



SQRH

Southern Queensland
Rural Health

2024

YEAR IN REVIEW



→ A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA



University of
Southern
Queensland



Darling Downs
Health



South West
Hospital and Health Service



2024 AT A GLANCE



8,806

Placement Weeks



1,505

Total Placements



140

Students received an extended placement bursary



335

Students stayed in SQRH accommodation



5

Successful research grants



12

Peer-reviewed research publications



2,342

Weeks of SQRH supported accommodation



367

School students attended Aspire 2 Health



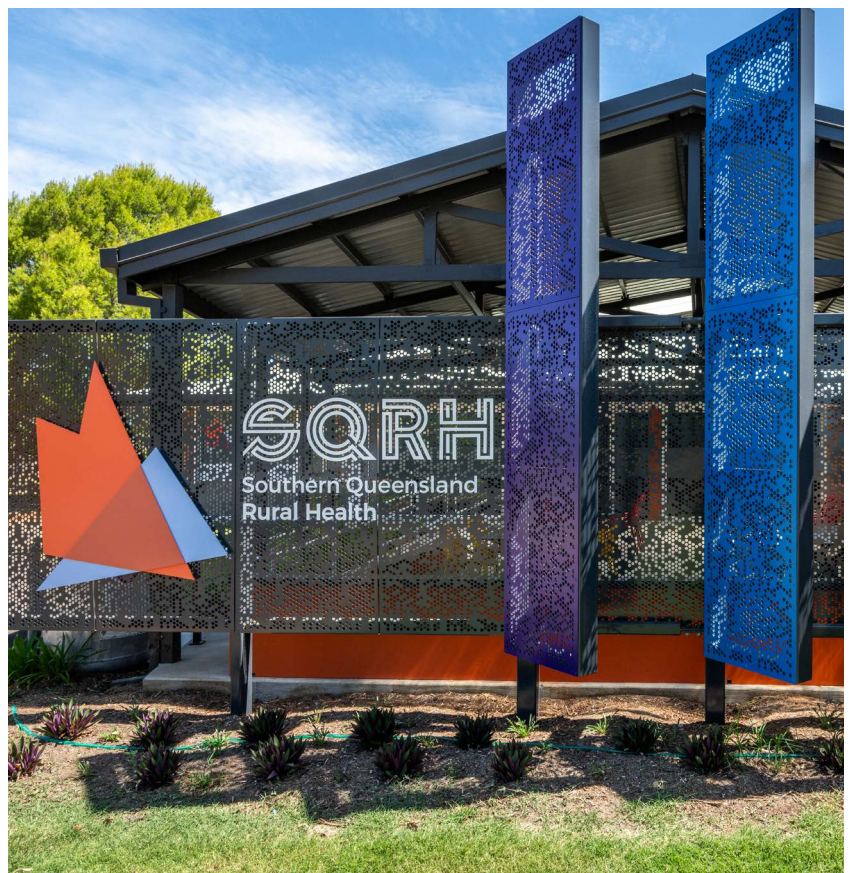
377

Attendances at health workforce professional development sessions



74

Health professionals and students completed Telehealth clinical practice modules



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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) 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 allied 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 35 staff across the region
- 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.

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

SQRH

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GEOFF ARGUS

2024 was another busy and successful year for SQRH. The SQRH collaboration between The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ), Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS) continued to gain momentum as the consortium supported over 8800 weeks of nursing, midwifery and allied health domestic student placements across the region. We cover a vast geographical region across the Darling Downs and Southwest Queensland and SQRH staff do an incredible job in supporting students undertaking placements, often far from home.

SQRH is very proud to have partnered with Goondir Health Services in St George with our allied health education and training hub. In April, Goondir celebrated the official opening of the St George Community Wellbeing Centre, where SQRH staff and students are co-located. This innovative initiative by Goondir is designed to promote physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing for First Nations people and the broader St George community.

In July, the SQRH Education and Training Centre in Chinchilla was officially opened by the Hon. Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health. The Centre is located at the Illoura Village Aged Care Home and is a partnership between SQRH and Southern Cross Care Queensland (SCCQ). The valuable partnership between SQRH and SCCQ is critical to growing a rural health workforce ready to work in aged care and promote healthy ageing. SQRH-supported students in Chinchilla have been involved in a range of programs

designed to improve the health and wellbeing of Illoura residents and foster a positive approach to healthy ageing.

In Charleville we are fortunate to share a Nursing Clinical Educator role with Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH). This partnership has enabled increased child and family health services for CWAATSICH clients and opportunities for students to enhance cultural safety in their practice.

SQRH signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Country Universities Centres (CUC) Balonne and Maranoa to strengthen our collaborative efforts in supporting students in St George and Roma.

2024 also saw the first graduates from the UniSQ Charleville end-to-end Bachelor of Nursing program. This unique program is a collaboration between UniSQ, SQRH, SWHHS and the Charleville High School and provides the opportunity for locals to study nursing close to home in a grow your own nursing workforce initiative for outback southwest Queensland.

I would like to thank all our partners, collaborators and stakeholders who provide such generous support for the work that we do at SQRH. We are very fortunate to work with likeminded organisations and individuals with a shared vision of better health outcomes for rural communities. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks and acknowledgement to all the staff at SQRH. They are the beating heart of SQRH and every day I am impressed by the passion and commitment to our mission of growing a highly skilled rural health workforce.



BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

I have been very fortunate this year to join the SQRH Advisory Board as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences at The University of Queensland (UQ). It has been a privilege to work with my colleagues on the Board and with Associate Professor Geoff Argus as we continue to collaborate across universities and hospital and health services to advance the mission of SQRH. The successes of SQRH are testament to the strength of the collaborations.

One of the highlights this year was the Official Opening of the SQRH Education and Training Centre in Chinchilla in July which was attended by the UQ VC Professor Debbie Terry as well as the VC from University of Southern Queensland. Many of our UQ staff joined the road trip and it was wonderful to meet so many residents of Illoura Village where the Centre is based, as well as members of the local community.

A personal highlight for me was our board meeting in Charleville in October. I was delighted to meet community members, SQRH staff and UQ students on placements. It is abundantly clear that opportunities for our students to experience work and life in these rural communities is a game-changing experience that will make them better health professionals of the future.

Another impressive aspect of SQRH in 2024 has been the growth in research activity. It was always part of the long-term plan that the consortium would support both education and research. In 2024 there were 12 SQRH affiliated publications, numerous successful research grants and SQRH staff have presented at eight conferences. Such work will help to increase understanding about opportunities and challenges related to rural health workforce and service provision.

2025 will see some major changes at UQ in the education of health professionals with all of our students joining the newly created Faculty of Health, Medicine and Behavioural Sciences. We welcome a new Executive Dean, Professor Danny Liew, and a new Deputy Executive Dean, Professor Sandy Brauer, who will be keen to continue the successes that SQRH has enjoyed to date.

On behalf of UQ, I extend sincere thanks to all involved with SQRH for what has been achieved in 2024 and my very best wishes for the future.

PROFESSOR LOUISE HICKSON AM

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



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA





PROFESSOR GLEN COLEMAN

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



University of
Southern
Queensland

Congratulations to Associate Professor Geoff Argus and the SQRH team for another successful year developing, growing and delivering a skilled workforce in nursing and Allied Health in our regional, rural and remote communities.

The UniSQ Charleville Nursing Program, supported by SQRH, is dedicated to enhancing access to health education for First Nations, rural, and remote students. Semester/trimester residential schools are delivered from the Charleville Clinical training facility at SQRH with support from other members of the Charleville community. The program ensures that these students receive support and resources they need to succeed in their health studies. SQRH also offers accommodation to those students who live outside of Charleville to assist with cost of living and need to attend their mandatory residential sessions. This initiative is a significant step towards improving educational opportunities and outcomes for First Nations students especially, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. The

SQRH Clinical Educator (Indigenous Health) offers support to First Nations students within the Southwest region. Students also benefit from weekly support sessions delivered via Zoom by the Charleville Program Coordinator, and designed to create a collegial environment where students support each other, rather than studying in isolation.

UniSQ accepted physiotherapy students for the first time in 2024 and, in 2025, both occupational therapy and physiotherapy will be offered from our Toowoomba Campus. UniSQ now offers allied health programs in social work, occupational therapy, exercise physiology, physiotherapy and speech pathology. Our expanded suite of allied health programs have, at the core of their design, a focus on interprofessional practice and the health challenges of rural and regional communities. Our partnership with SQRH is central to the delivery of these curricula components in an authentic way that is meaningful to our students. A new student and supervisor placement survey was rolled out for all UniSQ students in 2024. This data will allow UniSQ and SQRH to collaborate on ensuring quality placement experiences for students and supervisors.

Progress on two of SQRH's more recent projects, the Chinchilla Aged Care initiative and the St George Allied Health clinic, has been admirable. A total of 38 students

have completed 274 weeks of placement in Chinchilla 15 UniSQ nursing, psychology and paramedicine students. Further, a total of 35 students (including UniSQ nursing students) have been supported by SQRH to complete 251 weeks of placement in St George.

Through SQRH, UniSQ continues its participation in the national Nursing and Allied Health Graduate Outcome Tracking (NAHGOT) study. Anonymised data from all UniSQ health students, from 2021 onwards, is being combined with data from six other universities to determine factors that influence nursing, midwifery, and allied health graduate's decisions to work in metropolitan or rural and regional or remote settings. Preliminary findings showed that students from a rural background are more likely to have had rural placements than students from non-rural backgrounds. Students of rural origin are more likely to practise in a rural location after graduation and completion of a rural placement is also associated with rural practice location after graduation. This data highlights the importance of SQRH's support for students to experience quality rural placements.

UniSQ is excited about the opportunities that lie ahead in 2025 and working with our colleagues to build and expand SQRH's activities to deliver a health workforce for our regional communities. Congratulations to Geoff Argus and the team on their achievements in 2024.





ADJUNCT PROFESSOR ANNETTE SCOTT, PSM

HEALTH SERVICE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
DARLING DOWNS HEALTH



Darling Downs
Health

The SQRH consortium has continued to excel in its 7th year of operation, building on the momentum this successful collaboration has generated over many years, to grow and optimise student placements and help build sustainability in our allied health, nursing and midwifery workforce

Work to support allied health, nursing and midwifery student placements at Darling Downs Health facilities across our region continued in 2024 where we saw increased uptake of extended placements and shared placements, continued engagement with SQRH-led Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education (SWIPE) sessions, and ongoing training offered to our clinical educators and supervisors to develop their student supervision capabilities.

Through the strong relationship with our consortia partners, Darling Downs Health has seen enhanced rural placement opportunities translate into workforce growth. 2024 saw many examples where students, from a number of disciplines, who had previously participated in placements across Darling Downs Health facilities, return for internships, HP1 roles and new graduate positions. The partnership between SQRH and Southern Cross Care Queensland allowed two dietetic students from UQ complete a paired placement at Illoura Village in Chinchilla. The rich experiences offered

at this dedicated aged care education and training hub paved the way for these students to go on and complete further rural- and regional-based placements in 2024 and resulted with both joining Darling Downs Health in new graduate positions.

Darling Downs Health and SQRH worked together to offer many successful shared placement opportunities. One highlight was the joint placements for physiotherapy students between Darling Downs Health's Transition Care Program and Community Care teams, and the SQRH Wellness clinic. Also at Illoura Village, for the first time, occupational therapy and nursing students on placement in Chinchilla participated in a shared placement model between a Darling Downs Health facility and Illoura Village. This shared placement model was so successful it is planned to be repeated again in 2025, creating innovative and diverse learning opportunities for our students.

Placements for nursing students increased significantly across Darling Downs Health in 2024 with a growth of approximately 30%, compared to 2023, with our rural placements seeing an increase of approximately 25%. This level of placements has been maintained in 2025. Our facilities have demonstrated a very supportive commitment to student placements and when approached

to take an extra student, from our Consortium partners, to facilitate a students required final placement, they have been more than willing.

SQRH's continued support with accommodation and financial bursaries increased access to many student placement opportunities in the region. One example demonstrating the significant impact of this support was for the first time, two 6-month psychology student placements took place in Kingaroy. Both students, one from UQ and the other from UniSQ, accessed SQRH accommodation and bursaries and without access to this support, this it is unlikely that the placements would have proceeded.

As we move into 2025, Darling Downs Health remains highly motivated to continue to achieve the goals of SQRH. The cultivation of student placements and interprofessional education alongside SQRH remains our priority.

Darling Downs Health is proud to be a member of this valuable collaboration and I am looking forward to what we can achieve together to build our rural health workforce over the coming year.

→ BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

SQRH under the leadership of Associate Professor Geoff Argus is leading the way in the workforce education and development in rural and remote Australia. Geoff and his team with limited resources are making a big difference.

It has been a great honour to be on the board of SQRH. The board can influence some of the outcomes of SQRH through good governance.

It is well understood that there is a health workforce crisis especially in rural and remote Australia.

The future of rural and remote health workforce development is enabling the training of health care professionals in context as much as is practically possible. The evidence shows that if rural and remote high school students can have a supported health education pathway in the area where they grew up they are much more likely to remain in their communities and much more likely than incomers to have the broad range of skills necessary to serve the needs of their communities.

SQRH have many nursing and midwifery training places across the Darling Downs and South West and have extended training places for allied health students across the same region.

SQRH has solid foundations of which we are all very proud.

Through partnerships with The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs Health, South West Hospital and Health Service, our local ACCHO's, private health providers, local councils and many other local health delivery organisations SQRH has a coalition of the willing that will make the difference.

2024 has been a year of innovation and consolidation. I am very excited for 2025 and all the opportunities available.

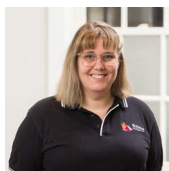
DR TONY BROWN

HEALTH SERVICE CHIEF
EXECUTIVE, SOUTH WEST
HOSPITAL AND
HEALTH SERVICE





CHARLEVILLE



CHRISTIE-ANNE HUNTER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (SOUTH WEST)

SQRH has had a great year in Charleville, where staff have had the opportunity to support ongoing training and education of nursing, midwifery and allied health students as well as participating in key community engagement activities.

A key milestone of 2024 was the celebration for the UniSQ graduate nurses. This was an opportunity for family, friends and community members to come together in recognition of the four graduates completing their Bachelor of Nursing via the UniSQ end-to-end program which allows students to live, work and study across South West Queensland. Their journey highlights the importance of these rural education and training pathways in growing a sustainable workforce that provides quality healthcare in rural and remote areas across Australia.

Nursing, midwifery and allied health students were given unique opportunities whilst on placement to further their understanding of rural and remote health through various opportunities which included interprofessional education workshops and Royal Flying Doctor Service base tours. Not only did they gain valuable clinical experience, they also had the opportunity to engage with the local community through a range of sporting activities, community events, regular student lunches and student support activities which includes the likes of paint & snack afternoons.

2024 saw the continued close collaboration with other local organisations and the opportunity to participate in a variety of health promotion and career awareness initiatives to inspire the next generation of rural health professionals.



THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

- Teddy Bear Hospital
- Year 6 Health Excursion
- Murweh Career Expo
- Aspire 2 Health
- Work Experience Week





CLARE DAL BON

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (ALLIED HEALTH)

COLLEEN FORDE

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (NURSING)

CHINCHILLA

The Chinchilla team had an impressive start to 2024, welcoming 14 students to our Aged Care Education and Training Centre in Semester 1 and another 11 students in Semester 2. This hub, supported by an expansion of the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program, offers a unique learning model. Clinical Educators Colleen Forde (Nursing) and Clare Dal Bon (Exercise Physiology) provide on-the-ground support, complemented by remote supervision from discipline-specific supervisors based in Toowoomba and Brisbane.

The year was marked by several key initiatives. February saw the second year of the Staying Healthy in Aged Care program, a collaboration between SQRH and Southern Cross Care Queensland. This partnership continued to flourish as exercise services were delivered to residents in aged care homes in Miles and Chinchilla. Looking ahead to 2025, we plan to expand this relationship by introducing falls prevention exercise classes for community-dwelling older adults receiving home care services in Chinchilla.

Occupational Therapy and Psychology students co-led an intergenerational program connecting aged care residents

with Year 8 students from Chinchilla State High School. These sessions, designed and led by the tertiary students, evaluated loneliness and attitudes across the two generations. Psychology students also initiated a range of activities for aged care residents, including adjustment groups for new residents, cooking classes, music and poetry performances, pot plant decorating, and outings such as tours of the Chinchilla Museum and Men's Shed.

Our Dietetics students contributed to the Community and Public Health Nutrition Project in collaboration with Kup of Kindness, a local charity providing meals to disadvantaged community members. The students offered nutritional advice while ensuring cost-effectiveness for the food van service.

Nursing students experienced a diverse range of placements across 2-3 sites in Chinchilla, depending on their university requirements. This shared placement model allowed exposure to settings such as the 10-bed local hospital, a 66-bed aged care home, the Goondir Health Service, and a busy community GP practice.

It was great to see some students returning to the region after graduation to take up positions with one nursing student taking a position at the Chinchilla

hospital and several other students gaining employment in rural and regional areas.

Staff and students actively engaged in numerous community events throughout the year, including the Chinchilla Careers Expo, Aspire2Health, Tara Careers Expo, the Chinchilla Birthday Party for 3-Year-Olds, Aim Higher, Ignite Your Futures, and Student Workshops in Interprofessional Education. The past year was exciting for Chinchilla, and we can't wait to show you what's in store for 2025!





KEY INITIATIVES

- Second year of the Staying Healthy in Aged Care program
- Occupational Therapy and Psychology students co-led an intergenerational program connecting aged care residents with Year 8 students from Chinchilla State High School.
- Dietetics students contributed to the Community and Public Health Nutrition Project in collaboration with Kup of Kindness
- Nursing students experienced a diverse range of placements across multiple sites in Chinchilla



SQRH CHINCHILLA CENTRE OFFICIAL OPENING

The SQRH Education and Training Centre was officially opened on 15th July by the Hon. Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for rural and Regional Health. The Centre, established through a \$1.4M grant by the Australian Government, is a partnership between SQRH and Southern Cross Care Queensland (SCCQ) and located within the Illoura Village Aged Care Facility in Chinchilla.

The Centre in Chinchilla provides teaching and learning spaces for students completing placements at Illoura and other locations in Chinchilla and is staffed by our very experienced Clinical Educators. The works were completed by Girvan Constructions and project managed by Knight Frank.

Assistant Minister McBride recognised the importance of providing high-quality facilities for students completing clinical placements in rural areas and praised the collaborative nature of the Chinchilla initiative. SCCQ Chief Executive Officer, Jason Eldering acknowledged the strength of the partnership and the critical role it will play in

training the next generation of health professionals to provide high quality health services to aged care residents in rural areas.

The event was hosted by Professor Debbie Terry AC, Vice-Chancellor and President, The University of Queensland (UQ) and Professor Geraldine McKenzie, Vice-Chancellor, the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ). Also in attendance were Councillor Andrew Smith, Mayor of the Western Downs Regional Council and fellow Councillors and executives, along with the Board Chairs and Chief Executives of Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital Health Service, Board members, executives and staff of SCCQ, senior staff from UQ and UniSQ, SQRH staff and students, community members and Illoura Village residents.

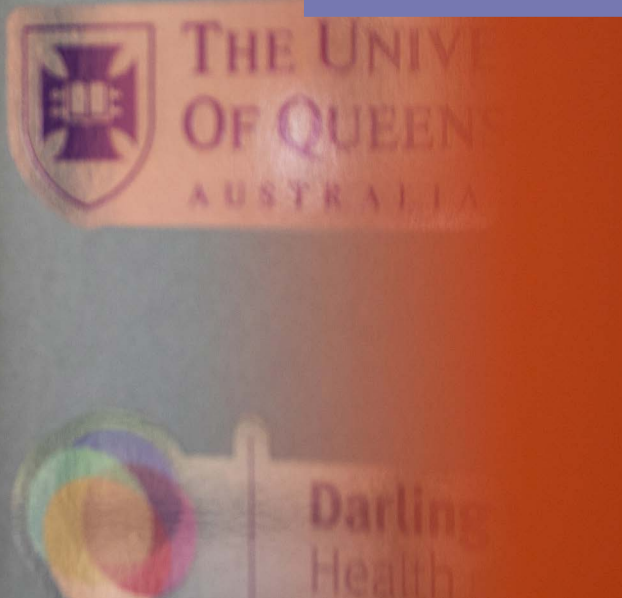


SQRH
Southern Queensland
Rural Health



SQRH CHINCHILLA CENTRE

Officially opened on 15th July by the Hon. Emma McBride MP,
Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health





FIRST NATIONS HEALTH



LEE LINGWOODOCK

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (INDIGENOUS HEALTH)

2024 was another busy year in Indigenous health education. The Aim Higher program was delivered to secondary school students in St George, Chinchilla, Murgon and Toowoomba. The program is designed for Indigenous students to expose them to the breadth of health careers available to them. It was great to see the enthusiastic engagement from school students in these sessions.

Three-hour Cultural Safety workshops were delivered to students on placement across the region. It is always great to get out West to deliver SQRH programs for school students and university students to see the enthusiasm for health and learning about improving the cultural safety practices when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As with last year the most memorable event for myself was the Cherbourg Kids' Health Party, which we collaborate in with the Starlight Foundation, Darling Downs Health and other stakeholders to provide health checks to attendees. We get all the little ones from the kindergarten and

daycare in Cherbourg community to come to this event and have checks done on their, eyes, ears, height, weight and teeth. The little ones really enjoy the food, gifts, clowns and activities provided on the day.

In 2024 we rolled out the Indigenous Health Workforce project across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland. The project seeks to understand the career aspirations of Indigenous staff working in health to understand their education and training needs into the future. The project will be valuable for the design and delivery of education sessions and other forms of training for Indigenous staff working in health.





STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND DELIVERING OUTSTANDING EDUCATION



SALLY GORMAN

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (NURSING)

In 2024, SQRH proudly continued its collaboration with the Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health (CWAATSICH), further cementing its commitment to delivering impactful education and fostering community partnerships.

A highlight of the year was an enriching excursion that took health workers and students to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) base. This unique experience provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of the critical services offered by the RFDS. Students gained insights into the extensive geographical area covered by the service, the life-saving medical chests strategically placed on remote properties, and the intricate workings of the organization.

The visit included a guided tour of one of the RFDS planes, giving students and health workers a firsthand look at the equipment and layout essential for delivering in-flight medical care. Adding to the immersive learning experience, students and health workers participated in an airway simulation exercise. This hands-on activity was a standout, offering invaluable practical skills and enhancing their understanding of emergency response procedures in rural and remote settings.

SQRH supports CWAATSICH's Mums and Bubs program, offering students from medical, allied health, and nursing disciplines a unique opportunity to engage with Aboriginal health in a meaningful way. Through their involvement, students gain valuable insights while participating in activities such as fun days in the park, pool sessions, and creative craft workshops. One of the most memorable moments

of the year was an inspiring art project where mothers painted on canvas, with their artwork later transformed into fabric. These designs were then sewn into matching outfits for mums and their children, who proudly showcased them in a fashion parade during CWAATSICH's 30-Year Celebration, marking a heartfelt and culturally significant highlight of the program.

A highly significant and culturally meaningful event of the year was the Welcome Baby to Bidjara Country ceremony. This ancient tradition, which has been practiced for thousands of years, acknowledges an infant's connection to the land of their birth. Aunty Pat Fraser led the ceremony, welcoming and smoking the children and their families, while Aunty Dawn Willet presented each child with a certificate. To further honour their connection to Country, each child received a handcrafted headband made from red, yellow, and black raffia adorned with emu feathers and beads. These headbands were made with help of our students.

SQRH's ongoing partnership with CWAATSICH underscores its dedication to providing high-quality educational opportunities that prepare the next generation of health professionals to serve in rural and remote communities. This year's collaborative efforts exemplify the power of partnerships in shaping the future of healthcare in the region.



SQRH RESEARCH IN 2024



DR ADAM HULME

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

Another year has flown by for the SQRH research team, and as I reflect on our activities and achievements throughout 2024, it's clear that our dedication to advancing rural health research remains as strong as ever. We continue to build momentum in research that supports regional, rural, and remote healthcare.

Once again, SQRH researchers have made their mark in the academic literature, with the number of published peer-reviewed journal articles well into the double figures. These publications span a diverse range of themes, including preconception health among Indigenous peoples, clinical radiography, multidisciplinary teaming and skill-mixing, interprofessional education and collaborative practice in nursing and allied health, as well as systems thinking methods in healthcare and climate change-related factors influencing workforce dynamics. For a relatively small team of dedicated research staff, this is an achievement to be proud of.

The 2024 conference circuit was a highlight, with SQRH researchers delivering six national presentations, including at the 18th National Rural Health Conference in Perth. A strong cohort of researchers and clinical

educators shared insights on the Health and Wellness Clinic; the impact of health student placement duration on satisfaction and career intention; reviews on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and gamification in healthcare education to enhance learning and trust in interprofessional practice.

SQRH had an ambitious year in grant applications, submitting 12 proposals in 2024, including eight Category 1 nationally competitive grants through the ARC, NHMRC, and MRFF. These proposals, many of which are under assessment at the time of writing, brought together research teams from across the country, reflecting our growing national research footprint.

We also pursued successful funding opportunities through targeted schemes, such as the UQ Regional, Rural, and Remote Health Research Accelerator (HERA) scheme, exploring the optimisation of skill-mixing in rural and remote primary care, and other initiatives focusing on community-led research with UQ's Centre for Community Health and Wellbeing. Further funding includes Indigenous health research in collaboration with the UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health.

Our research achievements would not be possible without the support of our partners. I extend my sincere thanks to Darling Downs Health, South West Hospital and Health Service, UniSQ, including the Centre for Health Research and other research concentrations, and various teams and units across UQ for their ongoing collaboration and shared commitment to rural health research. We also acknowledge the collaboration within the Australian Rural Health Education Network. I would like to congratulate Dr Tony Fallon who was recipient of the ARHEN David Lyle Prize for Rural and Remote Health in 2024.

I would like to personally acknowledge our core research team at SQRH throughout 2024 who continually raise the research bar. A great degree of appreciation is also given to our Clinical Educators, whose growing involvement in research and grant applications reflects their experience and expertise in shaping ideas.

As we move into 2025, I am confident that our collective passion, curiosity, and dedication will continue to propel SQRH research to new heights. I look forward to another year of impactful work together.





ST GEORGE ALLIED HEALTH EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTRE

STEVE WOODRUFFE

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)

The St George Allied Health Education and Training Centre continued to develop and thrive throughout 2024. Several highlights for the year included the official opening of the Goondir St George Community Wellbeing Centre, expansion of student placements within the clinic, fantastic interprofessional collaboration by the wider Clinical Education Team and expanded community engagement.

We welcomed 13 allied health students from Exercise Physiology, Dietetics and Occupational Therapy to our St George Clinic throughout the year, to continue their clinical learning through practical delivery of health programs. Strength & Balance and Healthy Lifestyles programs were delivered by Exercise Physiology and Occupational Therapy students with 90 participants joining us in these classes. We have continued to partner and collaborate with Goondir Health Services to optimise the delivery of our student clinic service for Goondir clients and the broader community.

Services were expanded in the second semester to include cardio-pulmonary maintenance exercise sessions twice-weekly. These sessions were an opportunity for SWHHS patients with previous diagnosis of cardiac and pulmonary conditions to continue their exercise rehabilitation following initial treatment at the St George Hospital.

Dietetics students created a cookbook for students on placement, available in all SQRH Student Accommodation and developed a series of healthy eating workshops, "Horizon Bites" in collaboration with Country Universities Centre (CUC) – Balonne. The CUC is an important

collaborator with SQRH and we were thrilled to sign an MOU with CUC Balonne and Maranoa to formalise our collaboration.

Staff and students were involved in many community engagement activities throughout the year. The "Big Buddy" and "Safe Sisters" programs were delivered over several weeks with local Indigenous youth, aimed at promoting good health habits. SQRH collaborated with the CUC Balonne in the delivery of Sporting Horizons, Careers Fair, Youth Summit as well as many student engagement activities including Trivia, games nights and barbecues. We also welcomed Grow Rural students back to the region and UQ Rural Medicine Future Doctors for weekend-long visits to the region.

Considerable stakeholder engagement, preparation and planning was committed to the development of a Paediatric Program for the region. The program which will focus on promoting self-regulation skills in 3–5-year-olds through movement, sensory and language strategies is planned to be rolled out in 2025. The aim is for Occupational Therapy students to provide hands on learning opportunities to empower parents with skills and knowledge to support co-regulation at home.

Staff were active in the delivery of SQRH education programs including Aspire2Health and Aim Higher with St George High School students and the first Interprofessional Practice in Healthcare Teams workshop to St George Hospital staff.

CARDIAC AND PULMONARY REHABILITATION



KATE BELL

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)



KRISTY WILDERMUTH

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY)

2024 saw an ongoing collaboration between SQRH, the Toowoomba Heart Care Team and the Toowoomba Hospital Respiratory Team to deliver outpatient services to patients in the region. The program was co-facilitated by SQRH Exercise Physiology Clinical Educators Kate Bell, Steve Woodruffe and Kristy Wildermuth. Additionally, SQRH Physiotherapy Clinical Educators Tenielle Kent and Madison-Lee Clarke were also involved. This service provided a rich placement experience for Exercise Physiology students from The University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland who were actively involved with program delivery. Students consistently report how valuable this service is as a learning opportunity and report improvements in their confidence when working with these populations.

PULMONARY REHABILITATION:

In 2024 there were 46 initial pulmonary assessments completed, with 20 of these completing the program and 17 who will continue the program in 2025. In September and October, SQRH staff collaborated with the Toowoomba Hospital Respiratory Team and the Western Corridor Pulmonary Telerehabilitation team in Ipswich to provide an innovative hybrid model of care during staffing shortages.

CARDIAC REHABILITATION:

In 2024 there was an increase in sessions for those engaging in Cardiac Rehabilitation. There continued to be 10 education topics, which are well attended by patients. In 2024 there were 120 initial assessments completed with 74 completers and 16 people who will continue in the program in 2025. Although there has been a dip in the number of patients completing the program, there was an additional 45 patients entering the service compared to 2023. The maintenance program continued to be well attended with patients attending an average of 18 sessions.



AT A GLANCE PULMONARY REHAB PROGRAM



46

People completed the program

CARDIAC REHAB PROGRAM



74

People completed the program



LOOKING AHEAD FOR 2025:



SQRH are looking forward to continued collaboration with The Heart Care Team and the Toowoomba Hospital Respiratory Team on these services, including exploring ways to maximise attendance and ensure efficient service delivery.

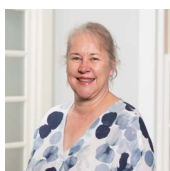




A PROGRAM CHANGING



THE HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY



HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC

DAYLE OSBORN

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

2024 was another successful year in the SQRH Health and Wellness Clinic (HaWC), now into its sixth year of operations on Baillie Henderson Hospital campus.

During 2024, **43** students from The University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, University of New England, Griffith and Latrobe universities experienced the benefits of an immersive placement in interprofessional practice, developing skills to work collaboratively with other health disciplines in a chronic disease prevention program.

Building on the program's foundation areas of Nutrition, Social Connection, Movement and Behaviour Change, 2024 saw the already jam-packed schedule expand to include additional sessions on 'Weight Management' and 'Mindfulness'. 98% of participants completing the

program this year said they intend to continue their new health behaviours beyond the program end. Participants returning for their 6- and 12-month follow-up reviews increased, taking the opportunity to re-energise efforts to embed positive health behaviours and maintain their wellness goals.

With local General Practitioners continuing to see this program help people improve their health, referral numbers remain high with demand exceeding available program places. Face to face, individual and group sessions continue to be popular, with some participants opting to connect with the clinic via telehealth during periods of unexpected absence.

Students from Exercise Physiology, Physiotherapy, Social Work, Psychology, Dietetics, and Nursing, were joined for the

first time in 2024 by UniSQ Paramedicine students. On either full time or shared placements with other Toowoomba health providers, 97% of students reported they would recommend the placement to another student.

In 2024 several visiting University Departments of Rural Health and other emerging student led clinics, came to observe the HaWC program in action, seeing firsthand the opportunities to incorporate collaborative practice into existing clinical skills, communication processes and health documentation.

The next twelve months will see opportunity to further research and promote the HaWC program, interprofessional model and participant outcomes within the health community across Australia.

CLINIC STATISTICS

49

Participants enrolled in the HaWC program in 2024

98%

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

3,006

Occasions of service provided

43

Students completed **294** weeks of interprofessional placement at HaWC



A TRULY COLLABORATIVE INTERPROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS
YEAR IN REVIEW 2024 – HEALTH & WELLNESS CLINIC CONT.

ON AVERAGE, PARTICIPANTS WHO COMPLETED THE PROGRAM:

- Increased the distance they each walked in 6 minutes
 - Improved their reported quality of life across both physical and psycho-social domains
 - Were more likely to eat the recommended daily serves of fruit and vegetables
- 98%** reported a better understanding of their health conditions.
- 88%** of people intended to continue contact with fellow program participants after the course.
- 98%** agreed the involvement of more than one health discipline improved the care they received.

REPORTED PARTICIPANT CHANGES IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING...

- "I am now able to get up myself when I have a fall"
- "Better health and feeling more active"
- "I have noticed less inflammation, more energy & a much better recovery time from health incidents"
- "Better attitude to exercise and diet"
- "Felt well supported to reset health and understand importance of social connections"
- "Have hope again for enjoying life and maintaining independence in mobility"
- "Feel stronger, more energy and less pain. Sleeping better"
- "Generally feel better in all aspects of my physical and mental wellbeing"
- "The program has allowed me to find out about things I can do in my area"
- "Increased motivation, activity, muscle gain, come off meds"
- "Positive – less pain, supported through challenges. Mindfulness techniques helped. I'm eating healthier. I feel stronger"
- "I feel stronger and am sleeping better! Woohoo!"
- "I can bend and stretch a lot more. I have lost cms off my waist. I've gained strength"

25

STUDENTS SAID THEY VALUED...

- "The informal conversations amongst staff and students"
- "Learning about other disciplines"
- "Observing communication styles of other professions"
- "Learning how to work more collaboratively and consider the priorities of other professions to achieve patient centred care"
- "See how [other disciplines] applied to my own practice"
- "Team work and a good environment. Supervisor feedback"
- "Learning about interprofessional communication"

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID THEY VALUED...

- "The holistic approach and how well all the staff and students interacted with every single participant"
- "Support, holistic approach, enthusiasm of students"
- "I FELT SAFE. Allowed me to be me, I also found the students really listened and set up programs suited just for me"
- "Being able to enjoy the gym was something I never thought would happen with my health issues but here I am, enjoying the gym!"
- "Working as a group towards goals, and the information provided"
- "Sleep management strategies and social groups"

EDUCATING OUR

HEALTH WORKFORCE



CHRISSIE O'CONNELL

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (SPEECH PATHOLOGY)

The SQRH Clinical Education team are committed to supporting health professionals throughout the region with our education series. Our team have developed a range of education series for health professionals including our “Supercharge your Supervision Skills”, “Master your Supervision Skills”, and “Interprofessional Practice in Healthcare teams” sessions.

In 2024, we delivered 19 short sessions online or in-person and four one-day workshops. Our education sessions were delivered to nursing and allied health professionals from across the Darling Downs and South West regions, with our online sessions extending our reach to health professionals nationally.

With health professionals seeking opportunities to build their supervision skills, we have seen attendees from across the range of health services including hospitals, private providers, and education. With over 370

attendances to our education sessions and workshops in 2024, SQRH has supported the development of invaluable skills for our health professionals across the region, helping to enhance the placement experiences for health students and fostering collaborative healthcare.

The SQRH Clinical Education team is motivated to provide up-to-date education and have been busy reviewing and refreshing our education resources for 2025 and we look forward to continuing to provide education and support to health professionals in the region in 2025.





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FOSTERING FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS WITHIN OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES.

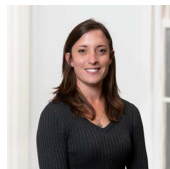




CI-AHN VOGLER

STUDENT SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

(DARLING DOWNS)



TAHLIA BOWDEN

STUDENT SUPPORT OFFICER

(SOUTH WEST)

In 2024, SQRH continued to enhance the rural placement experience for nursing, midwifery, and allied health students across the Darling Downs and South West Queensland. With the addition of a new house in Charleville, our student accommodation expanded to better meet the growing demand. Each house is fully equipped to create a welcoming and comfortable home away from home for students during their placements.

We held a range of fun engagement opportunities for students, fostering friendships and connections within our rural communities. Paint and snack activities in Roma and Charleville brought creativity and fun, while St George students enjoyed regular gatherings such as trivia, music bingo, squash, cricket matches and ParkRun. Board game nights, BBQs, lawn bowls and Anchorage

Homestead tours were held in partnership with the Country University Centre in St George provided plenty of social opportunities. Our students in Kingaroy enjoyed trivia nights and Chinchilla students explored the town with a scavenger hunt designed by SQRH staff in collaboration with Chinchilla Community Commerce and Industry.

SQRH also continued its commitment to supporting students financially during their extended rural placements, awarding approximately \$113,000 in bursaries. These funds provided critical assistance to students from various universities. The bursaries ensured students could fully immerse themselves in their rural experiences and make the most of their training opportunities.

To better support students' practical needs, two of our dietetics students, Abby

and Bec created cookbooks for those living in rural areas. Designed to help with the challenges of rural living, the cookbooks feature healthy, affordable meal plans tailored for students, particularly those navigating life away from home for the first time. SQRH have made copies available in all our student houses to provide students with guidance and inspiration for preparing healthy, affordable meals during their placements.

Looking ahead to 2025, SQRH is excited to explore new ways to enhance the student experience, with plans for more engagement activities, expanded support initiatives, and continued improvements to our rural accommodations.





ASPIRE2HEALTH



TELIA SIMPSON

CLINICAL EDUCATOR (MIDWIFERY)

Another enjoyable year was had road tripping and inspiring secondary school students to enter health careers. Paul from Rural Medical Education Australia led the SQRH team along with the assistance of staff and students from Griffith University, the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise and the Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network. We are also very grateful for the many university health students who supported us in delivering the same session six times a day – thank you.

Aspire 2 Health saw 15 events across the Darling Downs and south west Queensland promoting health careers to a total of 367 students from 14 Toowoomba schools and 24 rural and remote schools. It was lovely to witness the event grow and have attendance from a few new schools that haven't previously been involved.





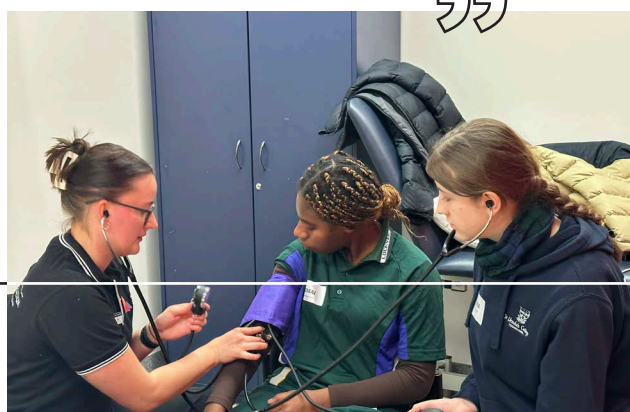
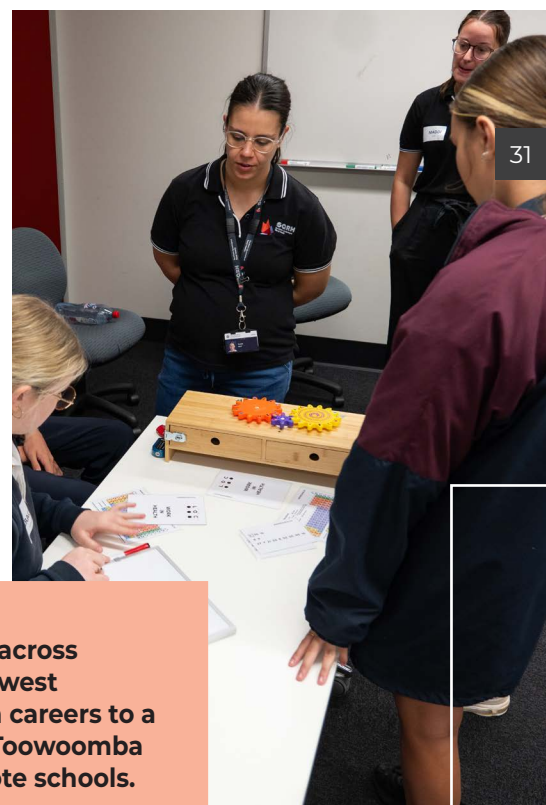
Once again, students enjoyed the interactive day that exposed them to a variety of health professions which included social work, psychology, nursing, midwifery, exercise physiology, physiotherapy, indigenous health, medicine, speech pathology, dietetics, paramedicine, occupational therapy and pharmacy. 100% of students surveyed would recommend Aspire2Health to a friend. 92% of students were motivated to follow a health career after attending A2H compared with 86% before the event.

The enthusiasm of staff and students alike was infectious. One teacher reporting it was her favourite event of the year. We watched students being given education at a university level on a topic they had not been exposed to before. To then process the information using critical thinking skills and solve a health problem was also inspiring.

My personal highlight was having midwife Anna from 'Farmer Wants a Wife' join me along the way. She was a true inspiration to the students, although she informed me the majority of her followers were 'middle-aged-women'. Anna did represent one of many local health professionals who joined us, in a voluntary capacity along the way to personally do their bit in growing their own local workforce.



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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