by enabling students to train locally and transition into rural employment.

A highlight of the year has been the continued uptake of clinicians participating in SQRH education with 313 total attendances in 2025. This is continually growing the number of confident and competent clinician supervisors throughout the workforce which in turn creates the opportunity to place students in their workplace settings. The Clinical Education Team must be commended on their professionalism and commitment to delivering these important education modules.

We have continued to support students with accommodation across the region, with more than 2,500 placement weeks supported. In 2026, we are pleased to expand our accommodation offerings with the addition of two rooms in Warwick. This expansion reflects growing interest from local providers in hosting student placements, alongside strong university support to increase placement uptake in the area. It is a strong example of SQRH's ability to respond flexibly and collaboratively to the evolving needs of our consortium partners.

The strength of partnerships is what I see as the key to success for SQRH and I personally want to thank our formal partnership partners; Southern Cross Care Queensland, our aged care partner in Chinchilla, Charleville and

Western Areas Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islanders Community Health (CWAATSICH) with whom we share a position in Charleville and Goondir Health Services, our valued partner in St George from whose Community Wellbeing Centre our clinic is based.

I would like to sincerely thank the SQRH staff for their unwavering support throughout my time acting as Director. I have also been incredibly fortunate to receive consistent support from the SQRH Board, our valued formal partners, and the many stakeholders I have had the privilege of working alongside during this period.

I look forward to 2026 with optimism and enthusiasm for what can be achieved through strong partnerships, meaningful collaboration, and a genuine commitment to innovation in building the future health workforce.



BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

Congratulations to SQRH on another successful year supporting the growth of the rural and remote nursing, midwifery and allied health workforce.

In its 8th year of operations in 2025, SQRH has gone from strength to strength and grown a national reputation as a leader in regional, rural and remote health workforce education and training. The University of Queensland (UQ) is proud to partner with the University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service in this important initiative. The success of the collaboration between these organisations is a testament to our

shared vision and steadfast commitment to developing a highly skilled rural and remote health workforce.

The new UQ Faculty of Health, Medicine and Behavioural Sciences (HMBS) commenced in 2025 under the leadership of Executive Dean, Professor Danny Liew. The HMBS Faculty has a strong focus on rural and remote health, and aligned with the UQ Queensland Commitment, is well placed to strengthen and grow its activities in partnership with regional, rural and remote Queensland communities. The new HMBS Faculty brings together the strengths of the former Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences under one united Faculty structure to deliver the full breadth of excellence in health research, education and training.

For a modest-sized team, SQRH achieved an enormous amount of high-quality activity in 2025. Promoting health

careers to rural high school students, supporting health students whilst on rural placement, delivering rural-based student-resourced health clinics, educating existing health professionals in clinical supervision and conducting rural-focused research, SQRH staff continue to show their dedication and professionalism in delivering on the shared objectives of the SQRH consortium.

On behalf of UQ, I would like to congratulate Nicola Cotter on her leadership during the transition to a new SQRH Director in 2026. As one of SQRHs original staff members, Nicola has skillfully led the SQRH team as acting Director in the latter half of 2025 and has demonstrated exemplary leadership. In 2026 we look forward to welcoming Associate Professor Melissa Taylor who commences in February as SQRH Director. I have no doubt that SQRH will continue to thrive and grow under Associate Professor Taylor's leadership.

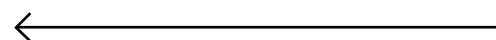


ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GEOFF ARGUS

**DIRECTOR OF RURAL HEALTH
THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND**



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND**
AUSTRALIA





PROFESSOR GLEN COLEMAN

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (STUDENTS
AND EDUCATION), UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND



University of
Southern
Queensland

This year saw significant strengthening of partnerships and student placement support across Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH). Collaboration between Placement Officers and SQRH staff improved markedly, supported by a dedicated relationship-building session between the SQRH and WIL teams that enhanced shared understanding of student support opportunities.

The UniSQ Charleville Nursing Program, in partnership with SQRH, improves health education access for First Nations, rural, and remote students. Residential schools are held at the Charleville Clinical Training Facility, with free accommodation provided to cohort members who live outside Charleville. In 2025, the program facilitated 31 placements that contributed to rural education to help bolster the healthcare workforce locally, with a strong emphasis on supporting First Nations students.

SQRH received funding to expand placement opportunities for UniSQ students, supporting the Chinchilla Aged Care initiative and St George Allied Health clinic.

These initiatives have enabled us to expand the variety of disciplines gaining rural clinical experience. For instance, throughout all three trimesters, 14 Sports and Exercise students participated in placements at SQRH clinics, including the St George Allied Health Education and Training Hub. Additionally, Psychology students completed placements at the SQRH site, specifically at Southern Cross Care Chinchilla – Illoura.

UniSQ continues to develop health workforce pipelines for our students. In 2025, we successfully launched our Toowoomba based offers of occupational therapy programs. In 2026, we re-launch our midwifery program in response to extensive feedback from colleagues in our HHS partners. The 12-month Graduate Diploma of Midwifery replaces the previous 2 year graduate entry Bachelor of Midwifery. UniSQ's Academic Board recently approved a proposal to introduce a Bachelor of Pharmacy (Honours) program from our Toowoomba campus in 2027. At their core, our suite of allied health and a focus on developing students' appreciation of the health challenges faced

by rural and remote communities. SQRH's contributions are fundamental to these aspects of curriculum design. UniSQ looks forward to the possibilities that 2026 will bring and is eager to collaborate with colleagues to further SQRH's efforts in developing a health workforce for regional communities. The team's accomplishments in 2025 deserve recognition and celebration, thank you to Nicola Cotter for doing such a sterling job as Acting Director and we look forward in 2026 to working with incoming director and former UniSQ colleague Associate Professor Melissa Taylor.





ADJUNCT PROFESSOR ANNETTE SCOTT, PSM

HEALTH SERVICE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
DARLING DOWNS HEALTH



Darling Downs
Health

Building on the strong foundations of previous years, Darling Downs Health has continued to work closely with SQRH and key stakeholders to ensure sustainable growth in student placement opportunities. The significant growth achieved in 2024 has been successfully maintained throughout 2025, reflecting the commitment of our facilities and partners to support student learning. This stability ensures that students continue to access diverse and meaningful placement experiences across our region.

A key priority this year has been strengthening relationships between education providers, SQRH, and Darling Downs Health. Regular meetings have fostered collaboration, enabled shared problem-solving, and ensured alignment on strategies to expand placement opportunities through innovative models. Our commitment remains clear: to strengthen partnerships, innovate in placement design, and support the next generation of nurses, midwives and allied health professionals in building rewarding careers within our health system.

In its eighth year, the SQRH consortium continues to thrive, leveraging the momentum of long-standing collaboration to expand and optimise student placements. These efforts are helping to build a sustainable allied health, nursing, and midwifery workforce for the future. Through strong partnerships within our consortium, Darling Downs Health has translated enhanced rural placement opportunities into tangible workforce growth. In 2025, we saw numerous examples of students from various disciplines—who previously completed placements across Darling Downs Health facilities—return for internships, HPI roles, and new graduate positions.

Momentum has continued across allied health, nursing, and midwifery student placements, with increased uptake of extended and shared placements. Sustained engagement with ongoing training for clinical educators and supervisors has further strengthened student supervision capabilities.

Collective endeavour was exemplified in numerous initiatives, including the

provision of on-campus accommodation in Warwick for two SQRH students undertaking extended placements in the Southern cluster. The Child Development Service delivered care from the SQRH Aged Care Education Hub in Chinchilla, benefiting both the consortium and the community. Physiotherapy students undertook shared placements between Community Care and Wellness clinic settings, supported by SQRH accommodation assistance and bursaries for extended rural placements in Kingaroy, Warwick, and Dalby. Six Nutrition & Dietetics students completed shared placements between Darling Downs Health and the SQRH Wellness Clinic, while a past UQ Dietetics student returned to undertake employment with Darling Downs Health for several months.

As we move into 2026, Darling Downs Health remains committed to achieving our goals. Our priority continues to be the cultivation of student placements and the advancement of interprofessional education in partnership with SQRH. We are proud to be part of this important collaboration and look forward to working together to strengthen our rural health workforce in the year ahead.



South West
Hospital and Health Service
Building better health in the bush

DR TONY BROWN

HEALTH SERVICE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SOUTH WEST HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICE

South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS) has had a highly productive year in collaboration with Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH). This partnership continues to play a pivotal role in delivering our End-to-End Training "Grow Your Own Workforce" strategy, committed to building sustainable health services and workforce for rural communities.

In 2025, SWHHS worked closely with SQRH to expand clinical placement opportunities and strengthen local training pathways. Students from The University of Queensland completed placements in St George, including Exercise Physiology programs, showcasing the value of rural clinical experiences.

A major milestone was the graduation of four students from the End-to-End Bachelor of Nursing program in Charleville. This initiative, delivered in partnership with UniSQ, SQRH, and Charleville State High School, enables students to complete their entire degree locally.

The program is delivered at the SQRH Charleville Clinical Training Facility, with SWHHS providing educational leadership, placement coordination, and workforce development support. In May 2025, SWHHS and SQRH jointly presented at the Association of Queensland Nursing and Midwifery Leaders Conference. Their presentation, "Developing the Rural Nursing Workforce: Leveraging Community Support to Develop Our Future Nursing Leaders," highlighted the collaborative approach and its impact on rural health workforce sustainability.

Graduates from the Charleville program have already filled registered nurse roles within our facilities, strengthening local workforce capacity. Their success was celebrated at a ceremony attended by SWHHS leadership and community

stakeholders, reinforcing the importance of partnerships in addressing rural health challenges.

Through structured placements, locally delivered degrees, and leadership in workforce development, SWHHS's collaboration with SQRH in 2025 has delivered tangible outcomes for our communities. This model not only prepares students for health careers but ensures they remain embedded in the regions they serve, creating a resilient and sustainable workforce for the future.





CHARLEVILLE



DR FLORA ROLF

DEPUTY DIRECTOR (SOUTH WEST)

2025 was a busy year for Charleville as we continue to work hard supporting and growing essential resources for our bush communities. Our work continued to centre on growing a rural and remote workforce by supporting both students and clinicians. We supported allied health, nursing and midwifery students undertaking rural and remote placements, and worked closely with clinical colleagues to develop their skills as student supervisors.

An often-noticed feature of remote communities is connectedness and belonging. We are proud of our strong bonds with the Charleville and Murweh community and thankful for the opportunity to live and work on Bidjara land. Together we continued to work towards healthy, strong, and durable communities by growing well-educated and engaged healthcare practitioners to offer care for current and future generations. Equitable and timely healthcare access for rural and remote communities is a familiar and persistent challenge, and our mission here in Charleville is to create a lasting and visible impact.

We are proud to continue our partnership with CWAATSICH (Charleville Western

Areas Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community Health) in delivering vital nursing services to our community. Our SQRH nurses ran programs in mums and bubs support, child health screening and started a fortnightly immunisation clinic for 0-4 years in 2025. We have also grown the education activity for local clinic staff, upskilling practitioners in managing deterioration, cardiorespiratory emergency care and core procedural skills.

Our Bachelor of Nursing program, run by the University of Southern Queensland and held on-site in the South West with Charleville as the designated learning and training hub, continues to offer full degree training for students becoming registered nurses. Students live, work and study in their own region, graduating and then practising in the communities they call home. We are immensely proud of this 'in place' training and will continue to work towards advancing and extending these opportunities. We now have students studying across all 3 years of the degree, providing an enduring and uninterrupted resource for the health of the South West community, as well as an established pathway for local students wishing to stay out bush and become a nurse.

There have been many highlights for Charleville in this past year, firmly centred on connecting student learning and remote community life together. Students from a range of professions have offered health promotion activities, health and wellness checks, and health careers promotion to the community. We have also supported students to use telehealth to assist older community members with physical conditioning and falls prevention, and supported student dietitians to lead cooking classes for healthy, easy, and budget-friendly meals. We have also continued our commitment to Aspire2 Health, an activity day for high school students to experience healthcare 'up front' using simulation, including the ever-popular plastering broken limbs, helping to deliver a baby, resuscitating a collapsed patient and suturing wounds.

Our busy training hub and our team continue to thrive because we are always asking 'What else can we do?' This phrase underpins our work in placement support, student support, community partnerships, teaching, and research. We are proud to live and work in remote Australia and look forward to another year of supporting, training and serving.



COLLEEN FORDE

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (NURSING)



NEELAM NAYAK

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (PHYSIOTHERAPY)

CHINCHILLA

Chinchilla had another impressive start to 2025. A total of 25 students undertook placements in Chinchilla across disciplines including Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Pharmacy, Dietetics, Speech Pathology and Physiotherapy.

We farewelled Exercise Physiologist Clare dal Bon who relocated to Brisbane and welcomed Neelam our Physiotherapy Clinical Educator who joined mid-2025.

Neelam supervised our first physiotherapy student, who commenced the Falls Prevention exercise class for community-dwelling older adults receiving homecare services in Chinchilla. This program was well received and very successful. We look forward to continuing this program in the new Southern Cross Care Health and Wellness Centre in 2026. The physiotherapy student also commenced work in collaboration with the Southern Cross Care Music Therapist, Sam Grimes in the Parkinsons Gait Clinic. Neelam has been working hard this later part of the year to upskill Southern Cross Care Personal Carer, Kath in the newly implemented Allied Health Assistant position.

Chinchilla commenced the first pilot Rural Pathway Nursing program with UQ. This program enables students interested in a future rural health career to complete all of their placements in rural areas. Chinchilla was chosen for the pilot as it has the Training Hub and SQRH for support. Three nursing students were selected and have completed two clinical placements in Chinchilla. We look forward to mentoring them through their nursing degree and their future rural career.

Our pharmacy student completed a Quality Use of Medicines project and delivered several education sessions to staff at the Chinchilla and Miles RAC on eye drop administration, transdermal patch administration and asthma education

We have enjoyed another successful year of occupational therapy students leading the Intergenerational program with the Chinchilla State High School

year 7 students. The occupational therapy students undertook pressure area projects and were able to put proposals to the Friends of Illoura group to fund pressure area equipment that enables the RAC to meet best practice guidelines. They also delivered several education sessions to staff on pressure area prevention and created education posters and resources for both staff and residents.

Dietetic students undertook a *Community and Public Health Nutrition Project* with the Chinchilla State High School Breakfast Club that involved them evaluating the menu and making recommendations to improve student nutrition. They also delivered education sessions to both the Chinchilla State High School and Brigalow State Primary School.

Our first speech pathology student completed a quality improvement audit on current service delivery of dietary requirements in the RAC and delivered a comprehensive education session to students along with posters and other educational material for the RAC.

Our psychology student was on placement for 20 weeks and developed an adjustment group for residents which is now delivered by the Pastoral Care staff and has been highly successful. The student also continued with several groups started by previous psychology students along with many one-on-one psychology sessions with residents in the RAC. He commenced practicing at the Chinchilla Medical Practice and was also able to deliver several education sessions to the community from the practice. He presented education sessions to the Baby Tribe group at the Community Centre and primary school students at the Chinchilla Christian College.

We had several poster presentations from nursing students to staff on quality improvement activities throughout the year. It was great to see some students returning to the region after graduation to take up positions, two nursing students taking a position at the Miles hospital, one occupational therapy student gained employment at Chinchilla Hospital and

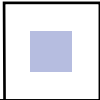
several other students gained placements and employment in rural and regional areas.

Staff and students engaged in numerous community events throughout the year. The Chinchilla Careers Expo saw a large increase in interest in our alternate pathway for students to nursing. Several students have enrolled in a School Based Traineeship in Cert III, Individual Support with a career aspiration of nursing and will complete this in conjunction with Southern Cross Care and Akadia Training Institute.

The Chinchilla County University Centre was opened in early 2025 and the partnership has been working well with many students registered and using the facilities while studying in Chinchilla and on placement.

Students also participated in a range of community events including the Chinchilla Birthday Party for 3-Year-Olds, Under 5s day and Ignite Your Futures. The past year was exciting for Chinchilla, and we can't wait to show you what's in store for 2026!





YEAR IN REVIEW 2025: RESEARCH



DR ADAM HULME

ARC DECRA FELLOW

The past three years have demonstrated consistent growth in research activity and impact at SQRH. I find myself wondering how each new year could possibly live up to the last. Yet, after a glance at the research summaries and outputs for 2025, I'm again reminded of the extraordinary consistency of the SQRH team and Clinical Educators in delivering, year-on-year, an impressive standard of rural health research excellence.

To begin, I'd like to take a moment for celebration and recognition. Dr Anthony Fallon's ongoing contributions to all things research-related at SQRH have earned him a well-deserved promotion to Principal Research Officer. We are also pleased to welcome Dr Benedict Osei Asibey as our new Research Fellow. Benedict has quickly immersed himself in the role and is already shaping an exciting portfolio of research programs focused on enhancing collaboration between clinicians and researchers to generate sustainable rural health outcomes. The number of conferences that SQRH staff have attended this year has been a standout, with researchers and Clinical Educators delivering 19 national presentations and showcasing the incredible work achieved throughout 2024-25.

Research topics included:

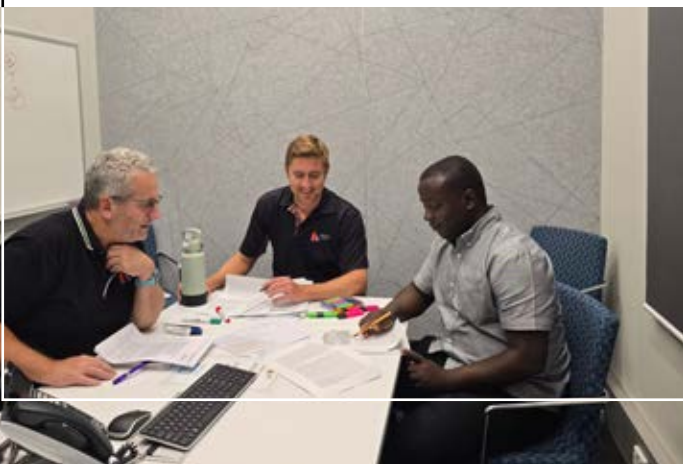
- Gamification in education and the Escape Room in a Briefcase concept
- Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE)

- Aspire2Health (health career outreach program)
- Longitudinal research on rural allied health profession length of stay in the public sector,
- Findings from our St George allied health and education training hub
- Pharmacist recruitment and retention, and
- The Groups4Health program combating social isolation and loneliness.

The SQRH team has continued to publish high-quality research in leading peer-reviewed journals, including the Australian Journal of Rural Health, BMC Geriatrics, System Dynamics Review, BMC Nursing, and Health Services Research. These publications span advanced statistical approaches, such as survival analyses examining rural healthcare workforce retention, alongside national-scale research on dementia care training and support, consumer engagement in rural health education and practice, systems thinking in healthcare safety, and the contribution of UDRHs to Indigenous health workforce development. With fifteen publications in 2025, this output reflects another year of substantial productivity, impact, and academic excellence. SQRH maintained strong momentum in grant activity during 2025, securing two Category 1 nationally competitive grants through the MRFF and NHMRC, alongside one successful local grant supporting rural health

workforce research. These successful applications span rural health services and workforce priorities and reflect collaboration with a broad network of national and international partners. In addition, multiple further Category 1 grant applications are under review at the time of writing, highlighting a growing national research presence.

This research activity in 2025 reflects the strength of the research culture at SQRH and the people behind it. I acknowledge Dr Tony Fallon, Dr Bahram Sangelaji, and Dr Benedict Osei Asibey for the energy, collegiality, and sustained commitment they bring to our research program. Their work is further supported by our very own Clara Walker, as well as former Director Associate Professor Geoff Argus, along with a dedicated group of Clinical Educators whose increasing involvement in research and grant development adds that all-important practical layer to our work. With the continued support of our partners at the University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health, and South West Hospital and Health Service, the organisation enters 2026 with a clear sense of purpose and a strong research direction. The progress achieved this year has strengthened an already solid foundation, positioning us well for continued growth. I am confident that the year ahead will bring further meaningful contributions to rural health research, and I look forward to continuing this work together.



ST GEORGE ALLIED HEALTH EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTRE



STEVE WOODRUFFE

CLINICAL EDUCATOR
(EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)



CASSANDRA WOLSKI

CLINIC ADMINISTRATION



The St George Allied Health Education and Training Centre continued to thrive in 2025 expanding student placement opportunities and delivering services to the St George community. In addition to the Healthy Lifestyles and Strength and Balance programs, the centre expanded its delivery of health promotion programs for the wider community. St George staff and students were very active within the community through several community engagement activities. In November we welcomed our newest team member: Physiotherapist Joshua Yates, who shares a role with us and the South West Hospital and Health Service.

Across both programs, 90 community participants participated, including 55 in Healthy Lifestyles and 35 in Strength and Balance. The Healthy Lifestyles program aims to reduce the risk of chronic disease through engagement in appropriate exercise and education on modifiable lifestyle factors. The Strength and Balance program aims to reduce the risk of falls through primarily strength and balance based physical activity with education focused on raising awareness of falls risks and improving safety within the home and community. In 2025, these programs were delivered across four, 8-week blocks, by students from exercise physiology, physiotherapy, exercise science and dietetics. Most participants reported improvements across a range of health indicators and provided positive feedback on their experience. The St George Clinic aims to continue to offer these programs throughout 2026.

In 2025 we welcomed Jacob to our small team as a First Nations Cadet under a collaborative agreement with the South West Hospital and Health Service. Jacob commenced his first year of a Bachelor of Clinical Exercise Physiology (Honours) through the University of Southern Queensland. To enable Jacob to stay in his hometown, study online and complete practical work hours, SQRH and SWHHS agreed it was a great fit for Jacob to join the St George team. Jacob developed practical skills as an emerging Exercise Physiologist alongside students on placement.

We welcomed 20 allied health students from Exercise Physiology, Dietetics, Physiotherapy and Pharmacy to our St George Clinic throughout 2025, a considerable increase from 2024. Placements included a combination of student-led clinical service project-based placements (Pharmacy and Dietetics). Through our partnership with the University of Southern Queensland, Exercise Science placements commenced in the clinic in 2025. Through a mix of two and four-week placements Exercise Science students were responsible for delivery of two new health promotion programs: StrongHER Together and Fat Farmers.

The StrongHER Together program originated through a Balonne Shire council and State Government funded initiative to get more women and girls active. StrongHER Together was a 12-week program to introduce women and girls to the many varied concepts of Resistance Training. Students were a vital component in this, particularly our female students. By the end of the 12 weeks over 1000 individual attendances had occurred.

The Fat Farmers program was a locally generated idea, building on the success of other rural communities to encourage community members to increase their physical activity levels through group exercise participation. Led by exercise physiology and exercise science students, the 45-minute sessions focused on all-round strength and fitness-based activities tailored to all levels of capability. The St George clinic was the first Queensland site to adopt the program ethos. Initially a six-week trial, this was extended and continued throughout 2025.

KEY INITIATIVES

- Pharmacy – Quality Use of Medicines student project
“Improving Medication Reconciliation: Evaluating discrepancies between best possible medication history and General Practitioner medication lists in a rural setting.”
- Dietetics – Rural Immersion Placement Program – Allied Health (RIPPAH)
“Supporting Healthy Lifestyles: A community-based nutrition education project.”

Community Engagement and Collaborations

- Goondir Elders Exercise Group
- Careers and Jobs Expo -CUC
- Teddy Bears Hospital – CUC, Vital Health, RFDS
- Sporting Horizons – CUC
- Queensland Country Womens Association Health and Wellbeing Expo
- NAIDOC Week and Closing the Gap Day activities
- Country Universities Centre Charity Ball
- Mental Health week -Riverside Rhythm Exercise Class with Care Balonne
- Battle on the Balonne Triathlon
- Student Engagement events – trivia and games nights, barbeques

CARDIAC AND PULMONARY REHABILITATION



KATE BELL

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)



KRISTY WILDERMUTH

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)



In 2025, ongoing collaborations between SQRH, the Toowoomba Heart Care Team, and the Toowoomba Respiratory Team continued to deliver high-quality outpatient cardiac and pulmonary services across the Darling Downs region. SQRH Exercise Physiology Clinical Educators Kate Bell and Kristy Wildermuth contributed to deliver services alongside Physiotherapy Clinical Educators Madison-Lee Clarke and Tienielle Kent.

In addition to supporting patients cardiac or pulmonary conditions, these services provided valuable clinical placement experiences for exercise physiology students. In 2025, students from The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, University of the Sunshine Coast, and Griffith University were involved in the service delivery. Students reported highly positive feedback particularly valuing interprofessional collaboration and case conferencing.

CARDIAC REHABILITATION:

In 2025, 111 initial assessments were completed for cardiac rehabilitation. Approximately 80% of patients completed the program, demonstrating strong engagement. Patients actively engaged in education sessions delivered by multiple disciplines including dietetics, nursing, occupational therapy and psychology. Exercise Physiology students and Clinical Educators also had the opportunity to deliver an education topic to patients which was well received and always sparked interesting and productive conversation. Patients who have completed the cardiac rehabilitation program continued to be invited to attend the maintenance group, with students involved with supporting these patients. Overall feedback on cardiac rehabilitation remained very positive, with patients often reporting an increase in confidence, strength, reduction in symptoms and improved fitness.

PULMONARY REHABILITATION:

36 initial assessments were completed in 2025 for the Pulmonary Rehabilitation program. In 2025, The Darling Downs Respiratory Service was involved in a service mapping project conducted by the Clinical Excellence Queensland Health Improvement team with specific review and mapping of pulmonary rehab services offered. 2025 has also seen ongoing collaboration with our colleagues in Ipswich with the Western Corridor telerehabilitation service both as a referral pathway option and valuable support. Kate and Kristy also had the opportunity to network with the Ipswich team when they attended the Queensland Clinical Network Cardiorespiratory Forum in June.

AT A GLANCE

PULMONARY REHAB PROGRAM



31

People completed the program

CARDIAC REHAB PROGRAM



80%

Patients completed the program



My cardiac rehab placement at SQRH was a really positive experience and exceeded my expectations. I loved working as part of a multidisciplinary team and felt well supported by supervisors, which helped me build my confidence, knowledge and clinical skills. The environment was welcoming, and working with the patients made the placement both enjoyable and valuable.

- Thomas
Exercise Physiology Student, UniSQ





**KNOWLEDGE + NEW SKILLS + AMAZING SUPPORT
= POSITIVE STEPS TOWARDS BETTER HEALTH**



HEALTH AND WELLNESS CLINIC

DAYLE OSBORN

HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC COORDINATOR

The Health and Wellness Clinic (HaWC) program continues to be popular within the Toowoomba region with referrals in 2025 again exceeding available places.

This year 40 participants commenced their journey with HaWC to improve their overall health and reduce their risk for chronic disease. Whilst the group exercise, education sessions and physical elements of the program continued in popularity, program participants voiced they equally valued the shared experience, social connection and benefits to their mental health. This holistic approach to health remains a strength of the program structure.

On average participants improved their health across a range of outcomes including walking distance, strength, moderate exercise per week, fruit and vegetable intake and risk for developing diabetes. Participants also reported benefits from the involvement of more than one health discipline believing it contributed to improved care received.

During 2025 33 students from exercise

physiology, physiotherapy, social work, dietetics, and nursing took up the opportunity of a placement in HaWC. These students from the University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, University of Sunshine Coast and Griffith University worked together with the Clinical Educators, supporting participants to learn about simple steps to change their health for the better. Students continued to report they valued learning about and working closely with other disciplines – an opportunity not typical on most placements.

Research activity increased in HaWC this year with work exploring the impact of goal setting on behaviour change. Additional activity has included bolstering the systems supporting data collection within the clinic, review and updating program content, and collective work to improve the student experience and program efficiencies across SQRH clinic sites.

Moving into 2026 the Health and Wellness Clinic have updated their offerings with

key improvements being a shorter program duration, with more flexibility and less time commitment required. This is intended to increase access for those in the workforce with less availability to attend sessions during business hours. The focus on chronic disease prevention will continue through a 'Healthy Lifestyles Program', whilst another concurrent offering 'Strength and Balance' will meet the needs of those people hoping to reduce falls risk and improve their balance. More information is available through the website – see QR Code below.



2026 is shaping up to be another exciting year in the Health and Wellness Clinic delivering unique student interprofessional placements benefiting the local community.

CLINIC STATISTICS



Participants commenced the HaWC Program in 2025



Surveyed participants said they intended to maintain the health behaviours recommended to them at HaWC



Occasions of service provided



Students completed 201 weeks of interprofessional placement at HaWC



A PROGRAM WITH SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025 - HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC CONT.

ON AVERAGE, PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETED THE PROGRAM:

- Increased their muscle mass and grip strength
- Increased the distance they walked in 6 minutes
- Increased their amount of moderate activity each week
- Increased their intake of fruit and vegetables
- Reduced their Diabetes Risk Score

100% reported feeling more able to keep themselves healthy, and having improved confidence in their health

100% intended to continue to work towards their health and wellness goals beyond the program

STUDENTS SAID THEY VALUED...

- "Interprofessional interaction"
- "Team work and supportive staff"
- "The positive learning environment and the support and constructive feedback provided by supervisors"
- "Learning the value and effectiveness of interprofessional teams within healthcare to be to apply a little bit of each professions' practice into my own"
- "Insight into interprofessional teams and how all different disciplines play a role in enhancing patient care and outcomes"
- "How hands on it all was. This was a great experience for how things would be in the real world"

REPORTED PARTICIPANT CHANGES IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING...

- "This course has made me realise that I need to put my health and wellbeing as a priority"
- "Feel so much more confident with my ability to do more exercise and make changes to my diet"
- "Mentally able to cope much better with family commitments"
- "My mental health has improved so much ... this group saved my life"
- "Ability to move ... hope for the future"
- "Feel healthier and more confident"
- "Regained my balance"
- "Gained strength in my legs, better balance, knowledge in diet"
- "Feel so much fitter and looking forward to continuing with exercise program and eating better"
- "Feeling stronger, more flexible in my movement and better informed about healthier meal choices"
- "Doing the gym has seen me losing weight, feeling happier with now having a purpose and a plan to achieve"

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID THEY VALUED...

- "Personalised exercise program"
- "Breaking their negative cycle"
- "Meeting people and creating friendships"
- "Self-belief and self-respect leading to more self-confidence"
- "Feeling fitter"
- "Getting one on one help from educators and students"
- "Setting me up to be able to now self-manage my health far better than I could when I first started"
- "Education and exercise program"
- "It was good to feel I was a person; people knew your name, you mattered. Very nurturing environment"
- "Friendship, laughter"
- "All of the learning I have gained from each and every student"

CLINICAL EDUCATORS

OUT AND ABOUT

CE Colleen Forde (Nursing) speaks to UniSQ students at "O week" about rural placements



CE Lucy Parker (Pharmacy) and CE Adeline Vains (Nursing) present on Gamified education tools at the APC Interprofessional Colloquium in Melbourne



CE Kate Bell (Exercise Physiology) facilitating an Escape Room in a Briefcase



CE's Telia Simpson (Midwifery) and Adeline Vains (Nursing) delivering an on-line education session



CE Steve Woodruffe (Exercise Physiology) and CE Emma Gordon (Allied Health) at Sporting Horizons St George



CE Telia Simpson (Midwifery) running Imminent Birth workshop at Cunnamulla Hospital



CE's Tenielle Kent and Madison-Lee Clarke (Physiotherapy), Lucy Parker (Pharmacy) and Jayne Kirkpatrick (Dietetics) enjoy a break during a face-to-face workshop.



CE Colleen Forde (Nursing) nominated for UQ award for excellence in leadership



CE's Neelam Nayak (Physiotherapy) and Natalie Delgado (Occupational Therapy) piloting a new briefcase educational tool



Deputy Director and Nursing CE Christie-Anne Hunter and UniSQ Lecturer Jessie Elliott present on rural nursing at the AQNML conference

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CE Maryanne Long (Social Work) presents on Tackling Loneliness at the ANZAHPE Conference in Perth



CE Chrissie O'Connell (Speech Therapy) presents on Interprofessional Student Workshops at ANZAPHE Conference in Perth

FOSTERING FRIENDSHIPS AND

CONNECTIONS WITHIN OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES.



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CI-AHN VOGLER

STUDENT SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

(DARLING DOWNS)

This year was all about refining and strengthening the support we provide to students, ensuring they feel at home and connected during their time in our communities.

We undertook major revisions to our houses to make sure every property remains well-equipped and welcoming. Refreshing spaces helped maintain the high standard of accommodation that students have come to expect from SQRH.

Engagement remained a cornerstone of the student experience in 2025. We hosted game nights and trivia sessions, creating opportunities for students to relax and connect. St George was a hub of activity, with outings that showcased the best of rural life—burgers and bowls, sheep shearing demonstrations, cotton farm tours, harvest farm visits, horse

riding, golf days and even competing in the Battle on the Balonne Backward Triathlon. These experiences not only provided fun but also deepened students' appreciation for the communities they have joined.

This year, SQRH awarded more than \$85,000 in bursaries, continuing our commitment to easing the financial burden of rural placements. In addition, 2025 marked a significant milestone: for the first time, we were able to offer free accommodation to all domestic nursing, midwifery, and allied health students completing placements of eight weeks or longer in a rural or remote area. This initiative reflects our dedication to removing barriers and making rural placements more accessible.

Demand for accommodation rose across

all locations, presenting challenges balanced through collaboration with health services and other providers. Despite these pressures, student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Many students shared that their rural experiences inspired them to apply for jobs in regional areas after graduation which was a testament to the impact of these placements.

As we move into 2026, exciting plans are on the horizon. We aim to host even more student events, add two new rooms in Warwick to meet growing demand, and undertake renovations on one of our Charleville houses to increase capacity.

These initiatives will ensure SQRH continues to provide outstanding support and opportunities for students exploring rural health careers.





ASPIRE2HEALTH



NATALIE DELGADO

CLINICAL EDUCATOR
(OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY)

What a year for our Aspire2Health series, which saw the event delivered right across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland in 2025. SQRH is fortunate to collaborate with Rural Medical Education Australia, Griffith University, the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Queensland – Rural Clinical School, Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise, and the Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network, to provide this immersive and engaging workshop to high school students.

Once again, grade 9 and 10 students across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland were offered the opportunity to attend Aspire2Health and hear from health professionals from in areas such as dietetics, exercise physiology, medicine, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, psychology, speech pathology, social work and Indigenous health. The students were presented





with a patient case study and were able to have a hands-on experience solving the healthcare “puzzle” from the perspective of various health professions.

They also had the opportunity to learn about different pathways to gain tertiary qualifications as a health professional. In 2025, 10 Aspire2Health events were offered across the Darling Downs and South West regions, with a total of 270 students engaging in the learning experience. Seventeen schools outside of Toowoomba and eighteen schools within the Toowoomba district attended the program. A common theme among the student feedback provided was appreciation for the hands-on learning activities, the opportunity to connect with like-minded students, gaining an understanding of different universities, and building awareness of how health professionals work together.

Aspire2Health events continue to provide valuable health career exposure for school students across the region. These events involved significant travel and coordination; however, they consistently delivered strong engagement outcomes. The curiosity and refreshing outlook that each student brings to the case study and experience is inspiring and reminds us that the future of our regional, rural, and remote health workforce is bright!



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SUPERVISION SERIES



TENIELLE KENT

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (PHYSIOTHERAPY)

The SQRH Clinical Education team remained dedicated in 2025 to delivering high-quality learning opportunities for health professionals across the region.

During 2025, education offerings and workshops were expanded and refined, including Supercharge Your Supervision Skills and - its advanced follow-on series, Master Your Supervision Skills. A total of 15 online sessions and five face-to-face workshops were delivered, enabling participation from clinicians across Australia.

As part of this effort, the Clinical Education team undertook a rural roadshow, delivering one-day workshops in Charleville, Roma, and St George, engaging a total of 45 clinicians across the three days. This roadshow supported local health clinicians by bringing supervision training directly to their

communities, strengthening student placement capabilities and, ultimately, workforce pipelines across South West Queensland.

As demand for supervision skill development continued to grow, we welcomed participants from a wide range of settings, including hospitals, private practices, community services, and education providers. With more than 300 attendances recorded across all sessions and workshops this year, SQRH continued to play a vital role in strengthening clinical supervision capacity and enhancing student placement experiences.

We are excited to continue offering our supervision training throughout 2026 and to further support the professional growth of health practitioners across the region.







SQRH
Southern Queensland
Rural Health

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



Darling Downs
Health



South West
Hospital and Health Service