

## Save the Date (4-6 December): Manna Symposium

### *Branching out: growing rural mental health research*

**Get ready, the Manna Symposium is just seven months' away!**

We are excited to announce the first ever Manna Symposium, which will bring together researchers, students, industry stakeholders and community members to explore the topic *Branching out: growing rural mental health research*.

Bringing the country to the city, the symposium will be held from 4-6 December in Sydney, the traditional lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and will shine a spotlight on rural mental health research and the innovative work being done with, for and by people living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia.

The symposium will feature a range of networking opportunities, keynote presentations, panel discussions and other activities designed to foster relationships and collaboration among people passionate about regional mental health research.

The symposium is being organised by a diverse group of Manna members, including those with lived and living experiences, First Nations peoples, doctoral students, and early-, mid-career and senior researchers, with a focus on creating an inclusive, engaging and innovative event.

Invitations will soon be open for abstracts and sponsorship opportunities. [Find out more here](#)

## Manna's new office

Manna Institute is a virtual institute, however we are excited to share that we now have a new physical office.

You can find us in Office 1 at NOVA, the UNE Smart Region Incubator at 122 Faulkner Street, Armidale. So, if you are ever passing by, please pop in to say hello.



## Celebrating our partners – Manna at CQUniversity



From left: Dr Vicki Pascoe, Dr Cassy Dittman, Dr Anwaar Ul-Haq, Professor Chris Doran.

### As part of our series celebrating our university partners, we introduce CQUniversity, its Manna members and their research expertise.

- Manna Chief Investigator, supervisor and mentor [Chris Doran](#) is a Professor of Health Economics with research experience in mental and public health. His research has contributed to the field of health economics and strengthened the evidence base for effective policy action. In recent years, Chris's focus on priority setting has been complemented by the development of tools and frameworks to facilitate translational research.
- Research Fellow (MCR) Dr [Cassy Dittman](#) is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology and registered psychologist researching child and adolescent mental health. Cassy's research aims to find ways to support parents and caregivers in the community to raise happy and healthy children and adolescents who feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. This research aligns with Manna's Child, Youth and Family work stream, which Cassy is leading.
- Postdoctoral Fellow (ECR) Dr [Vicki Pascoe](#) is a social justice researcher interested in the regional health workforce, particularly medical doctors. Vicki was also involved in a recent study that explored how young people obtain their health literacy via social networks and social media. Much of Vicki's work highlights intersecting inequalities often linked to mental health issues, which is a Manna priority.
- Senior Lecturer in artificial intelligence (AI), Research Fellow (MCR) Dr [Anwaar Ul-Haq](#) researches suicide prevention, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and broader psychiatric disorders. He has been developing an AI-driven tool designed to detect suicidal ideation from social media data and Anwaar's work extends to the creation of a ChatGPT-style chatbot (Mindful GPT) to enhance personalised conversations and mental health support systems. Collaborating with UNE's Dr Marg Rogers, Anwaar has also employed machine learning to provide access to more personalised online children's resources.
- CQUniversity's Manna contingent also includes HDR students Sandra Hyde, Michelle Gossner, Michael Bowles and Michael Booth. Sarah's proposed research study aims to provide greater support for Indigenous graduate nurses in the workplace. Michelle is a former primary school teacher and PhD student who is researching the unique challenges that impact child and adolescent school engagement in regional and rural Australia. PhD student Michael Bowles is conducting a mixed-method study on how workplace suicide impacts individuals and organisations in construction and mining industries.
- The research of Manna Senior Researcher Associate Professor [Robert Stanton](#) focuses on the physical health and physical healthcare of people with mental health conditions. Fellow Senior Researcher and Gunggari woman Dr [Vicki Saunders'](#) work is framed around *yimbaya yadina undunoo* – listening for the sounds of children's laughter. Her research into wellbeing measurement and acoustic ecology aligns with Manna's focus on counting what counts for First Nations peoples.

# Research translation

## Publication spotlight

At Manna Institute, the ways we research, teach and engage in communities is grounded in co-design with people with lived and living experience (LEX) of mental health. In working alongside our peers in the LEX workforce, we can often hear that they feel undervalued or lack a voice in shaping service delivery, even though government policy and practice exhorts their inclusion.

A new paper by Manna researchers Professor Myf Maple and Associate Professor Sarah Wayland, led by past UNE research assistant Lane Carrandi (with co-authors Yanan Hu, Katie McGill, and Shae Karger) in the journal *Health Expectations*, sought to operationalise the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) to build in the LEX workforce, with the goal of strengthening integrated systems of care. It sought to ensure that everyone at the table was heard.

### So, what did we learn?

By systematically reviewing the research published since 2016, and then running co-creation sessions with LEX workers, the study highlighted that engaging with individuals in the implementation of their role, or the design of an intervention, leads to better service delivery *if done before a job begins*. By adapting the CFIR and creating a CFIR-LEX, service providers can use this tool as a guide to develop, design and deliver inclusive integrated health services that acknowledge the key role of LEX. We encourage people to read the open access article [here](#) and consider how use of this tool might enhance the ways you deliver services.



## Mentoring program re-opens

Congratulations to those who have been successfully matched with a mentee or mentor for the first round of the Manna Institute Research Mentoring (MIRM) program.

MIRM has rolling intakes during 2024, in May, July and September. **Please submit your May application by Friday 17 May** (prior applications will be reconsidered).

[mannainstitute.au/research-mentoring-program](https://mannainstitute.au/research-mentoring-program)

We are actively seeking more mentors to join this growing program. If you would like to share your expertise and experiences, please contact us as soon as possible. The commitment is relatively small, involving regular meetings with your mentee to share your experiences and support their development over a period of 12 months.

# Research Streams Update

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## Suicide and Distress

The Outside the City report, which has been co-developed through several rounds of consultation with community members, people with lived and living experiences, industry and researchers is soon to be launched. This report highlights the barriers and facilitators of access to support across the suicide prevention, intervention and postvention spectrum. This adds to prior world-leading research in stigma, barriers to appropriate care and assessing mental health challenges that members of the Suicide and Distress research team will consolidate

into an action plan for our theme. This will spell out the steps to appropriately training lay, peer and specialist mental health workers to meet the varying mental health needs of people who live in regional Australia. As we embark on an ambitious journey to enshrine this evidence in teaching and learning across the RUN universities, we are committed to ensuring that the right supports meet people's needs at the time they need them, regardless of where in Australia they live.

## Child, Youth and Family

The Child, Youth and Family (CYF) work stream has had a busy start to 2024. Members of the group have published 27 new papers so far this year, and several have worked together to submit several Category 1 research grants on projects to promote child and adolescent mental health.

The retreat in March enabled the group to continue to work on its research agenda for 2024, including the development of a systematic review protocol, and we meet monthly to support progress and build other collaboration opportunities.

Cassy Dittman has initiated a collaboration with the team from the Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study and is looking for expressions of interest to contribute to a special issue submission on childhood adversity in regional Australia (see page 6).

Finally, Marg Rogers led an opinion piece in the [Women's Agenda](#), with contributions from Cassy Dittman, Vicki Pascoe and Navjot Bhullar, on how women living in RRR areas and Indigenous women were disproportionately impacted by the 7 million calls to Centrelink left unanswered in 2023, as recently announced by Services Australia. The piece garnered the attention of the office of the Federal Government Services Minister and Marg has led a briefing paper in response.

As always, the CYF work stream welcomes the contributions of other Manna researchers. [Email Cassy Dittman](mailto:Cassy.Dittman@mannainstitute.au) if you would like to be included in our monthly meetings. [mannainstitute.au/manna-research-child-youth-and-families](http://mannainstitute.au/manna-research-child-youth-and-families)

## Health and Wellbeing in Later Life

Stream members finalised the Theme Narrative and workshopped grant ideas at the recent Manna Retreat on the Gold Coast.

The narrative acknowledges our individual contexts yet encompasses our collective focus. It highlights the prioritising of partnerships to navigate barriers and maximise strengths through place-based approaches.

We have also been working with external consultants from the Hunter Medical Research Institute to refine the collective aims of the theme moving forward. Stream leads Dan and Belinda look

forward to sharing these with other interested Manna researchers at our next theme meeting on Wednesday 8 May at 10am. If you are a stream member and have not yet received an email invitation please let us know.

Congratulations to our HDR member Jesse Baker, who successfully passed his confirmation at Easter. Well done Jesse. We look forward to seeing your work exploring tech-based solutions to social isolation in older adults.

[mannainstitute.au/manna-research-later-life](http://mannainstitute.au/manna-research-later-life)

## Research Streams (continued)

### Physical Health

The Manna Retreat was a good opportunity for members to update each other on current and planned research. Our program of work applies a life course approach to a diverse range of settings and outcomes that aim to improve mental and physical health in regional and remote areas. Much of it addresses the role of physical activity, sleep, nutrition, alcohol and tobacco use in mental wellbeing, and the social determinants of these behaviours.

Wellness out West (WoW) is a consumer-led, whole-of-community initiative being led by Professor Tracy Kolbe-Alexander to address a major public health problem – mental health and obesity in the Darling Downs region of Southeast Queensland. The over-arching aim is to co-develop an intervention framework that tackles the determinants of mental health and obesity, which can be scaled up in regional towns.

In-depth interviews were conducted with consumers and stakeholders to establish the main health-related concerns in the region in phase 1. Consumers emphasised the mental health challenges in their communities and expressed concerns related to nutrition and obesity. They noted that the current cost of living crisis is contributing to poor mental health, and the unaffordability of healthy food is leading to the purchase of cheaper, calorie-dense foods, leading to increased risks of obesity. Consumers emphasised the need for tailored, community-based programs, empowering the community to deliver solutions. Phase 2 involved seven community-based workshops and 70 consumers discussing the determinants of mental wellbeing and overweight in their community. The last two workshops were conducted with members of the Oakey Local Alliance and Toowoomba Region Bicycle Users group. The next phase will focus on identifying priority areas (determinants) and co-designing interventions that aim to improve mental wellbeing.



**May topic: Workforce**

**Monday 20 May 1-2pm AEST**

[Register for upcoming webinars and view recordings here](#)

**Exploring Experiences of Intergenerational Friendships**

Are you part of an intergenerational friendship?

If you are between 18-35 and have a friend over 55, or if you are aged 55 or over and have a friend who is 18-35, we would love to hear from you!

What is involved?

You can participate with your intergenerational friend in a shared interview (bring them along!) or individually.

In the interview you will be asked to share your experiences of loneliness, your intergenerational friendship, and how it may have shaped your experiences.

Scan Here

Where can I find out more information?

Scan the QR code or contact one of the team!  
 Danielle: [d\\_w047@student.usc.edu.au](mailto:d_w047@student.usc.edu.au)  
 Kris: [ktulloch@usc.edu.au](mailto:ktulloch@usc.edu.au)  
 Dan: [dwadswor@usc.edu.au](mailto:dwadswor@usc.edu.au)

UNISC ETHICS APPROVAL NO: S241922

## Contribute to special issue

Manna researchers are collaborating with the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) team to provide a comprehensive picture of childhood adversity and the health status of adults living in regional, rural and remote Australia. And we warmly invite you to contribute.

The project is being led by Manna Research Fellow Dr Cassy Dittman, from CQUniversity, and Dr Divna Haslam from QUT and ACMS. Their special issue – which they intend to have published – will use national data to explore the state of child maltreatment, health and mental health retrospectively.

“We know that Australians growing up in RRR communities experience social, health, educational, and economic disparities compared to Australians growing up in metropolitan Australia,” Cassy said. “These experiences of socio-economic disadvantage are likely to make them vulnerable to adverse childhood experiences, as well as the documented long-term health and mental health impacts of childhood adversity.

“By investigating the prevalence of child maltreatment, mental health disorders, health risk behaviours and health service usage, we hope to help plan future interventions, and inform initiatives and strategies targeting the needs of these populations.”

The ACMS last year interviewed 8,503 Australians aged 16 years and older to provide the first national estimate for the five types of child maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual



abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence). Cassy and Divna will now use this national data to document RRR experiences specifically.

They hope Manna researchers and HDR students might lead and/or contribute to a number of the papers that will comprise the special issue.

For more information, or to express your interest in contributing, [email Cassy](mailto:cassy.dittman@mq.edu.au) by 13 May.

## 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.

## HDRs find a supportive space



Manna's HDR Community of Practice (CoP) is fast developing into a supportive space for RRR researchers, and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

The twice-weekly Shut Up and Write (SUAW) sessions are very popular and our HDR community is also enjoying the CoP's monthly webinars.

"It's been really rewarding to see the HDR community grow at Manna," said Dr Dan Wadsworth, Manna Postdoctoral Fellow from the University of the Sunshine Coast and co-lead of the CoP with Dr Dylan Poulus from Southern Cross University.

"A real high point has been seeing the peer support and knowledge exchange grow across this group. We're running the HDR CoP iteratively, and we have been guided by student wants, needs and suggestions. For example, recently we've been using some SUAW sessions to practice confirmation presentations and get feedback in a safe and supportive environment, and we have a great schedule of senior researchers lined up to speak to the group at seminars across the year."

Dr Poulus, a Manna Postdoctoral Fellow, said the regular gatherings bring multiple benefits. "For me, a community is essential for PhD students to thrive, and this can be challenging for students in RRR universities and communities," he said.

"The SUAW sessions offer Manna PhD students a space to connect, discuss roadblocks, and make fantastic progression on their studies."



Congratulations to Manna CI Professor Sonja March and her University of Southern Queensland-led team who have launched a new free, online mental health platform for young Australians.

Called Momentum, it is available to anyone added seven to 17 and contains vital evidence-informed treatments, tools and techniques to help with a variety of problems, including anxiety, depression and sleep difficulties.

Momentum is the culmination of a five-year, \$5 million project that brought together researchers and experts in children's and adolescent's mental health and digital health from six universities and six other organisations nationwide. Hundreds of young people, parents and mental health professionals also contributed to its design and development.

Check it out at [www.momentumhub.org.au](http://www.momentumhub.org.au)



## Boosted by Barbados

Manna First Nations representative and UNE PhD candidate Kisani Upward is fresh from the Connecting Climate Minds (CCM) summit in Barbados with a full heart and renewed enthusiasm for her research.

"It was an amazing opportunity to be part of this important international dialogue, to highlight my work, and network with the top researchers in the climate change and mental health space," said Kisani, a Gamilaraay/Wiradjuri woman. "It reinforced the importance of my research, even on a small scale, because I learnt how it reflects what is happening elsewhere in the world.

"The mental health struggles in rural and regional NSW are similar to those in communities in Africa, Bangladesh and Canada, especially from a First Nations perspective. Learning this has given my work a deeper meaning and importance."

Supervised by Manna Senior researchers Professor Kim Usher (UNE), Dr Vicki Saunders (CQU) and Manna Institute Director Professor Myf Maple (UNE), Kisani's research centres on First Nations communities' experiences of solastalgia – the feeling of homesickness or grief felt while still at home, caused by damage to your environment.

In Barbados in late March, she represented the Oceania region and First Nations division as part of CCM's efforts to align research and action on climate change and mental health globally. A research agenda is close to being published and Kisani hopes to contribute to it in future.



"There is so much to be done, but I see opportunities to share research and collaborate; to move research forward together, to make greater strides for the sake of our communities and the planet. I also see opportunities for future research through Manna, to help ensure our work is impactful. We are all in this together."

And it's not all doom and gloom. "Time is limited, and action is imperative. But for too long the future of this planet has felt bleak," Kisani said. "I now see so much strength in those who fight to enact change. The world is becoming brighter; there is hope."

For more information on the CCM project: [go here](#).

## GUWAL JILBAY - YARNING RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Manna Institute is proud to sponsor the Guwal Jilbay First Nations Research Student Conference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and supervisors of Indigenous RHD students from **16-18 July 2024**.

The conference is specifically supporting First Nations Research Higher Degree students and their supervisors.

'Guwal Jilbay' is from the Dyrbal language of the Jirrbal people of north-eastern Queensland and means "talking research".

Submissions close **Tuesday 7 May, 2024**.

[More details here](#)



## VIOLET VINES MARSHMAN CENTRE FOR RURAL HEALTH RESEARCH

**TRANSFORMING RURAL HEALTH OUTCOMES THROUGH RESEARCH, COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.**

We have launched Australia's first Rural Health Consumer Panel – and you can be a part of it!



## Violet Vines Marshman Centre for Rural Health Research community grants

The Violet Vines Marshman Centre for Rural Health Research Partnership Funding Stream has opened its fifth community grants round.

These grants of up to \$50,000 provide a wonderful opportunity for community organisations to work with the VVMC on small projects to improve health and wellbeing in rural areas – and may align with your own research projects. Seed funding of large projects is considered.

[The Violet Vines Marshman Centre for Rural Health Research](#) is based at La Trobe's Albury Wodonga campus.

Details of the grants and application process can be found on our website ([link above](#)).

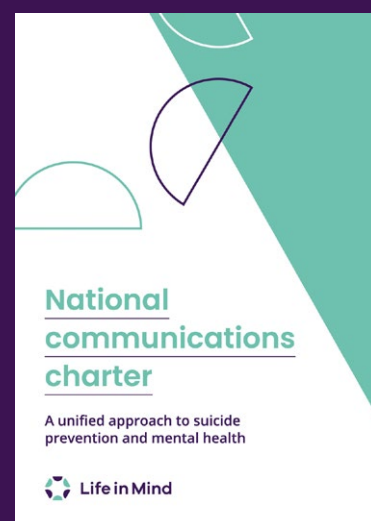
Applications close Friday 31 May at 5pm.



## Our language matters

The very language we use to communicate about mental health and wellbeing, mental health concerns and suicide matters. The worst examples can alienate members of the community and contribute to stigma, while the best can promote help-seeking and help-offering behaviours.

Everymind is pleased to announce that the national communications charter and supporting tools and resources first introduced in 2018 have now been updated. They are available through the Life in Mind portal and are designed to help guide the sector, governments, businesses, communities and individuals.



[Read more here](#)

## In the news

Manna members have been busy on the publishing front and attracting some media attention. Check out their latest output at:



**EduResearch Matters Blog**

**What happens now to children and families after these horrors?**

By Marg Rogers



**Research Evaluation Journal**

**Characteristics of contemporary health research practice: A shift from ivory tower to collaborative power**

Daniel P Wadsworth, Alison Craswell, Andy Ward, Kristen Tulloch, Mia A Schaumberg, Lee Stoner, Pamela J Meredith, Christopher D Askew



**Aging & Mental Health Journal**

**Psychological interventions designed to reduce relocation stress for older people transitioning into permanent residential aged care: a systematic scoping review**

Shanna Fealya, Suzanne McLaren, Melissa Notta, Claire Ellen Seamana, Belinda Cash and Lorraine Rose

## Support

Manna Institute is dedicated to addressing the mental health needs of Australians sensitively and respectfully. We appreciate that we live in challenging times.

**For support, contact:**

**Lifeline**

13 11 14

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

**Beyond Blue**

1300 22 46 36

[www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support)

**13YARN**

13 92 76

**Guyaa Dhuwi**

[www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/if-you-need-help/](http://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/if-you-need-help/)

## Important dates

May	June	July	August	December
<p><b>20 May</b> Manna webinar 'Workforce'.</p>	<p><b>5-6 June</b> NSW Aboriginal MH Workforce Forum Sydney.</p> <p><b>17 June</b> Manna webinar.</p>	<p><b>16-18 July</b> Guwal Jilbay First Nations Research Student Conference.</p> <p><b>22 July</b> Manna webinar.</p>	<p><b>19 August</b> Manna webinar.</p> <p><b>27 August</b> HMRI Early Career Researchers Summit – Newcastle.</p>	<p><b>2-4</b> Manna Symposium.</p>

## 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).

## Follow us

Stay up to date with all our news and events

