

Facilitate Project Update — June 2026

It has been some time since we were last in contact, and we wanted to provide an update on the work we have been doing and how your contribution has informed and shaped the next phase of the project.

NSW Regional Health Partners funding

In mid-2025, we received funding from New South Wales Regional Health Partners (NSWRHP), which supported the development of the Facilitate project. This study builds directly on the community consultation work conducted in the Port Macquarie–Hastings region in early 2025. Interviews with people living with persistent pain and local clinicians found that patients often felt lost in the system — unaware of available services and uncertain how to access them. Clinicians recognised that what many patients needed was not more acute treatment, but better navigation, education, and connection to the right support.

From this, the Pain Management Facilitator role was created. The Facilitator delivers foundational pain education to assist people in making sense of their pain and develops, in collaboration with the client, a pain management plan to support their care. The Facilitator has heightened awareness of local, regional, and online resources, and will deliver additional resources specifically for mindfulness, support programs, graded and paced activity, sleep hygiene, flare-up planning, and general medication screening as relevant for the participant.

Project progress

We have expanded our research team, which includes a broad depth of local expertise. We have submitted ethics for review and developed participant workbooks and supporting resources to be used throughout the study. Our longer-term intention is to make these resources accessible to clinicians across our local area to support broader practice.

Welcome Mark Stewart

We are pleased to welcome Mark Stewart, a physiotherapist from Port Macquarie Base Hospital, who has joined the project in the role of Pain Management Facilitator. Mark will be working two days per week and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his role.



"I have been working as a physiotherapist for the past 15 years. I graduated from Griffith University (Gold Coast) with a Bachelor's degree in Physiotherapy and Exercise Science in 2009. I initially worked as a private musculoskeletal physiotherapist before moving towards the public hospital setting, working with acute inpatients at

Mark Stewart

Pain Management Facilitator

Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital in Brisbane. I spent 10 years at QEII Hospital, with the vast majority of that time as a senior intensive care physiotherapist supporting early recovery and return to function for critically ill and injured patients. Following this time, my family and I returned to my hometown of Port Macquarie, where I am currently working as a senior surgical physiotherapist at Port Macquarie Base Hospital.

Through my career I have developed a keen interest in pain management — both acute and chronic — and have observed firsthand the negative impact living with chronic pain can have not only on a person's health and wellbeing, but also on families and carers. Conversely, through pain science education and reconceptualising the pain experience, along with a clear management plan and a dedicated support network, this can lead to a profound positive change in quality of life for people living with chronic pain."

Next steps

Subject to ethics approval proceeding as anticipated, we expect to commence participant recruitment in June 2026. The intervention will be delivered over a 20-week period.

Questions or concerns?

Please contact the research team → facilitatestudy@csu.edu.au