



Flinders
UNIVERSITY

College of Medicine
& Public Health

INSPIRING

ACHIEVEMENT

RURAL AND REMOTE

HEALTH STRATEGY

OUR LOCATIONS



Flinders University operates throughout the Central Australian Corridor

WELCOME



Firstly, I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which Flinders University teaches, researches and operates across (Arrernte, Boandik, Dagoman, Erawirung, Jawoyn, Kurna, Larrakia, Ngarrindjeri, Ngadjuri, Peramangk, Ramindjeri, Waramungu, Wardaman and Yolngu) and honour their Elders past and present.

In my roles, I have had the immense pleasure and privilege of meeting and working with staff, students and communities across our many locations in the Northern Territory and South Australia. I have witnessed the excellence, passion and commitment of our rural and remote staff, the close connections that Flinders University has with communities, and the positive affects that the contributions of our staff and students have on the communities we serve.

This breadth of excellence, passion and commitment was condensed into a single place in June 2019 when our Rural and Remote Health Strategy Retreat brought together over 100 of our staff in Alice Springs to develop a shared strategy for the Discipline of Rural and Remote Health.

This Retreat remains a highlight: it was the first time that many of us have gathered in one place to have focussed discussions on rural and remote health. Equally as importantly, the personal bonds, friendships and shared experiences that the Retreat facilitated are enduring. Staff travelled from places as diverse as Mt Gambier, Victor Harbor, Bedford Park, Renmark, Burra, Darwin

and Nhulunbuy, bringing with them unique perspectives and varied experiences but in a spirit of sharing that was as unique as the location.

In the lead-up to the retreat, we established four Working Groups to develop specific priority areas for discussion. The priority areas guided discussions and presentations which in turn provided the content for this Strategy. It is a living and dynamic document, which provides a clear vision of where we want to be in five years' time.

I sincerely thank the members of each Working Group and the Co-Chairs who led these groups during 2019 and, of course, each participant at our Retreat, including those from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, and representatives from many portfolios.

At Flinders University we are in a truly privileged position to make a difference in the communities we serve, and I look forward to what we can continue to achieve, together.

Professor Jonathan Craig

Interim Dean, Rural and Remote Health
Vice-President and Executive Dean
College of Medicine and Public Health

INTRODUCTION

FLINDERS UNIVERSITY IS RECOGNISED FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH.

Our education and research aims to equip the next generation of leaders and innovators with the skill, commitment and vision to protect vulnerable communities and advance health outcomes. Our fundamental vision is to improve the health of our communities through the transformative power of education, research and health care.

Our geographic footprint throughout the Central Australian Corridor is a defining feature for Flinders, and allows us to deliver regional academic programs and research that impact some of the most under-served communities in Australia. Our focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, rural and remote health issues and the development of a 'home-grown' health care workforce within rural and remote communities is a clear strength.

The College has an extensive presence across the Northern Territory, including Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

As well as delivering the Flinders NT Medical Program (NTMP), Flinders NT provides student placement and workforce capacity support through the Remote and Rural Interprofessional Placement Learning (RIPPL), manages the Centre for Remote Health, and the Flinders NT Regional Training Hub, focussed on the rural medical training pipeline.

Flinders University Rural Health SA facilitates high quality multidisciplinary health education and research across rural communities in South Australia including the Parallel Rural Community Curriculum (PRCC) program, and the Rural Junior Doctor Program. Our presence includes sites in the Barossa Valley, Hills Mallee Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island, Mid North and Yorke Peninsula, the Riverland, South East and Far North and Eyre Peninsula.

In 2018, the College of Medicine and Public Health Strategy was released, and articulates our focus on strengthening College efforts across a range of priorities and positioning our people to enable even greater excellence and impact.

The establishment of the Discipline of Rural and Remote Health (encompassing Flinders NT and Flinders Rural Health SA) aims to achieve a more integrated approach to education and research in rural and remote health. Our vision is to be recognised as the global leader in rural and remote health research, and as a global leader in the development of a committed and highly skilled rural and remote health workforce.

In order to achieve this vision, we must continue to foster partnerships with local health, community and government agencies and support research opportunities on health matters relevant to local communities. Flinders must position itself to leverage investment in rural, regional and

remote Australia to provide more choice and access for regional students pursuing higher education.

Our four priority areas of focus are identified in Part One of this document:

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health**
- **Education**
- **Research**
- **Partnerships.**

Part Two outlines specific activities and plans to deliver on our priorities.



Attendees at the 2019 Rural and Remote Health Strategy Retreat in Alice Springs



PART ONE

OUR PRIORITIES

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH

Flinders University recognises the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as First Nations people, and is committed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and engagement. The University is currently developing a Reconciliation Action Plan for submission to Reconciliation Australia.

We recognise the unique place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, and the resilience and cultural diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. We know that connection to culture and connection to cultural understandings is very important in maintaining wellbeing. We also note the health disadvantages that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience today.

As a College and University, we will act to ensure staff, students, and those with whom we collaborate, comprehend both the needs and the strengths within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. These strengths provide the foundation as we reframe the health narrative to privilege and centre Aboriginal peoples' ongoing connection to country, and the need to practice and uphold Aboriginal Lore/Law and culture.

As a College, we will respond to those local priorities in consultation and partnership with Aboriginal organisations and communities acknowledging our global responsibility as First Nations citizens.

EDUCATION

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

A model that prioritises community need, while privileging meaningful rural and remote immersion and community engagement for health professions students, will be developed.

RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH CURRICULUM

The development of a rural and remote health curriculum will provide the framework to educate students about health and health-system related issues in rural and remote contexts, and equip and prepare students for rural and remote learning placements. A curriculum will improve student preparedness for work integrated learning in rural and remote contexts, and emphasise inter-professional and collaborative health care teams.

RURAL EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE

Developing a rural educational pipeline of learning opportunities will provide greater opportunities for rural and remote students and increase the number of 'home grown' health professions students at Flinders, and ultimately working in their communities. We aim to increase enrolment and graduation of rural and remote students at Flinders, and increase outreach and support to rural and remote origin students in schools early to develop and nurture pathways into health professions careers.

PARTNERING WITH THE RURAL AND REMOTE WORKFORCE

Building educational capacity in rural and remote communities and with the local workforce will enhance student learning opportunities and experiences in rural and remote areas. There is significant unrealised opportunity to develop innovative short course offerings and professional development offerings that meet local community and workforce requirements that can support lifelong learning. Online learning platforms and innovative strategies to increase access to educational programs are required to ensure educational offerings in rural and remote areas are valued equally. Flinders has an opportunity to position itself as the key partner for education in rural and remote communities.

EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Supporting innovation in learning and teaching in rural and remote health, and the development of educational infrastructure is critical to the success of our graduates, their experience as a Flinders student, and to the reputation of Flinders as an educational institution and partner in rural and remote communities.

RESEARCH

BUILDING A RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK

We will lead the establishment of a cross-College rural and remote collaborative health research network within the Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute (FHMRI).

DEVELOPING RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Rural and remote health research priorities will continue to evolve, but will retain a clear focus on understanding the characteristics that are important to the effectiveness and sustainability of health services and the health workforce across the Flinders footprint, and rural/remote training strategies, with particular attention to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAPACITY

Strengthening research capacity across rural and remote Australia will involve supporting and mentoring early and mid-career researchers, increased higher degree research students in the rural and remote health context, and attracting high quality researchers and collaborators.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Developing strong and effective partnerships within Flinders, with other universities, research institutes, health services and policy makers will ensure our input and impact in policy and practice.



COMMUNICATING AND CELEBRATING RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH RESEARCH

Communicating our strategy and activities to support and develop rural and remote health research at Flinders is critical. Mechanisms to enable staff to access opportunities for development and to network are important and require creative solutions to enable appropriate access and more flexible opportunities given the challenges of geography.



Flinders staff from rural and remote locations



PARTNERSHIPS

Flinders University operates in rural and remote community contexts that are geographically and culturally diverse. Our communities are unique and engagement is fundamental to success in achieving our education and research goals.

Strong and effective partnerships contribute to building local communities, in particular the future health workforce, and ensure that local knowledge is incorporated into our activities. Partnerships are fundamental to educating our students and in ensuring graduate outcomes meet community needs.

Partnerships are critical to our success, and in ensuring meaningful engagement with our communities in the delivery of our vision and activities. The translation of the goals of our programs into successful outcomes requires an appreciation of our stakeholder's needs and priorities.

Flinders needs to ensure that our process of engagement and collaboration with partners is transparent, consultative, values-based and responsive to feedback. We will develop a recommended approach to establishing and maintaining partnerships, and inform a policy approach to partnerships that can be positioned at the heart of all University relationships in rural and remote contexts. Ultimately, our communities will expect and recognise Flinders as a consultative and respectful partner in our business.

PART TWO

OUR PLANS

Centre for Remote Health, Alice Springs

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH

- We will ensure all our College activities reflect our recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we work, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and value systems that inform that work.
- We will recruit and nurture new and existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and professional staff to grow our teaching and research capabilities and develop academic and professional leaders.
- We will deliver on strategies to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments, retention, successful graduation and identified pathways to employment.
- We will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success through integrated and tailored support, appropriate entry and course pathways, culturally-safe curricula and pedagogy, and the fostering of a culturally safe College environment.
- We will consult to ensure our research reflects community priorities, as well as developing both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researcher capacity to successfully conduct research in areas that enhance the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- We will ensure our curricula develop culturally-safe graduates equipped to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- We will further develop our modes of community engagement to ensure comprehensive participation in, and representation of community perspectives into, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters of relevance to our College.



Flinders staff from rural and remote locations

EDUCATION

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- We will expand longitudinal placements in rural and remote settings.
- We will develop an inter-professional education program to assist the development of collaborative practice skills, suited to rural and remote settings.
- We will undertake a scoping project to explore local capacity to increase student numbers and maximise the matching of students to local learning environments.
- We will work towards greater community and local health workforce engagement to underpin meaningful student experiences, and develop local young professional's networks to support placement of students and newly arrived health professionals.
- We will develop integrated health and wellbeing support for student success.

RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH CURRICULUM

- We will develop a rural and remote health vision across the University, by establishing a cross-College Rural and Remote Education Committee and developing a collaborative governance framework.
- We will develop and deliver a rural and remote health curriculum, to align learning in a common contextual framework, to be utilized and adapted across Colleges.
- We will identify existing rural and remote health and Indigenous health topics and course content and map staff and resources involved.
- We will create stand-alone course content in addition to expansion topics, preparatory courses and bridging programs to add to existing discipline specific curriculum.
- We will work with the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) to design and deliver innovative rural and remote health curriculum.
- We will build infrastructure capacity to deliver a flexible and accessible rural and remote health curriculum.

RURAL EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE

- We will develop strategies to identify rural and remote original students earlier in their admissions journey.
- We will explore specific rural and remote student entry pathways into health professions courses across the University and consider marketing and branding of pathways and courses.
- We will expand targeted school engagement strategies in rural and remote towns and communities, including on-campus residential programs for high school students.
- We will develop pathways from school to university that maximise educational opportunities for students.
- We will develop targeted strategies that maximise support for rural and remote students, particularly during their first year at university.
- We will investigate partnerships and course offerings that enable education programs to be offered locally and engage with regional health and education providers, as well as greater online education opportunities.

PARTNERING WITH THE RURAL AND REMOTE WORKFORCE

- We will undertake an assessment of the opportunities, and current gaps in support in education capacity.
- We will build the profile of postgraduate courses that promote rural, remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practice for health professions, which are informed by community needs.
- We will develop a strategy to further engage the rural and remote health workforce, incorporating awarding academic status, and placement supervisor awards.
- We will identify existing short courses and professional development opportunities.
- We will develop a support framework to guide the expansion and marketing of existing activities and development and implementation of new activities.
- We will further develop interprofessional capabilities across disciplines.
- We will further expand and enhance simulation teaching technology and support from the Bedford Park campus.

EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- We will adopt principles to maximise educational infrastructure and investment in rural and remote sites.
- We will scope the expansion of the learning coach model to maximise student learning opportunities.
- We will create spaces and places for students to socialise together, share experiences and learn from each other in a supported environment.
- We will partner with CILT to support innovation in learning and teaching and maximise creative learning opportunities.
- We will further the development and expansion of simulation teaching environments.



Discussions at the 2019 Rural and Remote Health Strategy Retreat in Alice Springs

RESEARCH

BUILDING A RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK

- We will map current research, key academic staff, existing strengths and weaknesses to enable an approach that can build on current research strengths throughout the Corridor, and identify opportunities for development. Existing strengths include workforce research, healthy ageing, mental health, social determinants of health, and methodological expertise in epidemiology, program evaluation and systematic reviews.
- We will host a Rural and Remote Health Research Summit to bring together relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- We will establish a Rural and Remote Health Research Steering Committee to scope new concepts for building and supporting research excellence.
- We will establish research themes of excellence relevant to rural and remote health and target strategic appointment of research academics to support the rural and remote health research agenda.

DEVELOPING RESEARCH PRIORITIES

- We will conduct data-linkage and population health studies to better understand health outcomes in rural and remote communities, in key focus areas such as mental health and emotional wellbeing, rural and remote health workforce, ageing and primary care.
- We will conduct translational research to improve health outcomes for rural and remote communities, and to influence policy and practice.
- We will develop methodological expertise in community engaged research, action research, systematic review and population health research.
- We will develop workshops with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in communities to listen and hear local voices on research priorities.
- We will undertake research that helps us describe and understand important aspects of primary health care and workforce in rural and remote Australia, including gaps in service delivery, workforce skill and composition, retention and turnover.

DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAPACITY

- We will target strategic appointments of high calibre research academics, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.
- We will establish research themes of excellence with a focus on attracting PhD and Masters students to Flinders.
- We will ensure seamless access to all research training for rural and remote academics, including development and support for NHMRC, ARC and MRFF grant opportunities.
- We will position seed funding to support new and innovative research ideas in rural and remote teams.
- We will build the capacity of medical and allied health clinicians across the Corridor to conduct and contribute to purposeful research, support Advanced Studies and higher degree research students.
- We will establish a monthly journal club and webinar program as part of the rural and remote collaborative health research network.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

- We will strengthen our research relationships and collaborations with other Colleges, and link in with existing research institutes, including the Caring Futures Institute, and Orama.
- We will develop and maintain partnerships with Local Health Networks (LHNs), Primary Health Networks (PHNs), non-government organisations, general practice organisations and local community organisations.
- We will scope and undertake new collaborative research projects consistent with strategic priorities set by the rural and remote health collaborative research network.
- We will grow strategic research partnerships with leading national and international peers in fields where we seek to build the rural and remote health research profile.

COMMUNICATING AND CELEBRATING RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH RESEARCH

- We will develop a communication strategy for rural and remote health research at Flinders to promote communications throughout the Corridor, and Bedford Park; incorporating a rural and remote research email group, an annual research retreat and forum series, plus webinar and journal club opportunities for staff and students.
- We will develop a web presence and virtual structure or rural and remote health research.
- We will conduct a rural and remote health forum in Adelaide to communicate to a wider audience.
- We will engage regional community coalitions in developing the agenda for community research priorities.

PARTNERSHIPS

- We will develop a core principles statement to outline the important elements underpinning partnerships in the rural and remote context.
- We will develop a transparent protocol and guidelines for developing and maintaining partnerships in rural and remote communities.
- We will design a communication and marketing strategy to ensure the protocol and guidelines are relevant for our partnerships and ensure collective understanding across the University about its purpose and use.



Attendees at the 2019 Flinders Rural Health SA Awards

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