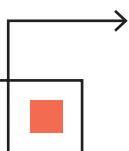




**SQRH**  
Southern Queensland  
Rural Health

# 2023

## YEAR IN REVIEW



**A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:**



**Darling Downs**  
Health





# 2023 AT A GLANCE

 **8,786**  
Placement Weeks

 **1,538**  
Total Placements

 **120**  
Students received an extended placement bursary

 **335**  
Students stayed in SQRH accommodation


 **6**  
Successful research grants submissions

 **18**  
Peer-reviewed research publications

 **2,058**  
Weeks of SQRH supported accommodation

 **262**  
School students attended Aspire 2 Health

 **349**  
Attendance at health workforce professional development sessions

 **60**  
Health professionals and students completed Telehealth clinical practice modules



# CONTENTS

<b>2023 At a Glance</b> The highlights for the year	2
<b>Who We Are</b> About us and our mission	4
<b>Advisory Board Chair's Report</b> Derek Tuffield OAM	6
<b>Director's Report</b> Associate Professor Geoff Argus	7
<b>Board Members' Reports</b> 2023 updates from SQRH board	8
<b>3rd Birthday for Charleville</b> A community health celebration	12
<b>A Strong Start for Chinchilla</b> New education and training hub	14
<b>First Nations Health</b> An important year for all	16
<b>End-to-end Bachelor of Nursing</b> Students find their health pathway	18
<b>St George Allied Health</b> A massive year of firsts	19
<b>Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation</b> Community health through collaborations	20
<b>Health &amp; Wellness Clinic</b> Preparing the future health workforce	22
<b>Clinical Education Team</b> Growing the interprofessional workforce	24
<b>Student Support</b> Creating memorable experiences	26
<b>Aspire2Health</b> Helping pave student pathways	28
<b>Diving Deeper Into Research</b> Achievements, grants, and new findings	30
<b>Supercharge Series</b> Supervision skills brought to many	31





## 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) and is a collaboration between The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service. SQRH is proudly funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care under the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program.

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

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







## ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT

### DEREK TUFFIELD OAM INDEPENDENT CHAIR

What a wonderful year 2023 has delivered to us at Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) filled with challenges but phenomenally successful as you will see when you read though this year's "Year in Review".

#### ST GEORGE ALLIED HEALTH PROJECT

During 2023 we were successful in securing Federal Government funding of \$1.9 Million for the expansion of rural health multidisciplinary training programs in St George.

This program is being delivered by SQRH in partnership with Goondir Health Services to support more allied health and nursing students training in St George.

Student placements during 2023 included Dietetics, Exercise Physiology, Occupational Therapy, Pharmacy, Social Work and Physiotherapy.

#### CHINCHILLA AGED CARE HUB PROJECT

We have partnered with Southern Cross Care to establish a new Training and Education Centre to provide vital training opportunities for people in the region who are embarking on a healthcare career. We were successful in securing Federal funding of \$2.9 Million for this project.

Work commenced on this project on the 31st of July 2023 and the construction was completed by mid-November. The official opening is planned for 2024.

#### CHARLEVILLE HOUSE PURCHASE

To provide additional student accommodation in Charleville we purchased another house property which has received minor renovations and should be ready for students by the end of January 2024.

#### RURAL VISITS

The SQRH Advisory Board continued its commitment to rural visits during 2023. In October we travelled to St George to view the Goondir Community Wellbeing Centre, formally the St George RSL.

The completion of the renovation was completed by 31 October with our SQRH staff operational in this new Community Wellbeing Centre in November 2023.

#### SQRH ADVISORY BOARD - STRATEGIC PLANNING

It is now more than five years since the formation of SQRH. Discussions commenced in October 2022 at Charleville. Work will continue with the

Strategic Plan during 2024 with the latest meeting being held on the 13th of December 2023.

#### RECRUITMENT

By the end of January 2024 SQRH will employ forty-two staff across the Darling Downs and South West region and will have achieved almost 100% staff capacity which is exceptional given the current employment challenges existing in Australia today.

#### ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my fellow SQRH Advisory Board Members Professor Bruce Abernethy (UQ), Professor Glen Coleman (UniSQ), Dr Tony Brown (South West Health Hospital and Health Service) and Annette Scott (Darling Downs Health Hospital Service) for their support and commitment to SQRH.

Over the past 5.5 years I have had the pleasure to work with some very talented, Advisory Board members, staff, and various health professionals. As the end of the 2023 year quickly approaches the time has come for me as Independent Chair and fellow Advisory Board Member Professor Bruce Abernethy to step down with effect 31 December 2023.

May I pass on my sincere congratulations to Associated Professor Geoff Argus, our Director, for his leadership, dedication, and commitment to continued growth and success of SQRH over the past 12 months and may 2024 continue to be as successful as the prior 12 months.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GEOFF ARGUS

2023 was another extraordinarily productive year for SQRH. The SQRH consortium supported over 8000 weeks of student placements across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland, the highest number to date.

We also saw a significant increase in students completing extended placements of 8 weeks or more in rural and remote locations. This is a testament to the collaborative work between The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service in developing immersive rural placement experiences for the future rural health workforce.

SQRH also partnered with the Office of the Chief Allied Health Officer and South West Hospital and Health Service to support the Rural Immersive Placement Program – Allied Health (RIPPAH) which saw students from physiotherapy and dietetics complete extended placements of 10 weeks in South West Queensland.

Rural health research outputs also increased in 2023 with 18 SQRH-affiliated peer-reviewed publications.

In addition, SQRH staff have been heavily involved in building the capacity and capability of rural clinicians to undertake research.

These activities are part of the Darling Downs Health Innovation and Research Collaborative (DDHIRC), of which SQRH is a founding member. Congratulations to Dr Adam Hulme, SQRH Research

Fellow who was successful in being awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award (DECRA) grant which will investigate the impacts of climate change on challenges with recruitment and retention of a rural health workforce.

The SQRH St George Allied Health Education Hub, a collaboration with Goondir Health Services, had its full year of operation in 2023. Students and staff delivered a series of healthy lifestyle programs to community members to improve health outcomes and reduce the burden of chronic disease in St George.

We are excited for the completion for the Goondir St George Community Wellbeing Centre which will formally open in 2024 and provide a unique range of social, emotional and physical wellbeing activities and look forward to a long and fruitful collaboration with Goondir.

In Chinchilla, capital works on the new SQRH Health Education and Training Centre were completed in late 2023 and an official opening will occur in 2024. This partnership with Southern Cross Care Queensland (SCCQ) at Illoura Village, Chinchilla is designed to provide health students with important skills and knowledge in aged care and healthy ageing.

We are very grateful for the support of SCCQ for our staff and students who work alongside SCCQ staff to improve the lives of residents at Illoura Village and residents in Miles and Tara with outreach visits.



The work of SQRH is one of collaboration, and any achievements we have are a result of collaborative work with our stakeholders and the communities we serve.



At the end of 2023, the SQRH Advisory Board farewelled Independent Board Chair, Mr Derek Tuffield OAM and Professor Bruce Abernethy AM, Executive Dean, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, The University of Queensland.

Both Derek and Bruce have been outstanding ambassadors and advocates of the work of SQRH and instrumental in the achievements of SQRH from its inception in 2017. They will both be sorely missed on the Board and I would like to wish them both the very best for the future.

Finally, I would like to thank all our important stakeholders across the region. The work of SQRH is one of collaboration, and any achievements we have are a result of collaborative work with our stakeholders and the communities we serve.

We are fortunate at SQRH to have such dedicated and hard-working staff who are passionate about improving the health of regional, rural and remote communities. Staff are constantly engaging with stakeholders to continually improve on what we do and adapt to a fast-changing landscape.





# BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

On behalf of the University of Queensland (UQ) I wish to extend congratulations to the Director, Associate Professor Geoff Argus, and all of the team at SQRH for another outstanding year of enhancing the clinical training experiences and opportunities for nursing, midwifery and allied health students in the Darling Downs and South West.

UQ is proud to be both one of the four core members of the SQRH consortium and the holder of the University Department of Rural Health contract with the Commonwealth.

As in previous years, we are thrilled with the progress SQRH has made throughout 2023 and extremely grateful for the opportunities SQRH has created for our students and staff to gain exceptional rural and regional experience. These rural experiences for the next generation of the health workforce are crucial for building

the future health service capacity for 'the bush'.

Over the last 12 months UQ 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 expansive footprints of Darling Downs Health and the South West Hospital and Health Service.

This experience of a genuine rural immersion has not only brought the opportunity of a future rural health career to the forefront of the minds of these students but has also helped sharpen their skills and preparation for such a career.

As we are all acutely aware, health is facing looming workforce shortages sector-and indeed world-wide and these shortages are predicted to be particularly acute in the non-metropolitan areas. It is for this very reason that the work of SQRH is of ever-increasing importance.

In addition to its core business of arranging and growing clinical placements for students some of the other noteworthy achievements of SQRH in 2023 have included the formalisation and socialisation of a core Principles of Collaboration document

that clarifies the responsibilities and expectations of all parties in the consortium, the procurement of national competitive grant funding for research, and the completion of the important infrastructure projects that will enable extension of allied health offerings in St George (in partnership with Goondir Health Services) and aged care placements in Chinchilla (in partnership with Southern Cross Care).

In closing I wish to acknowledge the important work undertaken by our inaugural Board Chair, Derek Tuffield OAM, in guiding the SQRH Board through its formative years and extend the very best wishes of all to Derek in his retirement. Like Derek, I will also step down from my role as the UQ representative on the Board at the end of 2023 and will be replaced by the new Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences, Professor Louise Hickson.

I have enjoyed my time on the Board enormously and wish to sincerely thank my fellow Board members along with all the staff at SQRH for their strong commitment to collaboration and embodiment of a 'can do' attitude pivotal to the ongoing success of the Centre.

## PROFESSOR BRUCE ABERNETHY

OUTGOING EXECUTIVE DEAN, FACULTY OF HEALTH, BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES, THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND



## PROFESSOR GLEN COLEMAN

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC AFFAIRS), UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND



It has been another successful year for SQRH. UniSQ is proud to be part of the SQRH consortium as it helps develop and deliver a skilled workforce in nursing and allied Health for our regional communities.

SQRH is central to the delivery of our nursing program delivered end-to-end in Charleville, which produced its first graduates in 2023.

This collaboration with our partners in SQRH, Charleville State High School and the Charleville community is a significant milestone in training and keeping nursing professionals in regional and remote areas of the State

Fifteen students from Charleville and the surrounding regions are enrolled in this program, including several First Nations students.

The support of SQRH has also allowed UniSQ to expand its range of health program offers to student, with degrees in speech pathology, occupational therapy and social work first offered in 2023, and physiotherapy to be offered in 2024.

These programs, along with our existing nursing and allied health programs, including psychology and counselling, benefit from SQRH's leadership in interprofessional education and telehealth, as well as their support for students who undertake placement in the Darling Downs and South West region.

Working in the region provides our students with an insight into the challenges and the rewards of working in rural and regional communities.



SQRH is central to the delivery of our nursing program delivered end-to-end in Charleville, which produced its first graduates in 2023.



The success, expertise and support of SQRH has allowed UniSQ to design programs that focus on interprofessional practice and developing in our graduates an understanding of the particular health challenges faced by rural and regional communities.

UniSQ is excited about the opportunities that lay ahead in 2024 and working with our colleagues from our three consortium partners to build and expand upon our activities in achieving a health workforce in regional areas, including leveraging the opportunities arising from the successful projects at St George and Chinchilla.

Congratulations to Geoff Argus and the team on their achievements in 2023.







## ADJUNCT PROFESSOR ANNETTE SCOTT, PSM

HEALTH SERVICE CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
DARLING DOWNS HEALTH

The SQRH consortium excelled in its 6th year of operation and continued their impressive momentum and strong collaboration to attract and retain a sustainable rural health workforce through the development of innovative training and enhanced student placement experiences in 2023.

Darling Downs Health and SQRH consortia partners have built on previous years' success and I'm proud of the many examples of positive opportunities for growing the rural health nursing, midwifery and allied health workforce in the Darling Downs region:

- SQRH increased extended Allied Health placements and provided supported student accommodation in Kingaroy and Dalby allowing vital placements to proceed in these regions.
- Darling Downs Health students on the Baillie Henderson Hospital campus have utilised SQRH office facilities to attend student tutorials. This has enabled students to access regular teaching whilst remaining at their regular placement site.
- The innovative Escape Room in a Briefcase activity was experienced by Darling Downs Health Clinical Education Support Officers. The aim was to develop a strong working

relationship with new team members and assess the activity for inclusion in the New Graduate activity plan. The activity was fun and engaging and the team found it valuable to reflect on the strengths of the individuals within the team and their different approaches to problem solving.

- A "Growing Midwifery Workforce" Workshop was conducted in collaboration with SQRH, Rural Medical Education Australia (RMEA) and university partners including The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, and Griffith University. The purpose of this workshop was to discuss and look at maximising opportunities to increase midwifery placements at Darling Downs Health.
- Student Workshop in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE) training was attended by Darling Downs Health Allied Health students. I received feedback from one dietetic student who found a wonderful support group of students from Pharmacy, Nursing and Speech Therapy after attending SWIPE in her second semester. This significantly contributed to her enjoyment of placement.

Darling Downs  
Health

- SQRH and Darling Downs Health jointly planned extended Physiotherapy placements shared between the hospital and private providers in Goondiwindi, as well as extended Occupational Therapy placements in St George. These extended rural health placements are not only valuable for students as they experience a diverse range of clinical experiences but are also an important part of the strategy to address rural and remote health workforce shortages into the future.

- Darling Downs Health Director Physiotherapy and SQRH Physiotherapy Clinical Educator attended a meet & greet function with the first-year intake of Bachelor Physiotherapy students at University of Southern Queensland, Ipswich campus, discussing opportunities such as employing students in traineeship positions and future clinical placements in Darling Downs Health.

Moving forward in 2024, I'm looking forward to working with my SQRH colleagues in a unified approach to staffing our hospitals and health services across Southern Queensland.



## BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

SQRH has achieved much in 2023 that enables the health workforce pathway in SWHHS and DDHHS geographical region. Associate Professor Geoff Argus and his team have worked tirelessly to develop and sustain training for the nursing, midwifery and allied health through innovation, hard work and partnerships.

It has been an honour to be on the Board of SQRH and I would like to thank Professor Bruce Abernethy, Adjunct Professor Annette Scott, Derek Tuffield and Professor Glen Coleman for their wisdom and hard work this year in guiding the UDRH.

I would especially like to honour Professor Bruce Abernethy for years of service on the board of SQRH; the results of his vision and work are evident in the outcomes SQRH has achieved and Derek Tuffield for his amazing leadership as Independent Chair since the inception of SQRH. Both have recently retired from the board. I welcome Professor Louise Hickson who is replacing Professor Bruce Abernethy and look forward to working with her in the governance of SQRH.



... The professional range of students and the number training in our remote facilities have all increased.



The highlights of this year have been numerous. The number of students, the length of their training in the region, the professional range of students and the number training in our remote facilities have all increased.

This not only fulfills the purpose of SQRH but bodes well for SWHHS in the future. Evidence tells us that achieving these outcomes means that more health workers will choose to work in the SWHHS and they will be better equipped to serve their communities.

Developing partnerships and infrastructure in St George with Goondir shows the maturity in the organisation and works towards closing the gap in health outcomes for the First Nations peoples of the Balonne region.

The graduation of the 6 nurses at the SQRH building in Charleville earlier in 2024 was a very exciting event. This was a ground breaking outcome from a lot of work, vision and energy in the partnership between USQ and SQRH.

Training locals, locally is the most evidenced way to develop the local workforce of the future. The program is expanding due to the commitment of both organisations.

As I attend community forums throughout SWHHS I am asked what is the solution to the health workforce crisis in rural and remote Australia. I am proud to describe the achievements of SQRH to our communities and offer hope for the future.

SQRH is well placed to continue to innovate and deliver into 2024. Geoff Argus has developed a highly committed and skilled team to progress the purpose of the organisation and I am proud to be part of the organisation.

## DR TONY BROWN

HEALTH SERVICE CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE, SOUTH WEST  
HOSPITAL AND  
HEALTH SERVICE

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







## A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH CELEBRATION IN CHARLEVILLE: SUCCESSFUL 3RD-YEAR BIRTHDAY PARTY



SALLY GORMAN

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (NURSING)

The celebration, organised in partnership with the South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS) HOPE Project, Starlight Foundation, Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH) and SWHHS Allied Health, showcased a commitment to preparing three-year-old children for kindergarten.

Key highlights included Captain Starlight's engaging presence, interactive health passports for children, educational workshops, and the innovative dental clinic experience.

The collaborative efforts of all partners, coupled with the active engagement of the community, resulted in a resounding success for our 3rd-year Birthday Party.



Key highlights included Captain Starlight's engaging presence, interactive health passports for children, educational workshops, and an innovative dental clinic experience.



### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Interactive Health Passport:** Children were equipped with health passports upon arrival, encouraging their participation in various health promotion activities throughout the event. This hands-on approach facilitated meaningful interactions and educational opportunities.
- **Community Engagement and Captain Starlight's Presence:** The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from community partners, with Captain Starlight becoming a focal point of joy for children.
- **Educational Workshops:** Collaborative efforts with Anglicare resulted in a stained-glass flower craft activity, while SWHHS child health nurses, SQRH and SQRH CE Nursing conducted height and weight checks. The SWHHS Dietitian's engaging fruit and vegetable display promoted healthy eating habits.
- **Dental Clinic Experience:** The dental clinic's innovative approach, using camping lounge chairs as dental chairs, created a friendly and enjoyable environment for children undergoing dental check-ups.
- **QAS "Toy" Truck:** The QAS truck, equipped with sirens and a steering wheel, provided both entertainment and education for the children, contributing to a well-rounded event.
- **Community Services Presence:** Lifeline, C&K Kindy, Charleville State School Learning Support, and Services Australia actively participated, offering valuable information and support to attendees.
- **Health Screenings and Support:** CWAATSICH's health van facilitated hearing screenings in collaboration with Hearing Australia. The SWHHS Allied Health Team, including Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologist and the Mental Health Team, engaged children in various activities promoting overall well-being.
- The success of the event was rooted in strong collaborative efforts with SQRH, the SWHHS HOPE Project, Starlight Foundation, CWAATSICH, and SWHHS Allied Health. These partnerships brought together a diverse range of expertise, resources, and a shared commitment to community health.







CLARE DAL BON

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)

COLLEEN FORDE

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (NURSING)

In 2023 the Chinchilla team welcomed 17 Allied Health and Nursing students to our new Education and Training centre, which was funded through an expansion of the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program.

In partnership with Southern Cross Care Queensland, the team delivered allied health and nursing services to the Chinchilla community and residents in the Chinchilla, Miles and Tara aged care homes. We hit the ground running and commenced an intergenerational program with the neighbouring Chinchilla

State High School and delivered student workshops in interprofessional education, staff supervision workshops and foundations of leadership training.

We have had several 'wins' across the year, forging relationships with local health providers and seeing four students commence roles in the rural and regional workforce following their graduation.

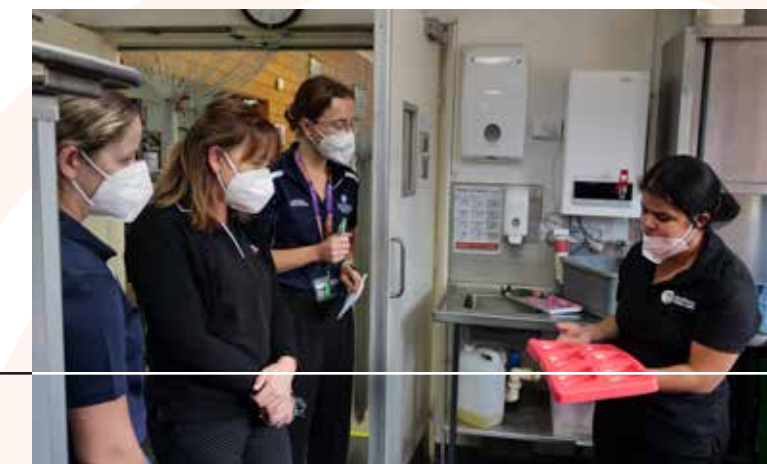
We look forward to welcoming a new group of students in 2024 and expanding on our footprint with local stakeholders in the Western Downs region.

Capital works were completed in late 2023 for the SQRH Health Education and Training Centre at the SCCQ Illoura Village. We are very grateful to architects Cottee Parker, project managers Knight Frank and builders Girvan Group for delivering an excellent facility.

We are extremely proud to partner with SCCQ in this important aged care initiative and look forward to the official opening of the centre in 2024.



## CHINCHILLA WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS AND STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY CARE







## AN IMPORTANT YEAR FOR FIRST NATIONS HEALTH



LEE LINGWOODOCK

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (INDIGENOUS HEALTH)

**2023 was a busy year for me, I had just come on-board with SQRH late in 2022, so was finding my feet as well as getting to know our partners and stakeholders in the Darling Downs region and across South West Queensland.**

In that time, I have developed Cultural Safety Training sessions and piloted the Aim Higher program.

The Cultural Safety Training is for our rural students who are on placement in our training hubs, SQRH staff and other interested parties. Aim Higher is intended for Indigenous Secondary School students to encourage them to go on to university to pursue a health career.

I have had many great experiences spending time in Charleville, St George and Chinchilla sites delivering Cultural Safety Training and speaking with stakeholders.

The 3rd birthday party in Cherbourg and Charleville was one of the highlights of 2023. There were many supporting agencies and lots of kiddies from the local kindy, the children had so much fun and learned along the way.

This is an important activity for health students to be involved in health checks for 3-year-old Indigenous children.

In October I was invited by the Aboriginal Liaison Officer to attend an Aboriginal Networking Day at the Kingaroy State High School. It was a great day and lots of connections were made. Students were treated to many stories and information about how to get into university and how to find a job.

It was also a very culturally significant day as we had an Aboriginal Ranger from Parks and Wildlife who talked about the local environment and how they protect it. If any of the students were interested in becoming a Ranger, they were given information on how to do this.

Another great event was when I and other clinical educators attended the Murgon Secondary School to participate in an Aspire to Health Day. The students were very interested in the hands-on health activities where they had a chance to test their skills in giving injections and bandaging injuries on dummies.

## COLLABORATING WITH CWAATSICH IN CHILD HEALTH



SALLY GORMAN

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (NURSING)

**Our collaboration with Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH) continues to flourish as we work synergistically to enhance the well-being of mothers and children attending the Aboriginal Medical Service.**

CWAATSICH generously supported our Nurse Educator in Nursing Sally, along with their Aboriginal Health Practitioner (Maternal and Child Health) Judy, enabling them to participate in a prestigious first 1,000-days workshop held in Melbourne.

This workshop provided Sally and Judy with a comprehensive understanding of culturally appropriate activities for our Mum's and Bub's program.

The program, operating weekly during the school term, primarily caters to children aged 3 and under. Recently

expanded to include Medical, Allied Health, and Nursing Students during their placements, the initiative offers valuable time for interaction and learning.

During Mum's and Bub's mornings, children engaged in a diverse range of activities, such as crafts, cooking, singing, dancing, and story time. Notably, we hosted a wildlife carer who brought along a baby possum and joey kangaroo, enriching the experience for the children.

To keep parents informed, a fortnightly newsletter covering various educational topics was developed and distributed.

Additionally, it serves as a reminder for attending the clinic, where Outback Kids Check and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Check appointments are conducted, overseen by Sally and Jude. Their responsibility includes the completion of these essential health assessments.





## UNISQ'S END-TO-END BACHELOR OF NURSING PROGRAM THRIVES IN CHARLEVILLE



SALLY GORMAN

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (NURSING)

SQRH is so very proud to support the UniSQ end-to-end Bachelor of Nursing Program in Charleville.

This is a unique program that allows local students from the South West to complete their studies whilst staying close to home. Each semester, all students actively participate in a residential school hosted in our state-of-the-art simulation and training rooms located in Charleville.

Throughout this week-long event, we strive to actively engage with the students, organising dedicated luncheons for each academic year level.

In the academic year 2023, we welcomed 8 first-year students, 8 second-year students, and 5 third-year students. The catchment area for these students encompassed Charleville, Roma, Thargomindah, Cunnamulla, Quilpie, and Longreach.

SQRH proudly maintains a robust and collaborative relationship with UniSQ Course Lecturer Jessica Elliott. Ms. Elliott demonstrates unwavering dedication to our rural students in the western region, providing them not only with a top-notch education but also exceptional support for their online learning endeavours.

During this period, we observed a significant expansion in nursing placements in the South West for our End-to-End Bachelor of Nursing Students. Moreover, we are thrilled to announce the imminent graduation of the inaugural cohort of Enrolled Nursing students, who will soon attain their Bachelor degrees and assume the title of Registered Nurses.



## ST GEORGE CENTRE FLOURISHES IN A YEAR MARKED BY FIRSTS



MADELINE GREENHILL

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY)

2023 saw the St George Allied Health Education and Training Hub embrace a year marked by firsts.

Staff and students patiently awaited the construction of the Goondir Community Wellbeing Centre which will house the new student and staff office, clinic room and gym facilities.

In our temporary office and clinic space, we welcomed 15 allied health students to embark on their learning experience where they got firsthand experience in the highlights and the challenges of rural and remote practice.

Students embraced rural life and seamlessly settled into St George attending local events such as Musical Bingo, an evening at the heritage listed Anchorage Homestead, squash competitions, and trivia nights.

Staff and students demonstrated flexibility and commitment to overcoming challenges in establishing a new clinic in a temporary space. They facilitated the delivery of various programs aimed to address community health and wellbeing.

The clinic saw the community get behind us with over 100 participants joining us in the group classes to support student learning opportunities. With the end of the year quickly rolling around, and the building starting to reach completion, we wrapped up the year with moving into the new office space and busily preparing for 2024 service delivery.

We are extremely proud to partner with Goondir Health Services in this important initiative and look forward to continue the work we have commenced in educating the future health workforce and serving the St George community and surrounds.



THE STUDENTS BRINGING THE MAGIC TO BOOKWEEK AT THE ST GEORGE LIBRARY.





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



**STEVE WOODRUFFE**  
CLINICAL EDUCATOR (EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)

In 2023 the collaborations between SQRH, the Toowoomba Heart Care Team and the Toowoomba Hospital Respiratory Team continued to deliver high quality outpatient Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation services to Darling Downs Health patients.

The program is co-facilitated by SQRH Exercise Physiology Clinical Educators Kate Bell and Steve Woodruffe and Physiotherapy Clinical Educator Tenielle Kent. The delivery of the program has a strong student-supported focus with University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland Clinical Exercise Physiology students actively involved in the delivery of both programs.

Nursing and Physiotherapy students were also involved, with brief placements throughout the year. Psychology Clinical Educators and students supported delivery of the education content throughout the year.

## CARDIAC REHABILITATION

2023 marked the fourth full calendar year of co-delivery of the Cardiac Rehabilitation program.

The collaboration between SQRH and the Toowoomba Hospital Heart Care Team has strengthened over the past 12 months through the formalisation of a Home Exercise program and Education only options for several patients, increasing the flexibility of program delivery.

The availability of the Maintenance Exercise sessions (once weekly) and

liaison with The Fit Lab for ongoing exercise was also consolidated throughout 2023. The gym-based exercise and education program delivered twice weekly for 5 weeks continues to be the primary method by which patients access services.

This past calendar year 75 patients commenced the program with 71 patients fully completing the program representing a completion rate of 95%. This is a considerable improvement on 2022 which saw just 54% of patients completing the program.

## PULMONARY REHABILITATION

2023 marked the second full calendar year of co-delivery of the Pulmonary Rehabilitation program. The decreased prevalence of COVID-19 variants in the community over the past 12 months meant that the program could be delivered without interruption throughout the year. This led to a greater participation in the program compared to previous years.

## STUDENT EDUCATION

A core focus of student involvement is the contribution to their learning particularly in the Cardiac Rehabilitation program.

Depending on the stage of their university studies, students present with varying confidence regarding their overall knowledge of Cardiovascular disease prevention and rehabilitation.



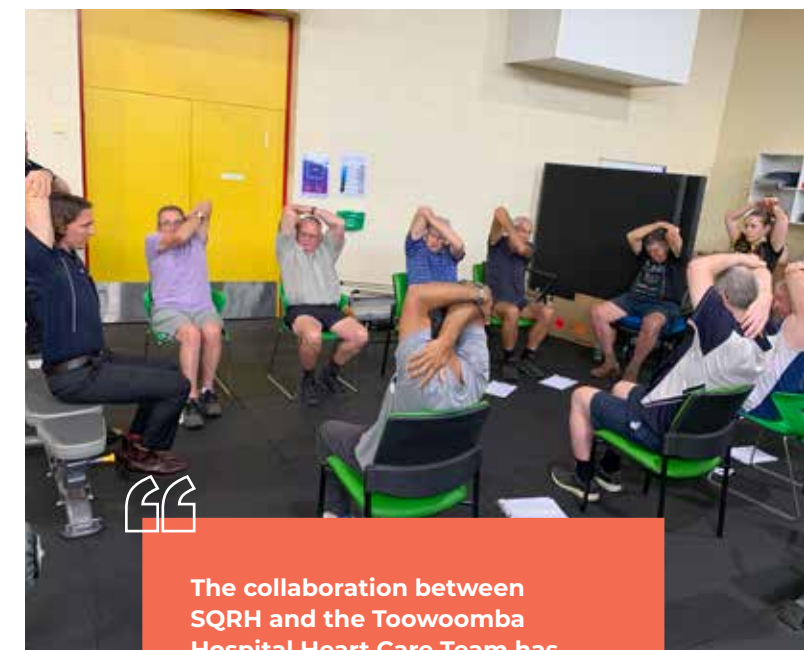
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### TOOWOOMBA HEART CARE TEAM

- Joanne Thomae
- Jacinta McCartney
- Tim Brouwer
- Lou Wilson
- Kassidy Bauer

### TOOWOOMBA HOSPITAL RESPIRATORY TEAM

- Carolyn Rae
- Emily Phillips
- Sarah Earle



The collaboration between SQRH and the Toowoomba Hospital Heart Care Team has strengthened over the past 12 months...



## CARDIAC REHAB PROGRAM AT A GLANCE



**71**  
People completed the program

**95%**  
Completion Rate

**44%**  
Improvement in knowledge





# EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS TO THRIVE IN THEIR HEALTHIEST STATE



## FROM THE HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC

DAYLE OSBORN

CLINIC COORDINATOR, CLINICAL EDUCATOR  
(NURSING & MENTAL HEALTH NURSING)



The SQRH Health and Wellness Clinic (HaWC) has continued to build on the successes of the previous years expanding both program content and student placements.

Integration of the program pillars Nutrition, Social Connection, Movement and Behaviour Change, remains a significant difference between this and other equivalent health programs. Together, these pillars in conjunction with the unique student-led interprofessional model, delivers content supporting people to make meaningful change towards leading healthier lives.

Referrals continued to increase, with word of mouth around the program success (comments around the range of activities and how people feel 'heard' and supported in improving their health) influencing people to seek a GP referral.

Students benefit from participating in the challenge of reducing sometimes up to 70 referrals for a block program limit of 25 participants.

The student interprofessional experience expanded in 2023 with additional topics included in the daily education, and gamification adding some extra fun with both Escape Room activities and the new 'Wellness Wizardry' game show.

2023 saw the inclusion of 3rd Year Medicine students joining the other students from Exercise Physiology, Physiotherapy, Social Work, Psychology, Dietetics, and Nursing.

Students from University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland were joined by new placements from Monash and La Trobe Universities and the Institute of Social Neuroscience.

The flexibility of placement options enabled students to take up a full-time placement, with many students being able to share placements between the Health and Wellness Clinic and other health providers.

The program strength of social connection contributing to better health was evident with 73.3% of surveyed participants saying they met people in the program they intended to remain in contact within the future.

Participants continued to appreciate the interprofessional student model with 87.5% of surveyed participants reporting the involvement of more than one health discipline improved the care they received. Clinic staff and students look forward to the next year and seeing the benefits in people changing their lives for the better.

## CONTINUED INNOVATION IN PREPARING THE FUTURE HEALTH

### WORKFORCE FOR INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

#### ON AVERAGE, PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETED THE PROGRAM:

- Increased the distance they each walked in 6 minutes by 62.7 metres
- Improved their reported quality of life across both physical and psycho-social domains
- Increased their daily intake of fruit and vegetables
- Improved their measure of 'Grip Strength' by an average of 1.2kg each

#### STUDENTS:

- 41 students completed 294 weeks interprofessional placement at HaWC.
- Students identified this experience as a diverse learning opportunity, in a positive environment that increased their confidence and understanding of how all professions can work collaboratively.



#### STUDENTS SAID...

- "Role clarity and getting a good understanding from the profession what they do"
- "The comradery; the different knowledge bases that other disciplines hold; doing group presentations with other disciplines"
- "Observation of other disciplines, attending discipline-specific education sessions and opportunity to talk extensively/ask lots of questions of other disciplines"
- "Motivational interviewing was huge for me to understand this from a psychosocial perspective"
- "All of the IPE sessions were highly valuable, especially being able to learn from other health professionals about their role and responsibilities"
- "Understanding the importance of effective communication when working in a team environment"



#### CLINIC STATISTICS

48

Participants enrolled in the HaWC program in 2023

100%

Of surveyed participants intended to continue working towards their health and wellness goals after completing the program

3,451

Occasions of Service Provided

41

Students completed 294 weeks of interprofessional placement at HaWC



# GROWING THE INTERPROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE



CHRISSIE O'CONNELL

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (SPEECH PATHOLOGY)

The Clinical Education team continue to drive the growth of Interprofessional practice through the facilitation of education days, including our Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE), Escape Rooms in a Briefcase (ERiB), and Interprofessional Practice and Learning workshops with health professionals.

2023 saw the team providing interprofessional education to more than 100 health students on placement across the Darling Downs and South

West via their Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE).

SQRH designed these workshops to provide the knowledge and skills that are essential for developing the collaborative behaviours and attitudes of our future workforce. Students learn about role clarity, interprofessional communication, team functioning, interprofessional conflict management, and patient/client centred care. At the end of the workshop, they are then able to consolidate their learning through our ERiB activity.

ERiB enables the Clinical Education team to provide students the opportunity to participate in a fun, although challenging, activity that has been designed to promote the qualities of an interprofessional, collaborative team, in particular, communication and team functioning.

Due to its portability, our team has been able to travel across our rural footprint with these briefcases and incorporate into SWIPE.



Our team continues to work closely with Pauline's Quilters World, a local business who has taken on the task of designing and building another two quality briefcases in 2023.

Our team also delivered an interprofessional workshop for health professionals. We are excited to work with health professionals who have a strong passion and belief in transforming their teams into a collaborative, interprofessional team, enhancing the care of patients across the region.

Finally, our Clinical Education team were eager to present on the work that we are doing around Interprofessional Education at various conferences, with both oral and poster presentations accepted.

Our team presented on ERiB and SWIPE, stimulating a lot of interest from our health professional colleagues in education and healthcare.

The future of 2024 is going to be even more collaborative and fun, with more workshops and briefcases on the way.



The future of 2024 is going to be even more collaborative and fun, with more workshops and briefcases on the way.



Thought provoking questions and exercises are crucial in helping our students expand on what they already know.

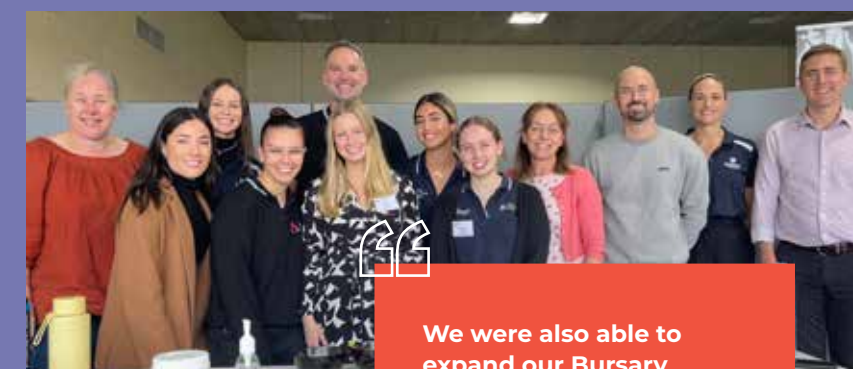


Our students were able to hone in on their communication, and team skills through partaking in group activities and sharing knowledge with others across our footprint.





## CREATING GREAT RURAL EXPERIENCES FOR OUR STUDENTS



We were also able to expand our Bursary program, which previously only included UQ and UniSQ students, to include all university students completing extended nursing, midwifery, and allied health placements in our region.

STUDENTS AROUND THE REGION ENJOYING VARIOUS ACTIVITIES, RANGING FROM SPORTS TO CREATIVE CLASSES.



CI-AHN VOGLER

STUDENT SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

In 2023, SQRH continued its commitment to enhancing rural experiences for nursing, midwifery, and allied health students across our regional, rural, and remote communities.

The start of the year witnessed a significant expansion of student accommodation. SQRH purchased 2 duplexes in St George, and after a few upgrades to the bathrooms and kitchens, we are now able to provide modern and comfortable living spaces for students. These 12 new rooms go a long way to accommodate the growing number of students undertaking placements in St George.

The Chinchilla houses, purchased at the end of 2022, had the first students check in and enjoy the table tennis table and 'take a book leave a book' shelves that were implemented. In conjunction with

SWHHS we were also able to add these shelves to the accommodation in Roma.

We were also able to expand our Bursary program, which previously only included UQ and UniSQ students, to include all university students completing nursing, midwifery, and allied health placements in our region. This change helped to provide approximately \$135,000 in support and alleviate financial burdens for even more students, allowing them to focus on their placements without worrying about rent, food, or supplies.

Student engagement remained a top priority, with initiatives like the Pot Plant Painting and Pizza evening, weekly squash meet ups, quiz and board game nights, and a BBQ under the stars at the historic homestead in St George. These events serve as valuable opportunities for students to connect with one another,

build lasting friendships, and create a sense of belonging in rural areas where community ties run deep.

Looking ahead to 2024, the Student Support team, along with the amazing administration support they are blessed with, aim to continue to cultivate vibrant and welcoming communities within our houses, where students can thrive both academically and socially, laying the groundwork for successful and fulfilling rural careers.





## HELPING STUDENTS FIND THEIR PATHWAY IN HEALTH



### ASPIRE2HEALTH



TELIA SIMPSON

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (MIDWIFERY)

**A2H is a collaboration between Rural Medical Education Australia, Southern Queensland Rural Health, Queensland Ambulance Service, the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise, Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network and Western Queensland Primary Health Network.**

This event brings interested year 9 and 10 secondary school students around the Darling Downs and South West Queensland to a day of learning that will expose them to a diverse range of health professions delivered through a range of health scenarios.

An early start in April to Kingaroy marked the commencement of the 2023 Aspire2Health campaign. Here we were met by 21 eager participants ready to start their health career journey. This was closely followed by road trips to Chinchilla and Dalby where we also had one keen student from Nanango. After hearing the

case study of the 34-year-old Indigenous female who was 28 weeks pregnant and fell off her quadbike, the students rotated around the interprofessional team to further learn the role of each profession.

The two Toowoomba events in May and August were fully booked with students from Toowoomba Christian School, Concordia, St Ursulas, Downlands, Glennie, Highlands Christian School, Centenary High, St Mary's, Toowoomba Anglican School, Fairholme College and Glennie all represented.

The South West was visited during month of July with events in Charleville and Roma. Charleville A2H coincided with NAIDOC week celebrations, and the students were treated to a welcome to country and smoking ceremony conducted by an Indigenous elder. A joint morning tea was shared by students, SQRH and hospital staff alike.

In the beginning of August, staff travelled to Stanthorpe and Warwick where the events were strongly attended.

Interprofessional education was delivered by Nursing, Midwifery, Dietetics, Pharmacy, Psychology / Mental Health, Social Work, Exercise Physiology, Physiotherapy, Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Paramedicine and Medicine.

The final road trip was to Goondiwindi with a successful day at the Gateway to Training centre and a visit from the Department of Education where pathways to health were discussed.

Over 250 students attended A2H days in 2023 and the pre and post event surveys demonstrated a broader understanding and interest in health careers. We look forward to seeing many of these young people in the rural and remote health workforce in future years.



Over 250 students attended A2H days in 2023 and the pre and post event surveys demonstrated a broader understanding and interest in health careers.







## DIVING DEEPER INTO OUR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES



DR ADAM HULME, PHD  
RESEARCH FELLOW

**It brings me great pleasure to report on our research activities, outputs, and achievements at SQRH during 2023.**

We secured six research grants, with a decision pending on a further four at the time of writing. For a passionate yet relatively small core team of researchers and clinical educators, this is a noteworthy accomplishment given the competitive funding landscape in Australia. Indeed, funding sources were diverse, including the ARC, NHMRC, and State and local-level collaboratives.

A highlight was an ARC DECRA Fellowship awarded to yours truly, which will investigate the impacts of climate change on the recruitment and retention of the rural health workforce using systems science methods. The Fellowship aligns perfectly with my recently appointed role and responsibilities as Deputy Chair of the ARHEN Research Staff Network. In this role, I have an opportunity to discuss emerging ideas in rural health, provide updates to fellow researchers in the network, and enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing.

In addition to grant applications, SQRH showcased its commitment to research excellence in rural health through the publication of 18 peer-reviewed journal articles and a book chapter. These publications covered various topics and areas of interest, from rural health workforce development and training, through to interprofessional collaborative practice and education, and the support of student placements. Further, our

teams delivered and contributed to eight national conferences through accepted presentations. Talks highlighted work describing a telehealth-based falls prevention program, and the 'escape room in a briefcase' gamification concept which continues to generate much interest and traction among health students. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the efforts of all involved, from clinical education, operational, and research-focussed and support staff, the latter including Tony Fallon, Bahram Sangelaji, Gordon Mander, and Clara Walker.

Dr Fallon has maintained his involvement in health workforce research. His research team, comprised of investigators from our consortium organisations and the UQ Rural Clinical School, are analysing and reporting findings from the Health Workforce Retention Project. This project, funded partly through a grant from the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation, examines the retention of health professionals across the SQRH footprint.

He was also appointed as Chair of the Data Working Group for the Nursing and Allied Health Graduate Outcomes Tracking (NAHGOT) Study, a multi-university longitudinal study that is linking data from various administrative sources to track where nursing, midwifery and allied health university graduates practice their profession out to 10 years after graduating.

Another exciting avenue for the research team and the SQRH Clinical

Education Team has been developing and implementing the evaluation of activities undertaken as part of the new SQRH Aged Care Student Training and Education Hub at the Illoura residential home at Chinchilla. A comprehensive evaluation of activities has been undertaken, including data from survey and administrative sources, and interviews with students on placement and other stakeholders, to provide a detailed picture of the implementation and initial impact of the Chinchilla hub.

Data collection is complete, and analysis of findings is underway, and we hope these findings will be used to highlight the achievements of this exciting initiative and inform future training and education initiatives at the training hub. Additionally, SQRH, in collaboration with investigators from our consortium organisations, has collected data from nursing and allied health students doing clinical and project placements across the SQRH footprint and their placement supervisors to examine the impact of length of placement on satisfaction, work-readiness and intent to practice rurally after graduating. Expect to hear more about these exciting initiatives across 2024.

On behalf of research at SQRH, I can confidently say that 2024 will uphold the work ethic and enthusiasm that defined progress in 2023. A big thank you to all our partners, both within and outside of the organisation, for their continuous support and dedication to advancing rural health research.



## SUPERCHARGE YOUR SUPERVISION SKILLS & MASTER YOUR SUPERVISION SKILLS



TENIELLE KENT  
CLINICAL EDUCATOR (PHYSIOTHERAPY)

**Throughout 2023, SQRH maintained its commitment to delivering education workshops to clinical supervisors throughout the region.**

SQRH offered both 'Supercharge your Supervision Skills' and Master your Supervision Skills' workshops.

In total, the clinical education team delivered an impressive 13 one-day workshops across the Darling Downs and South West region, strategically reaching locations such as Roma, Kingaroy, Warwick and Dalby. By offering these intensive workshops, we aimed to provide healthcare teams in the area with invaluable opportunities to enhance their student supervision skills.

Recognising the importance of accessibility and adaptability, we continued to expand our reach through online platforms. Our series of weekly 1.5-hour sessions enabled clinicians not only within the Darling Downs and South West region but also across the nation, to seamlessly access the educational resources provided by the SQRH clinical education team.

SQRH is excitedly looking forward to continuing to provide supervision training throughout 2024, extending its reach through both in-person sessions and online platforms.



**In total, the clinical education team delivered an impressive 14 one-day workshops across the Darling Downs and South West region, strategically reaching locations such as Roma, Kingaroy, Warwick and Dalby.**







**SQRH**  
Southern Queensland  
Rural Health

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



**Darling Downs**  
Health



**South West**  
Hospital and Health Service