



Charles Sturt
University

Three Rivers
Department of
Rural Health



2025 Year in Review

Supporting the growth and development
of the rural health workforce



Director's message

As Director of Charles Sturt University Three Rivers Department of Rural Health, I am proud to reflect on a year marked by growth, innovation, and collaboration.

In 2025, we strengthened our commitment to building a skilled and culturally responsive rural health workforce. Our partnerships with health services, universities, and communities remain the cornerstone of our success, and I thank the Department of Health and Aged Care for their continued support through the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program.

This year, we delivered impactful initiatives across education, research, and community engagement. Our student support programs provided accommodation, travel assistance, and outreach opportunities to hundreds of health students, ensuring equitable access to rural placements. Interprofessional education flourished through simulation-enhanced workshops and rural health forums, fostering collaboration among future health professionals.

Mental health education continued to expand through the Rural Mental Health Education Enhancement Hub, community-based placements, and targeted workshops. Service learning and multiagency placements offered students authentic experiences that meet local needs, while cultural immersion programs deepened understanding of First Nations communities – an essential foundation for respectful, person-centred care.

Research was another highlight, with projects addressing critical rural health priorities, including virtual care for people with intellectual disability, aged care innovations, and workforce sustainability. Securing a National Health and Medical Research Council grant and leading 43 active research projects reflects our commitment to evidence-based solutions for rural communities.

Our outreach programs, scholarships, and career pathways initiatives inspired the next generation of health professionals, while forums and field days strengthened community connections. These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our staff, partners, and advisory committees.

As we look to 2026, we remain focused on collaboration, innovation, and advocacy to support the future workforce to deliver high-quality healthcare in rural communities.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to making 2025 a year of impact and progress.

Christine Howard
Director
Three Rivers Department of Rural Health

Charles Sturt University Three Rivers Department of Rural Health is funded under the Australian Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. In consortium partnership with the University of New South Wales, The University of Notre Dame Australia, and Western Sydney University, Three Rivers DRH aims to improve the recruitment and retention of nursing, midwifery, allied health and dentistry professionals in rural and remote Australia.

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we live and work together. We extend this respect to all Elders, past and present.



About us

Charles Sturt University Three Rivers Department of Rural Health (DRH) is based in the Riverina and Central West regions of New South Wales.

Our goal is to improve the recruitment and retention of nursing, midwifery, allied health and dentistry professionals in rural and remote Australia.

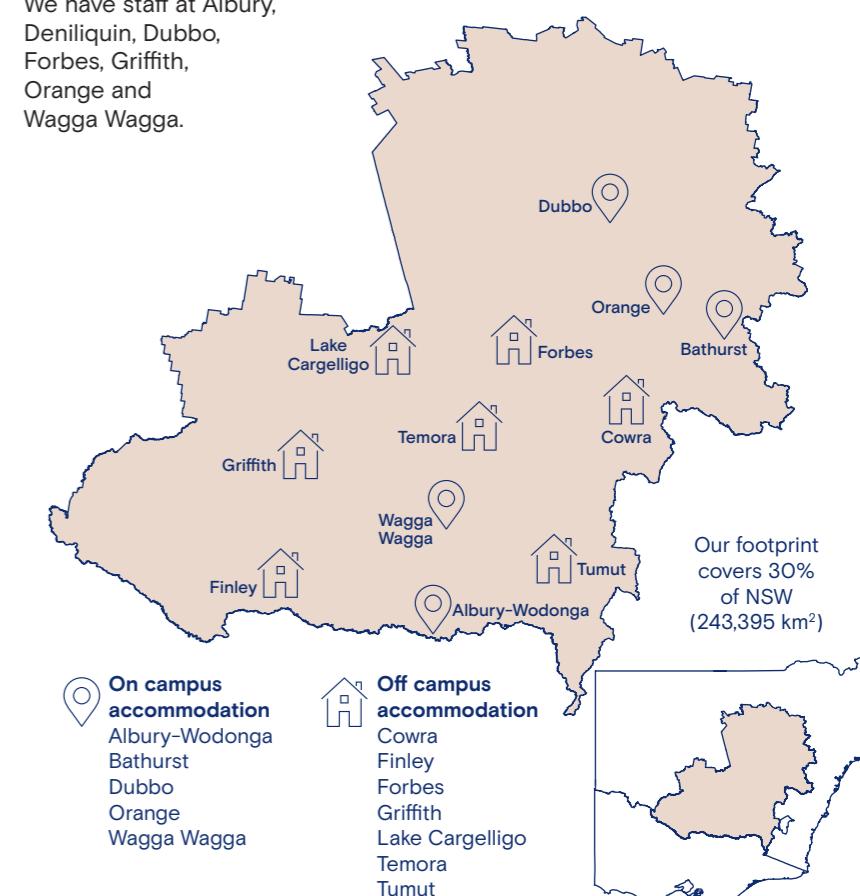
We work with educators, healthcare providers and local communities across our footprint to support health students and rural health professionals.

We support research into rural health training and workforce development, and rural health service delivery models that support the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples and rural communities.

We are one of 19 University Departments of Rural Health operating across Australia funded under the Australian Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program.

Within our footprint, the Wiradjuri Nation area has been described as 'land of the three rivers'.

We have staff at Albury, Deniliquin, Dubbo, Forbes, Griffith, Orange and Wagga Wagga.



Live. Study. Work. Rural.

Student support

Throughout 2025, students from universities across Australia have accessed support, accommodation, and travel grants during their clinical placement across our geographical footprint.

Our accommodation portfolio continues to experience strong demand, particularly in the Wagga Wagga and Orange areas.

The team remains dedicated to providing high-quality support, ensuring all students receive the most suitable assistance throughout their placements.

379
students

1,771
weeks supported



On-campus
subsidised
accommodation

Off-campus
subsidised
accommodation

Placement
Grant

Travel Support
Scheme

Outreach Visit
Support Scheme

Aged Care
Placement Bonus

190
students

717
weeks supported



369
students

1,664
weeks supported

Financial assistance for
Charles Sturt students in lieu
of accommodation.

99
students

478
weeks supported

Financial assistance for
non-Charles Sturt students in lieu
of accommodation.

12
students

24
nights supported

Additional financial assistance
when completing outreach
trips as part of placement.

58
students

154
weeks supported

Additional financial assistance
for specific aged care
placements in Deniliquin and
surrounding towns.



Three Rivers Department of Rural Health

Professional development

Our Rural Health Education (RHE) team provides free professional development (PD) opportunities to rural health clinicians and our partners, supporting them in their vital role in the health and wellbeing of our regional and rural communities.

Our PD program is based on extensive consultation with industry partners and delivered in online and face-to-face formats across the region.

These activities were highly collaborative. We worked with internal and external partners, including the occupational therapy and physiotherapy work-integrated learning (WIL) teams, as well as local partners, including Murrumbidgee Local Health District (LHD), Western NSW LHD, Albury Wodonga Health,

Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (PHN) and Going Rural Health, to deliver programs.

Our educational offerings are continually evaluated and have been well received across the community.

"Great speakers, easy to listen to and very engaging. Good balance of presentations and exercises to explore all avenues of enhancing the student-supervisor partnership." – Participant, 'Enhancing the Student-Supervisor Partnership' workshop, Narrandera



595 health professionals attended training sessions, including **17** face-to-face days and **9** online webinars

Sim-IPE: Understanding interprofessional roles in rural health

Interprofessional collaboration, education, and practice are a cornerstone of rural health.

Our simulation-enhanced interprofessional education (sim-IPE) workshops for students bring together diverse disciplines to learn about each other's roles.

In 2025, we held sim-IPE collaborations between our RHE team, Murrumbidgee LHD, Albury Wodonga Health and Western NSW LHD, resulting in six sessions for 91 students across Dubbo, Forbes, Bathurst, Wagga Wagga and Albury.

Students from nursing, medicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, social work,

dietetics, and medical radiation science participated in the sessions and learnt about holistic rural health using simulated patient scenarios.

A highlight was the involvement of two community members living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), who shared their personal stories with students.

Students in attendance commented that "I learned so much about how other disciplines work and how we can work together for the best outcomes for our patients" and "I was so glad to be a part of this session, it gave in-depth insight to different approaches to healthcare and patient-centred care".



Rural health forums

This year, we were proud to deliver two rural health forums.

Thrive 2025 'Innovations from the heart of rural health', was held in Parkes, with 110 attendees across two events – a networking evening with a keynote address by Dr Daniel Nour, founder of Street Side Medics, and a health forum with a keynote from Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH) CEO Catherine Maloney.

Attendees enjoyed diverse presentations covering the evolving role of rural paramedics, the Sing Out Choir supporting individuals living with dementia, dancing for healthy ageing,

youth suicide prevention and falls prevention strategies tailored for First Nations peoples.

Our 2025 Aged Care Forum, co-hosted with the Murrumbidgee PHN, welcomed 106 registrants and was held in Deniliquin. Opening speaker Maroba Caring Communities CEO Viv Allanson OAM spoke with great passion about the role of love and kindness in aged care.

The forum then focused on presentations related to the new, strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards, including nutrition and hydration in aged care, complaints management, and medication safety.



Mental health education programs

Rural Mental Health Education Enhancement Hub

The Rural Mental Health Educational Enhancement Hub (the Hub) continued in 2025 in partnership with the Murrumbidgee PHN.

The Hub offers high-quality education and training on targeted mental health topics, supports community-based mental health placements, and provides online resources to encourage intentional mental health career pathways.

In 2025, we partnered with the Murrumbidgee and Southern NSW LHDs to co-facilitate a workshop in Wagga Wagga supporting new and expectant mothers through online therapies.

Fourteen child and family health nurses attended, built their perinatal mental health knowledge and learnt how internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy (iCBT) can help mums experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety.

More workshops are planned for 2026, alongside research exploring their impact on clinicians' practice.

"It was very informative, relevant and thought-provoking. It will change my future practice." – Workshop participant



70+ health professionals attended mental health education provided through the Hub with **3,200+** visitors to the website

Community mental health placement experiences

Our Community Mental Health Experience (CMHE) program is a partnership between Three Rivers DRH and LikeMind (in Orange and Wagga Wagga).

Over 65 students from nursing, paramedicine, and social work have now completed a CMHE placement with LikeMind.

The outcomes of these placements have proven to be transformative in building student confidence and reducing stigma surrounding mental health. This experience has deepened students' understanding of their professional identity within rural communities and, in some cases, encouraged them to consider future careers in rural mental health.

"This experience has introduced me to non-traditional clinical environments, allowing me to connect with the community and learn from their experiences. I also have the valuable support of knowledgeable mental health professionals who are passionate about their work." – Ashtyne Palfreyman, final-year Bachelor of Nursing student



Service Manager Anne Bowman, LikeMind Educator Maddison Gillette, and nursing student Ashtyne Palfreyman

Online modules

In 2025, we collaborated with expert educational designers to transfer our free online courses to a new Learning Management System. 'Telehealth – Embracing technology in healthcare' had an ongoing engagement from learners across 20 universities and health professionals representing all disciplines, which resulted in the award of 7,013 certificates of completion since the course commenced in 2019.



919 certificates were awarded in 2025 for our free **telehealth** online course



75 completions of our six free online **rural clinical supervision readiness** modules by health professionals with a 97% satisfaction rating



217 completions of our seven free online **rural placement readiness** modules by health students with a 95% satisfaction rating

Rural placement programs

Currajong Disability Services

Lauren Beasley and Alicia Hammond collaborated with trained facilitators to implement the Dance Moves program at Currajong Disabilities Services, Parkes, NSW, gaining valuable insights into the disability sector.

In partnership with NSW Health, they conducted pre- and post-testing of participants' movement skills to assess the program's effectiveness for adults living with a disability.

They noted that this placement provided a rewarding educational experience, enhancing their understanding of occupational therapy in rural and regional contexts.

"Having two OT students lead our Dance Moves program has brought visible joy and confidence to our participants. Lifting mobility, balance, coordination, mood, and social connection, while upskilling our staff with fresh, evidence-based strategies and strengthening Currajong's culture of innovation and inclusion." – Jeff Evans, CEO Currajong Disability Services



Dancer Nettie with occupational therapy students Lauren Beasley and Alicia Hammond

Service learning

Service learning is a form of work-integrated learning that combines experiential education, civic engagement and critical reflection.

Our service learning program is founded on the core values of quality learning and teaching, rurality and social accountability. During these placements, students provide a service to a rural organisation that meets a need identified in collaboration with the community.

9 service learning placements

with **8** organisations, most in rural or remote areas,

hosting **18** students from physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech pathology

Multiagency placements

The multiagency placement (MaP) model is designed to deliver high quality foundational work-integrated learning in rural contexts.

These placements leverage partnerships across multiple health and community agencies to provide early-year allied health students with diverse, authentic, and pedagogically sound placement experiences where they rotate through several host organisations.

We have been growing this model over the past two years and have hosted opportunities for occupational therapy, paramedicine, physiotherapy and speech pathology students in Bathurst, Coonamble, Deniliquin, Dubbo, Forbes and Orange.

24 students participated in our MaP model

Dubbo community hosts students

First-year occupational therapy students Charlie McKenzie and Isobelle Deshon undertook a multiagency placement at Dubbo, NSW.

The students visited various Western NSW health sites and private organisations, gaining an understanding of the broad scope of occupational therapy practice.

Areas of practice included mental health, disability, rehabilitation, paediatrics, Aboriginal health and dementia.

"It was a pleasure to meet with both students – they were both enthusiastic and interested, asking some great questions that really showed a level of reflection between the services they have experienced over the week.

We would love to host either of these students in the future for clinical placements." – Host organisation



Charlie McKenzie, Three Rivers DRH Clinical Educator Elsie de Klerk, and Isobelle Deshon

Health chats at Henty and Orange field days

In 2025, we attended two field day events.

In September, we enjoyed our annual venture to the Henty Machinery Field Days, where we hosted a community-based placement opportunity for paramedicine students in collaboration with the Australian Men's Shed Association and Murrumbidgee LHD's Farm Community Counselling Service.

With a focus on rural men's health promotion, the students use the 'Spanner in the Works?' program as a foundation for their conversations. They complete blood pressure measurements, BMIs and discuss mental wellness using the K10.



In a new undertaking, we also partnered with the Men's Shed to deliver this placement model at the Australian National Field Days in Orange, NSW during October.

Across the two events, we hosted 13 paramedicine students and had health chats with 680 community members.

This community-based placement is an excellent opportunity for students to grow their technical and interpersonal skills as they check in on the physical and mental health of community members.

13 paramedicine students
had health chats with **680**
community members

"Our placement at Henty Field Days was an incredible opportunity to engage with the community, hone our skills and build stronger relationships with fellow practitioners. I am very appreciative of the team that supported this growth and development opportunity for us. Thank you!" – James Fisher, first-year Bachelor of Paramedicine student



Cultural awareness and place-based immersion

Place-based cultural immersion is vital for health students as it fosters a deeper understanding of local communities, enhances cultural awareness, and strengthens their ability to deliver respectful, contextually relevant care.

In the Lachlan area, we are privileged to continue our partnership with Uncle

"I believe this immersion session has been extremely valuable for my personal and professional growth. As a future paramedic, I will work with Aboriginal patients, and in rural communities, and having a deeper cultural awareness will help me provide care that is both respectful and person-centred."

"Understanding the importance of history, identity, and connection to land will allow me to approach my role with greater empathy and sensitivity, ultimately contributing to better patient outcomes and stronger relationships with the communities I serve." – Jess Potter, first-year Bachelor of Paramedicine student

Working with older people in Deniliquin and Finley

We have been privileged to work with Navorina Nursing Home, Southern Cross Care Orana, and Finley Regional Care to offer this program. We also welcomed Tocumwal Lions Hostel and Tocumwal Multipurpose Service (MPS) as partners, hosting a two-week nursing placement.



We celebrated the completion of capital works undertakings at Navorina and Southern Cross Care Orana nursing homes, joined by residents, staff, family, community members, and local dignitaries.

We are finalising plans for a collaboration agreement with Finley

Regional Care to create a state-of-the-art training and education space.

In addition to the Aged Care Forum, we have facilitated local professional development focused on a variety of topics, including documentation, wound care, medication safety, falls prevention and dementia.

"I enjoyed Deniliquin so much more than I thought I would! (as a coastie lol). The facility was honestly such a great environment. Definitely hoping to get my next placement around that area! I enjoyed it!" – Ebony Campbell, second-year Bachelor of Nursing student

"Honestly, if allowed to, I would one hundred percent go on this placement opportunity again because it was utterly fantastic. From this experience, I have grown exponentially as a healthcare professional in so many ways, so thank you!" – Kristen Turner, first-year, Bachelor of Paramedicine student

190 placement weeks in 2025
for **70** students
from nursing and paramedicine

Curriculum consultation and co-design

During 2025, our team collaborated with staff from the School of Nursing, Paramedicine and Healthcare Sciences (SNPHS) to plan and facilitate consultation sessions focused on two important aspects of the nursing curriculum: mental health and aged care.

The mental health curriculum review included seven community members with lived experience of mental ill-health and four Charles Sturt academic staff. The group spent time reviewing the current mental health content and discussing possible enhancements, including a particular focus on mental health placements.

To better understand what people with lived experience believe nurses should be learning in the aged care domain,

Three Rivers DRH staff and SNPHS staff met with residents, staff, and family members at Southern Cross Care Nursing Home in Deniliquin. Members of this community contributed ideas that will influence the design of the new nursing curriculum at Charles Sturt University for 2026.

These unique consultation processes provided opportunities to work collaboratively towards our shared goal of preparing students to complete placements, to recognise how the elements of mental health and aged care are embedded in nursing practice and to consider careers in both the mental health and aged care sectors.

Thank you to our placement partners

We acknowledge the work and dedication of our rural health education partners, who make it possible for health students to have such impactful learning experiences each year. It has been wonderful to continue strengthening our existing partnerships and meeting new partners.

For example, this year, Temora Public School hosted its first-ever service learning placement in partnership with Three Rivers DRH, welcoming two second-year occupational therapy students from Charles Sturt. Supervised by Esther Petrie and supported on-site by Principal Erin Pike, the students designed and delivered a place-based intervention

program aimed at improving motor skills in primary students through intentional movement.

Esther shared, "If there's something that lights a spark in me, it's supervising OT students". At the same time, Erin noted, "We are delighted with the success of the practicum and are proud of the positive experience the students had". The school is eager to host future placements and build on this successful foundation.

Thank you to Temora Public School and to all our partners who are invested in high-quality rural health education.

Research

We are committed to fostering authentic research collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders, including healthcare providers, communities and local organisations, to co-create solutions that are responsive to the unique needs of rural communities.

Our research focuses on rural health workforce development, innovative rural service delivery models that enable health services to meet diverse community needs, rural health training strategies, and health issues directly impacting rural people, including First Nations peoples.

Research in action

Gateway Midwife Care program evaluation

In 2025, our researchers consulted with Gateway Health staff to evaluate their innovative high-risk pregnancy clinic which provides continuity of midwife care to vulnerable community members in the Albury-Wodonga region.

It is hoped that this collaboration will provide a greater understanding of the program's importance in helping local clients at the highest risk of poor outcomes, as well as their children.

In July, we conducted a workshop with previous program clients to identify aspects of the program they considered important.

We also welcomed Associate Professor Natasha Brusco (Monash University) to the research team to support an economic evaluation of the program.

Data collection commenced in October and will continue through to early 2026.

We are leading or supporting
43 active research projects
in partnership with university and
health service partners within our footprint

Rural Disability Research Community of Practice

The Rural Disability Research Community of Practice (CoP) is a collaborative initiative involving 26 researchers from nine University Departments of Rural Health (UDRHs) and four states. Three Rivers DRH, Natalie Ellis and Louise French have played key roles in shaping the group's inclusive, place-based research agenda.

What sets this CoP apart is its commitment to privileging lived experience – nearly all members are either people with disability or have close family experience. This ethos has created a safe space for collaboration, advocacy, and capacity building.

In 2025, the CoP published 'Placing Rural in the National Disability Insurance Scheme Review', a rural-focused critique of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Review, which highlights the metrocentric gaps in current policy and calls for stronger rural representation.

Through focused collaboration and regular engagement, the CoP has amplified rural voices in national discourse and built a platform for authentic, community-driven research.



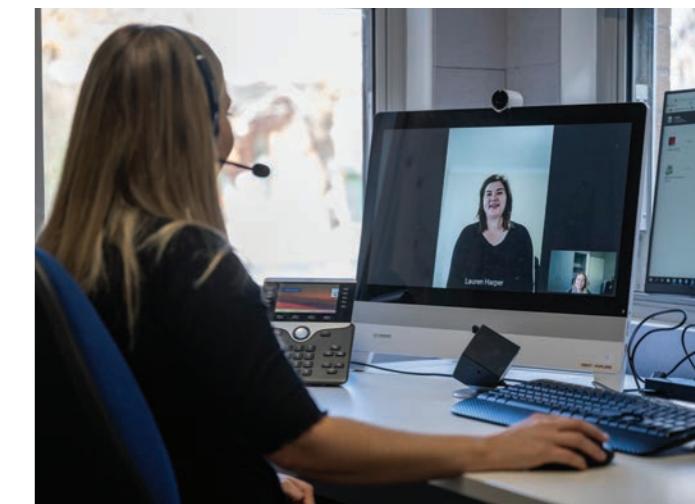
Improving virtual care through co-design

In 2025, we collaborated with people with intellectual disability, their carers and clinicians to explore how virtual healthcare can be improved.

Four workshops were held to identify challenges in delivering virtual care to people with intellectual disability and to co-design meaningful resources to help clients and clinicians.

Based on workshop input and feedback, five resources were developed to support virtual care delivery. These include a letter outlining a client's virtual care preferences, suitability checklists, planning tools, and a video aimed at improving communication, safety, and client engagement. The resources will be made freely available.

This project highlights the importance of involving people with lived experience of intellectual disability in service design and aims to support more inclusive and effective virtual healthcare.



External grant income

Our researchers led and partnered in 11 external funding applications valued at \$10 million, resulting in \$4 million in successful grants.



NHMRC success: Enhancing acute coronary syndrome treatment in emergency departments

Our research collaboration with Murrumbidgee LHD and the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation attracted Collaborations in Health Services Research Grant funding from the Australian Government's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

The multiphase project aims to understand the factors influencing the use of the acute coronary syndrome pathway when a patient presents to an emergency department (ED). We aim to identify what changes should be implemented in EDs of different capacities and remoteness to support clinical decision-making now and as Australia's health systems become fully digitalised.



Wellness 2 Age clinical trial

The Wellness 2 Age program is an evidence-based, strengths-focused initiative designed to enhance mobility, cognition, and social wellbeing in older adults living in rural communities.

Delivered over 10 weeks, participants attend one-hour sessions led by allied health professionals, assistants, or aged care staff, supported by home-based activities to ensure strategies translate into daily life.

Following early pilot success, funding from the HCF Foundation enabled the translation of this approach into community settings to test its feasibility and effectiveness across diverse models of care. Three partner sites represented different contexts: a public outpatient health service, a private allied health organisation, and a community-based aged care provider.

Across all settings, the program demonstrated strong feasibility and acceptability, with participants showing measurable improvements in mobility, cognitive function, and satisfaction with everyday activities. Importantly, many also reported a renewed sense of purpose, stronger community connection, and greater confidence in managing age-related changes.

Thank you to our research partners

Albury Wodonga Health
Children's Voices Centre
Deakin University
Federation University
Finley Regional Care
Gateway Health
Hunter New England Local Health District
Icaria Health
Independent Living Australia
Ingham Institute of Health and Medical Research
Kids I Can
Live Better
Marathon Health
Marradhal Aboriginal Corporation
Monash University

Murrumbidgee Local Health District
Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network
National Ageing Research Institute
Navorina Nursing Home
NSW Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service
NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation
NSW Intellectual Disability Health Network
NSW Regional Health Partners
Pro Patria Centre
Rural Health Research Institute
Southern Cross Care Orana
Southern NSW Local Health District
South Western Sydney Local Health District
St Agnes Parish Care & Lifestyle
Stride Ltd – LikeMind

University of Newcastle
University of Queensland
Therapy Connect
Torrens University
Uniting AgeWell
University of South Australia
University of Southern Queensland
University of Sydney
University of Tasmania
University of Technology Sydney
Western NSW Health Research Network
Western NSW Local Health District
Western NSW Primary Health Network
Western Sydney University
World Health Organization



Building research capacity

We actively contribute to research capacity building by supervising and mentoring students throughout the research pipeline, including Honours, Masters and PhDs.

In 2025, three of our Three Rivers DRH staff enrolled in PhDs.



Kathryn Castelletto

Thesis: The impact of psychological safety on health students' rural work-integrated learning experiences



Latitia Kernaghan

Thesis: How are lived experience experts contributing to formal and informal mental health education in Australia?



Elsie de Klerk

Thesis: Redefining identity: The journey from clinician to academic at Australian University Departments of Rural Health

Congratulations to our PhD students Alison Devitt, Nathan Cooke and Rebecca Jarrott, who published their research in 2025.

- A Scoping Review of Health-Related Self-Management Approaches for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities. (Alison Devitt)
- Burnout symptomology among early career paramedics. (Nathan Cooke)
- Exploring Occupational Therapists' Use of the Perceive, Recall, Plan and Perform Assessment When Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Northern Territory. (Rebecca Jarrott)
- Valid measures of cognitive assessment with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are urgently needed: construct and concurrent validity of the Perceive, Recall, Plan and Perform Assessment. (Rebecca Jarrott)

Research training and education

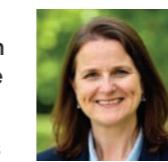
We are committed to designing and delivering research training opportunities that meet the needs of our local communities.

Thirty-three community members, health consumers, health researchers and health professionals collaborated during a one-day workshop, hosted by Three Rivers DRH and Health Consumers NSW in Wagga Wagga.

The workshop created opportunities for health consumers to work with health researchers and to strengthen existing relationships between health service providers, university partners, and regional health networks.



In 2025, Associate Professor Kristy Robson, Three Rivers DRH Senior Research Fellow, launched a new podcast series, *The Rural Researcher*.



This series focuses on the practical realities of conducting impactful research in rural and regional communities.

The podcast explores how research can move beyond academic boundaries to work meaningfully with rural communities and create real, lasting impact.

Each episode, available on Spotify, features engaging conversations with researchers, clinicians, service providers, policy-makers, and community leaders, unpacking topics such as research design, consumer engagement, co-design, and knowledge translation, all through a rural lens.



We published **28** journal articles

and **6** commissioned reports with 89% in Q1 ranked journals

The publications captured our priority Field of Research codes, including rural and remote health services, public health, allied health, curriculum and pedagogy.



We delivered **19** oral

and **1** poster presentation at **5** conferences across **4** states



We supervised **2** Honours,

1 Masters and **13** PhD students

including three Three Rivers DRH staff who have commenced their PhD candidature.



Conference highlights

Our researchers actively participated in various local and national conferences this year.

A strong staff contingent shared their research at the 10th Rural and Remote Scientific Symposium in Alice Springs, including insights on co-design for virtual care for intellectual disability services, impact of student placements in aged care settings, supporting older rural people to age well, rural workforce sustainability, rural student placements, mental health training, and research capacity building.

At the Western NSW Health Research Network (WHRN) 2025 Research Symposium in Orange, NSW, we shared our research on portable dentistry to support aged care residents, the use of ePrescribing in Western NSW, and the evaluation of care outcomes and costs of virtual care for people with intellectual disabilities.



Top: Staff at the 10th Rural and Remote Scientific Symposium in Alice Springs
Above: Travel and accommodation grant recipients at the WHRN 2025 Research Symposium

In partnership with Marathon Health, we sponsored 18 travel and accommodation grants for Aboriginal, allied health and nursing clinicians and students to attend the WHRN2025 Research Symposium.

Seven members of our RHE team attended the Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators (ANZAHPE) conference in Perth and facilitated three presentations.

Research awards

Congratulations to Associate Professor Melissa Nott, Stephanie Nelson, Alison Devitt, and Carley Lowcock, who jointly won the Health Research Award at the 2025 Western NSW LHD Excellence Awards for their project, making virtual care for people with intellectual disability more practical, accessible, and safe for everyone.

Congratulations to Associate Professor Kristy Robson who was awarded the Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN) David Lyle Prize

for Rural and Remote Health 2025 – academic category, for her significant contributions to rural research through her leadership as the Chair of the ARHEN Research Staff Network, her commitment to embedding a rural lens into health regulation, her policy work in NSW supporting rural older people, as well as her strong commitment to Three Rivers DRH and rural communities in our footprint.

Congratulations to the Charles Sturt University dentistry team, who were

supported by Three Rivers DRH to provide dental care to residents in rural aged care facilities, and were awarded a Charles Sturt University 2025 Social Responsibility Excellence Award. Dental and oral health students delivered dental care in six aged care facilities, which was a highly valuable and appreciated service.

We proudly fund this initiative, which prepares a compassionate, future-ready dental workforce that improves the oral health of aged care residents.

Pathways

Focusing on rural origin students, our Pathways team attend career-focused events across our footprint to provide insights into health career opportunities.

The 'Be a Health Hero' is a four-day immersive program that offers students a unique opportunity to explore careers in nursing, allied health, and medicine through hands-on workshops, hospital tours, and interactive sessions with health professionals.

In 2025, four iterations of the program were held with 90 Year 10 students from a wide range of schools across the Riverina participating.

Coordinated by the NSW Department of Education's Regional Industry Education Partnership (RIEP) in collaboration with Three Rivers DRH, Charles Sturt University, TAFE NSW, Murrumbidgee LHD, Active Health Riverina, New Directions, and Calvary Riverina, students stitched wounds,



tackled escape rooms, explored the university campus, and chatted with doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals.

One student said, "I didn't expect it to be so fun! Even though I'm introverted, I found myself asking heaps of questions". Another shared that they loved learning about all the different jobs, and that getting into university feels more achievable now.

The most popular health courses across our footprint are nursing, paramedicine, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, radiography, psychology, and health and medical science.



Our Pathways coordinators, Michelle West (north) and Laura Strano (south)



Attended **72** events

and interacted with
2,500+ people

including prospective health students, parents and carers, school careers advisors and staff



Travelled almost
14,000 km

Students 'Scrub In' at Forbes

During October, the first iteration of the new two-day program 'Scrub In' was held in Forbes, NSW.

Developed in collaboration with Western NSW LHD's allied health educator, the new program is designed to inspire future rural health professionals.

The event was held in conjunction with RIEP and the Western NSW LHD's Centre for Rural Education, Simulation and Traineeship (CREST).

Scrub In offers hands-on work experience for school students considering a career in rural health, providing them with the opportunity to explore the various roles available in a healthcare environment.

During the program at Forbes Hospital, students participated in various activities, including taking their own blood sugar readings, casting, hand hygiene, and IV-line activities. Ambulance walk-throughs and activities were also a highlight. Additionally, students had the opportunity to chat with doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals.

It wasn't just about learning – it was about discovering confidence, teamwork, and the thrill of helping others.



Three Rivers Department of Rural Health

Scholarships

In 2025, the Pathways team awarded \$180,000 in funding to 22 scholarship recipients.



Awarded

\$180,000

in scholarships

to support **22** aspiring health professionals

The scholarships support commencing and continuing health students, from rural areas, assisting in reducing barriers to higher education health studies.

The most popular disciplines we supported were nursing and physiotherapy.



"Growing up rurally, in Warren, I saw firsthand how limited access to healthcare can result in delayed diagnosis and treatments.

"Once I complete my degree, my aim is to return to a rural or regional community to work as a diagnostic radiographer.

"Beyond financial support, this scholarship reminded me that rural students are seen, heard and supported and that assistance is always available." – Amity Payne, first-year Bachelor of Medical Radiation Science student



"Through my studies in nursing, I want to become someone my community can rely on, not just treat illnesses, but to listen, understand and care deeply.

"In the future, I hope to be an advocate for patients' needs and work towards making healthcare more compassionate and accessible for everyone." – Srijana Regmi Dhakal, first-year Bachelor of Nursing student

Student rural health club

Rural Health Positive (Rh+) is a student-led club, which we support to promote career opportunities in rural and regional healthcare.

The club focuses on inspiring students pursuing health degrees, fostering a support network, and promoting health profession careers through outreach in rural high schools. The club is affiliated with the National Rural Health Student Network.

"2025 has been a year of growth and momentum for Rural Health Positive. We welcomed both new and returning faces to the executive team, allowing us to strengthen our connections across all Charles Sturt University campuses.

"We had great success with our First Nations events and our rural high school visits, continuing to advocate and raise awareness for rural, remote and Indigenous health.

"Our executive team and general members showed outstanding commitment through volunteering at rural outreach events in partnership with Three Rivers. As a club, we also expanded our community engagement by supporting local schools' health career days and annual community events such as 'Sky Stories'.

"Throughout 2025, every one of our members has demonstrated commitment, initiative and passion to support our club and continue its excellence." – Eliza Cyc, Rh+ co-president

474

Rural Health Positive club members





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Charles Sturt University Three Rivers Department of Rural Health is funded under the Australian Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. Charles Sturt University is an Australian University. TEQSA Provider Identification: PRV12018. CRICOS Provider: 00005F.