



## Monthly overview

This month sees 26 Manna researchers come together in Albury, NSW, for the **Rural and Remote Mental Health Conference 2023**, being held from Tuesday 7–Friday 10 November.

See Albury program for virtual access to pre-conference Manna workshops **page 5**.

This month all our Manna researchers are invited to join a session to hear about the **Manna program evaluation short course**. A course outline has been created and we invite Manna researchers to help guide its development **page 8**.

Please join us for our much anticipated November webinar with our guests Sophie Scott, OAM, Dr Elizabeth Patton and Elise Carrotte **Thursday 23 November, 12-1pm (AEDT)**. **Content and connection: How we talk about mental health, suicide and missing persons in the media and its impact on rural communities.**

[Register here in advance](#)

We are delighted to report that Manna Institute project administrator Ruthie and her husband Brandon have safely welcomed a healthy new edition to their family. Daphne Mae Rule was born on Saturday 14 October.

**Welcome Daphne!**



## Year in Review

As another calendar year comes to a close, Manna Institute Director Professor Myf Maple reflects on our collective power and progress.

"It has been another engaging and productive year for our institute, marked by successful new partnerships, research grants and inspiring face-to-face gatherings.

Our efforts to foster relevant research, develop professional workforces, and translate research findings into practical programs in rural and regional Australia are gathering pace. And I am confident our teams are responding respectfully and meaningfully to a range of mental health challenges.

The highlights of 2023, for me, have included the strategy workshop hosted by Southern Cross University, the establishment of our HDR Community of Practice, our monthly webinar series, and the growth of our First Nations engagement. For while ours is a virtual institute, we have all benefitted from sharing experiences and ideas in-person. The contributions of our five First Nations representatives and three people with Lived Experience of regional mental health into Manna's leadership and training programs has been particularly valuable.

Of course, we all recognise that research takes time. Delivering results takes even longer. But in Manna, our members have found their 'people', and feeling part of a team is so important for success. Our ECRs and MCRs, especially, are enjoying being part of a community with a shared purpose and that is incredibly powerful when so often they are working in isolation.

*Continued ...*

## Year in Review (continued)

This impact on personal careers and research trajectories is changing the way in which regional mental health researchers work, from often in silos to collaboration being at the heart of everything we do.

Manna's commitment to establishing new mental health networks in rural and regional Australia is also beginning to bear fruit. The trust inspired among researchers and within research projects is now being leveraged through cross-institutional collaboration and industry partnerships across our four priority work streams.

A great example of this is the \$900,000 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant secured this year by seven Manna researchers (from Charles Sturt University and Southern Cross University, including two Manna First Nations representatives) to investigate, for the first time in Australia, how rural mental health consumers and their carers access physical health care and participate in interventions. It promises to help improve the health and life expectancy of people living with severe mental illness in rural Australia.



### **We also have senior, mid and early-career, as well as HDR students investigating:**

- How to deliver much-needed mental health support to regional young people;
- How to support mental health and wellbeing in rural Australia through the Regional Older Adults Mental Health Project (ROAM);
- Ways to improve access to online resources for defence, first responder and remote worker families;
- Reducing dementia risk among older adults in rural and regional Australia;
- Best-practice suicide prevention approaches to respond to regional community needs;
- How popular online esports can be used to create awareness around mental health and build mental health skills;
- The evaluation of physical, social and mental health initiatives in regional university communities;
- Support needs of students attending regional universities with Lifeline Direct University Crisis Line; and
- New linkages through the publication of more than 20 projects that new Honours or capstone students can engage with Manna in. [More information.](#)

As we prepare to gather for our pre-conference workshop in Albury as part of the Rural and Remote Mental Health Conference, my focus is very firmly on securing additional core funding for Manna and its important work. This will ensure we can continue to grow the number of researchers – beyond our current 65 – and capitalise on our motivated membership and strong institutional and industry support to continue to work with communities to find innovative solutions to complex mental health challenges facing those who live, work and play in regional Australia.

There is still much to do, but the need has never been greater.

See you in Albury.”



## Expertise on hand

### Manna’s contributions to regional health are beginning to develop organically, and sometimes right in our own backyards.

At the University of New England (UNE), Manna researchers will evaluate a program just launched to support the health of staff and students. Healthy Campus is an internationally accredited initiative developed by the International University Sports Federation (FISU) that aims to boost mental, physical and social health.

UNE Life and SportUNE are rolling out the program to all those who work and study at UNE’s campuses and online, with a focus on social connection, physical activity, good nutrition and mental wellbeing. Some events will be in-person, like exercise classes and morning teas, while others will be virtual. It’s hoped the benefits – more connected, more productive and happier people – flow-on to the wider UNE community.

Being a part of the FISU Healthy Campus network unites UNE with other universities around the world.

“UNE is aiming to achieve the highest level of accreditation with FISU, while at the same time demonstrating the outcomes of this on staff and students through the evaluation,” Manna Director Professor Myf Maple said. “Some other RUN partner universities are also involved in FISU accreditation, and I hope Manna’s involvement will inspire others still to consider the broader impact of these initiatives. Having UNE Life realise the value of Manna being involved in this project is wonderful.”

A Manna doctoral student from the University of Sunshine Coast – David Duncan – will be employed to work on this project with other established researchers from the Manna network, including people from UNE, SCU and UniSC.



UNE Life Director Dave Schmude at the Healthy Campus Launch

“Involving David utilises his experience of working in the university setting in student support roles,” Professor Maple said. “It also gives him the opportunity to work on another project during his PhD candidature and to grow his research networks. Connecting people to develop research opportunities is one of Manna’s core functions.”

Dr Dan Wadsworth, David’s PhD supervisor and collaborator on the evaluation, said: “We are looking to conduct simple surveys at 3 and 6 months to establish how people have engaged with Healthy Campus and what impact it has had. The evidence we generate can then be shared, and wouldn’t it be amazing if all RUN partner unis adopted Healthy Campus?”

## HDR Community of Practice

The Manna Institute HDR Community of Practice (CoP) meets monthly over Teams. Having kicked off its first session on 9 October to agree on goals and expectations, the group is looking forward to its second, face-to-face session at the **Rural and Remote Mental Health Conference in Albury on Wednesday 8 November from 9-10am (AEDT)**.

All Manna researchers are encouraged to join this session in person or [via this link](#).



If you are an HDR student researching a topic related to regional mental health we would love to have you join our HDR CoP.

**You can find the [EOI form here](#).**



## First Nations Academy working group update

**After the Manna Institute planning days in August, seven of the 12 members of our First Nations Working Group met on September 18 to discuss – in their own safe ‘third space’ – what a First Nations Academy at Manna Institute might look like.**

Members range from academics across the RUN universities to Manna’s First Nations representatives and industry partners. Topics proposed included: the requirements for Terms of Reference for First Nations representatives, additional roles in projects and mentoring, and principles for working with First Nations peoples in regional communities, which will be valuable for ethics and to guide researchers to ‘do it right’.

Goals for the academy will form part of the working group’s 12-month plan, which we hope will be finalised by October 2024. On October 9, Manna members met with the Director of Aboriginal Mental Health, from NSW Health’s Mental Health Branch, to discuss First Nations scholarship pathways. Manna has since been invited to present at the NSW Health, Aboriginal Mental Health 30th annual forum in June 2024.

## Manna celebrates ARC success

**Manna is celebrating another successful grant application.**

Institute members from Southern Cross University, the University of Southern Queensland and Central Queensland University have been awarded \$438,567 under the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Projects scheme.

Their project will examine the role that open goals (e.g., ‘see how active you can be’) might play in the promotion of physical activity, a key contributor to mental health, with a particular focus on people living in regional areas.

SCU’s CI, Associate Professor Christian Swann, will lead the project in collaboration with Professor Stuart Biddle at UniSQ and Associate Professor Amanda Rebar at CQU, joined by colleagues from the University of Wollongong, UNSW, University of Lincoln (UK) and University of British Columbia (Canada). Their project will commence in 2024, fostering new collaborations between Manna Institute researchers and HDR students.

This is the second large grant that Manna has received recently, following the \$900,000 NHMRC grant secured for the project led by Professor Russell Roberts from Charles Sturt University.





Rural and Remote Mental Health Conference – Manna Institute

**Tuesday 7 November – Friday 10 November, 2023**

**All Manna HDRs, partners and senior researchers are welcome to attend the research stream workshops, logic model presentation and HDR session via zoom if unable to attend in person.**

We are encouraging all our researchers to ensure they are ‘aligned’ to one or more of our research streams. During the sessions below, each stream will be working on 12-month work plans, so please join if you are able.

### Albury program – virtual attendance



#### Tuesday, 7 November

2:30 – 3:00pm	<b>HMRI Logic model presentation for four streams</b>	<a href="#">Link to session</a>
3:00 – 5:30pm	<b>Manna streams/flagships workshop:</b>	
	Physical health / mental health stream	<a href="#">Link to session</a>
	Child, youth and family stream	<a href="#">Link to session</a>
	Disability, ageing and chronic disease/ mental health stream	<a href="#">Link to session</a>
	Distress and suicide prevention stream	<a href="#">Link to session</a>

#### Tuesday, 8 November

9:00 – 10:00am	<b>Manna HDR Community of Practice workshop</b>	<a href="#">Link to session</a>
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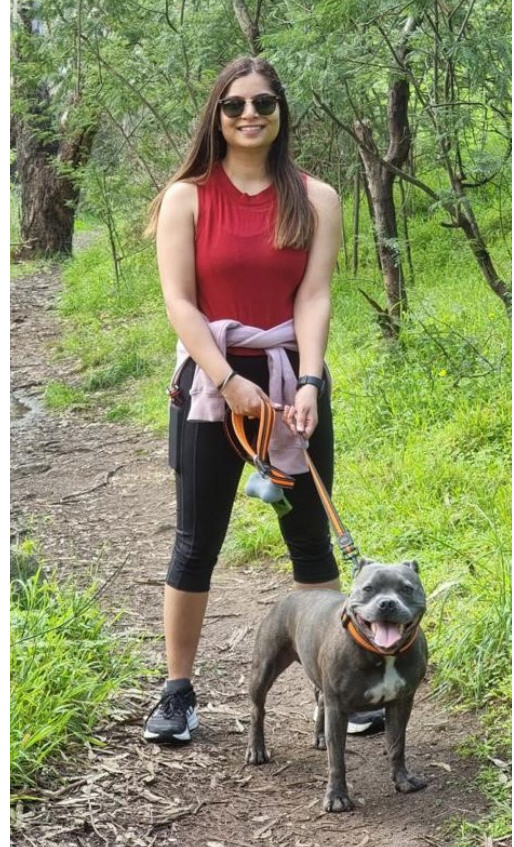
## Finding the Sun

**Dr Jasleen Chhabra,  
Postdoctoral Fellow, Federation University**

"When I think about my mental health and wellbeing, the first thing that jumps to my mind is spending time with my husband and our dog Shadow. Shadow is an English Staffy and a pure bundle of joy. Every day we take him for a walk in the morning and evening, and this is our "no smart devices" time. It is a great way for my husband and I to have our "What is our today looking like?" and "How was your day?" chats, and an opportunity for us to decompress and connect with nature.

Recently, I have also started kickboxing HIT classes and it has been wonderful for my mental and physical health and wellbeing. After a tough day, going to the gym and kickboxing my way through the class gives me an outlet to sweat out my anger and frustration, ensuring that I do not bring my work stressors home. I have also noticed that my sleep is vastly improved if I have been to the gym, and I am usually well rested the next day.

Finally, when I get a chance (usually over the weekends), I like to read fiction books and play PlayStation. I am currently reading *The Witcher* series and I have recently finished playing Red Dead Redemption on PS4. It was an amazing game!"



## Subscribe today

If you are not already on our mailing list,  
then you're missing out!

It's a fantastic way to keep abreast of Manna  
matters and to share in our progress.

**Subscribe to Trunk Line today**

## Manna Institute's Acknowledgement of Country

Manna Institute respectfully acknowledges the First Nations peoples as the continuing custodians of this continent and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging. The institute honours their rich cultural heritage, beliefs and enduring relationship to the lands and communities in which we all live, learn and work.

## Webinar – Thursday 23 November, 12-1pm (AEDT)

Rescheduled from October



In November our webinar will explore the topic

**Content and connection: How we talk about mental health, suicide and missing persons in the media and its impact on rural communities.**

We'd be delighted if you could join us.

**Please register in advance**

If you missed our September or any of our previous webinars, you can access all the recordings [here](#).

### Featuring special guests:

**Sophie Scott, OAM**, an award-winning journalist and former national ABC medical reporter, who will be discussing her career in science communication and the ways in which reporting on mental health connects with community;

**Ms Elise Carotte**, a psychologist and PhD candidate, who will speak about her PhD with the University of Melbourne and SANE to reduce stigma and discrimination for people living with complex mental health issues like schizophrenia, personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, using podcast-based storytelling; and

**Dr Elizabeth Paton**, who will give a brief overview of Everymind's Mindframe program. For more than two decades Mindframe has worked collaboratively to support media and communications professionals to safely and accurately report on suicide to the Australian public.

Our webinars are proving a wonderful opportunity to discuss a range of topics of practical relevance to Manna's work. Participants are applauding the welcoming atmosphere created by moderator Associate Professor Sarah Wayland, and enjoying rich conversations both in the online chat and long afterwards.

PROUD SPONSOR OF THE  
SOCIETY FOR MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2023  
**PEOPLE and PLACE**  
29 Nov – 1 Dec 2023 | Rendezvous Hotel Perth Scarborough WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
www.smhrconference.com.au



EVERYMIND

Tickets on sale

Prevention in Practice

Summit 2023

**Wednesday 6 December 2023,  
Newcastle, NSW**

The Prevention in Practice Summit is a new one-day event hosted by Manna partner Everymind that focuses on bridging the knowledge-to-practice gap in the prevention of mental ill-health.

The summit will bring together leaders in policy, research and practice from across Australia and feature presentations and panel discussions.

Attendees will have an opportunity to contribute to national priority setting and the sharing of best-practice examples.

The summit will include four themed sessions, each with a keynote address and panel discussion.

**Featured speakers include:**

- **Professor Rob Moodie** of Public Health at the University of Melbourne and former chair of the National Preventative Health Taskforce;
- **Dr Sally Fitzpatrick**, Program Manager at Everymind;
- **Ivan Frkovic**, Queensland Mental Health Commissioner;
- **Dr Stephen Carbone**, Founder and CEO of Prevention United; and
- **Associate Professor Sarah Wayland**, Manna Institute.

In-person and virtual registration options are available.

[More details and secure tickets here](#)

## Contribute to our short course

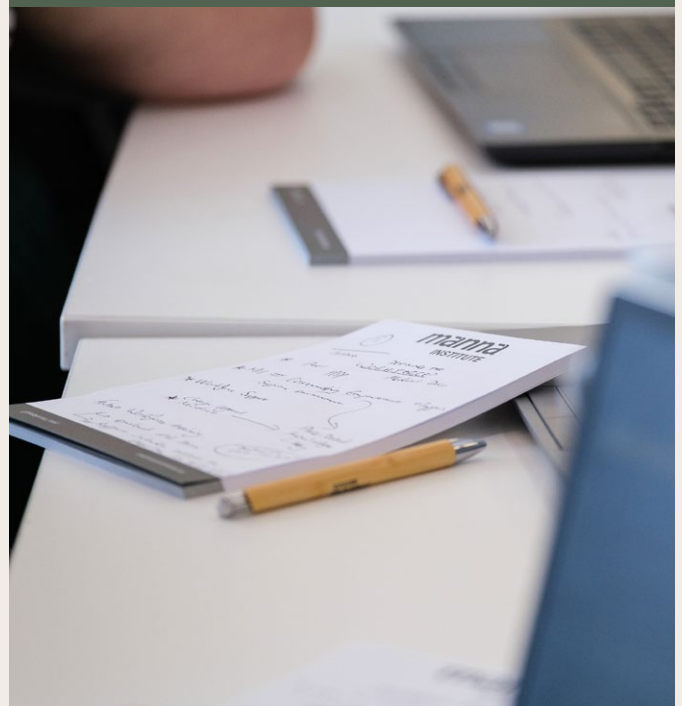
We warmly invite input into our session on the Manna program evaluation short course.

**The questions that could be discussed for the meeting are:**

- The potential audience and what they might want from such a course;
- Its key selling point/point of difference, compared to other program evaluation;
- Module topics: relevance and areas of focus within each module;
- Missing content and ideal sequencing; and
- Resources to support the course – for example, podcast interviews, case studies and example measures.

**Monday 13 November 12-1pm**

[Join session here](#)







## Support

Manna Institute is dedicated to addressing the mental health needs of Australians sensitively and respectfully. We appreciate that times of change can be especially challenging.

### For support, contact:

#### Lifeline

13 11 14  
www.lifeline.org.au

#### Beyond Blue

1300 22 46 36  
www.beyondblue.org.au/  
get-support

#### 13YARN

13 92 76

#### Guyaa Dhuwi

www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/  
if-you-need-help/



## Important dates

### November

Manna Institute pre-conference workshop  
**Tuesday 7 November**, Albury, NSW.

Rural and Remote Mental Health Conference  
2023, **Wednesday 8–Friday 10 November**,  
Albury, NSW.

**Monday 13 November**, 12:00PM-1:00PM  
(AEDT). Manna program evaluation short  
course feedback session.

November webinar – *postponed from October*  
**Thursday 23 November**, 12:00PM-1:00PM  
(AEDT). Content and connection: How we  
talk about mental health, suicide and missing  
persons in the media and its impact on rural  
communities.

### December

**29 November–1 December**, Society of  
Mental Health Research (SMHR)  
43rd Annual Conference, Perth WA.

Manna project office closed  
**25 December–1 January**.

## We want to hear from you!

Please share your news of Manna achievements and opportunities via [mannainstitute@une.edu.au](mailto:mannainstitute@une.edu.au)

