



Monthly overview

August is a busy month for Manna Institute. A big thanks to Ruthie in the project office for coordinating us from across Australia to meet at Coolangatta for our annual, two-day strategic planning session on **28-30 August**. And thank you to Professor Mary Spongberg, Southern Cross University Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) for welcoming us to SCU's Coolangatta campus. We are excited to bring together our Program Leadership Group (PLG), industry partners, and, of course, our researchers. We are grateful to also have our First Nations and Lived Experience representatives and some of our newly enrolled PhD students and newly appointed senior researchers joining us.

During Manna Institute's Research Opportunity Webinar, hosted by Professor Sonja March, future research students can learn about the research projects we will have on offer and where they may be able to join existing research teams.

Please email: Ruthie.Rule@une.edu.au if you would like a link to the Thursday **3 August** event, and share the information about this with any potential research students you know (including potential honours, PhD, and capstone students).

Chief Investigator check-in

Professor Chris Doran



One of Professor Chris Doran's primary Manna responsibilities is the development of a regional Community, Industry and Research (CIRA) data asset and toolkit. This involves working with Manna's industry partners, starting with Lifeline Direct, to streamline data collection that informs their decision-making and project evaluation.

Chris is leading the team that's mapping community health needs and matching them with appropriate services – what is known as a data asset.

"This will help to determine the most effective and cost-efficient ways to deliver the care required," Chris said. "We are looking at what data is available and ways we can translate evidence-based strategies into practice. Focus group discussions involving Lifeline and Lifeline Direct counsellors, Primary Health Networks and Manna's Lived Experience representatives begin in August."

Chris is also assisting the internal evaluation of Manna activities using the Framework to Assess the Impact of Translational Research (FAIT) that he helped create. "By developing metrics around research outputs, stakeholder engagement and impacts, we can assess both practical actions at the community level and policy influence at government levels," he said. "It's a way to evaluate change, hold ourselves accountable and contribute to Manna's sustainability."

A health economist with the Central Queensland University, Chris is a keen traveller and surfer. He has just returned from a 10-day, 5,000-kilometre road trip with one of his daughters from WA to Brisbane, via the Nullarbor Plain, Great Ocean Road and Victorian-NSW coastline.

"It was just the two of us in a VW Beetle with two surfboards crammed inside; lots of music and time for talking," Chris said. "It was a fantastic opportunity to engage with each other and some spectacular regional Australian environments."

HMRI Healthy Minds Summit

Laura Grattidge's perspective



How were you involved?

I attended as a representative of Manna (ECR and Lived Experience representative) and presented findings from my PhD, 'Exploring Community-Based Suicide Prevention for Youth in Rural Areas'.

What was the highlight?

One of the highlights was being able to network with so many regional researchers with similar interests in mental health and suicide prevention.

What does the future hold for you and your research?

I'd like to collaborate as widely as possible and continue my work to understand best-practice suicide prevention approaches and programs for rural areas. Strategies need to include how best to meet the needs of rural communities, and build on existing strengths and resources to support community members in these roles, including volunteers and people with lived experience.

How do events like this assist you as a RRR mental health researcher?

They provide the opportunity to meet like-minded researchers and potential collaborators who are on a similar research mission, to discuss ground-level implementation issues and solutions. You can see where the research gaps are and where there are synergies.

Where do you hope your experience with Manna will take you?

I am hoping it provides opportunities for me to continue my research in rural suicide prevention, as well as potentially contribute to broader collaborations. I hope to build my leadership role in the lived experience space and ensure lived experience continues to be central to informing the direction of Manna and suicide prevention overall.



Webinar Series launch – 10 August



As the first virtual research and training institute of its kind in Australia, Manna is dedicated to improving mental health and wellbeing beyond our cities.

Our researchers, industry partners and representatives discuss topics of importance to regional mental health, and propose areas of focus and innovation to inform and update interested parties across Australia.

We aim to be open to fresh perspectives, including those that challenge existing ways of thinking. With this in mind, our thought-provoking webinar series will deep-dive into topics familiar to us: existing and emerging workforce development; individual health and wellbeing; priority populations; and the impact of changing environmental conditions on mental health. We will also discuss collaborative research and inclusive practices. Each webinar will feature a presentation or panel discussion, followed by a Q&A.

Starting this month, these webinars will firmly cast the spotlight on rural and regional mental health. The first, on **Thursday 10 August, 12-1pm AEDT**, will tackle the critically important topic of the **Regional Mental Health Workforce** and we'd be delighted if you could join us.

Please register in advance

**Next month: Thursday 7 September, 12-1pm
our topic is 'Co-design – what does it mean?'**

Featuring special guests:

James Bell, Regional Manager, South QLD, Neami National (industry perspective);

Darren Wagner, Project Lead, Suicide Prevention Peer Worker Support Strategy, Wellways Australia (peer work perspective);

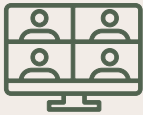
Professor John Hurley, Professor of Mental Health, Director of Higher Degree Research, Faculty of Health, Southern Cross University (academic).



Our webinar series will be moderated by Associate Professor Sarah Wayland (UNE).

It will explore topics relevant to and a priority for our State/ Federal governments, service providers and communities. Three perspectives – of an industry representative or service provider, peer worker and academic – will be shared and recorded during the first 30 minutes of each webinar (and available later for public viewing).

Once the recording concludes, the floor will be opened to questions for the panels – a fantastic opportunity for our ECRs, MCRs and HDR students.



Virtual Learning Teams (VLT) update



The VLT webinar for our ECRs and MCRs comes around again on **Monday 7 August** on the topic **The power of many: Leadership in teams** with Sonia Diab (CSU/Manna HDR).

For as long as there have been humans, we have come together in groups to work collaboratively towards common goals. The modern research team context also presents unique challenges and opportunities, particularly as we see an increase in virtuality and the welcome integration of more diverse perspectives. In this webinar, we will delve into team dynamics in the modern setting and the crucial role of leadership in facilitating cohesion, innovation and performance.

Drawing from a distributed leadership lens and theories of group processes, we will explore:

- A collective approach to team leadership;
- The make-up of the modern research team;
- Breaking down barriers to elevate: group norms, climate and connection; and
- Driving team performance in a virtual setting.

Join us as we discuss a combination of theoretical concepts and specific, actionable approaches to foster team success.

Manna Institute is providing the following sponsorship for the SMHR Conference in Perth 2023

Early to mid-career researcher event sponsor \$2,500 (inc GST)

Travel scholarships for early career SMHR researchers \$1,500 (inc GST) x2 \$3,000

Keep an eye out for more details!

Regional Research Collaboration (RRC) Program update

The next steps, per the contracts, are as follows:

Full report (Annual and Financial) due **31 October** to the Commonwealth, which will include the FAIT report card and updated external evaluation. Importantly, this is also the time we will be reporting our benchmarking and Year 1 growth against grant, publication and HDR metrics. Each RUN university is contributing by preparing these data for merging into our report. Our thanks to the research data teams behind pulling this information together.



Researcher spotlight:

Dr Govind Krishnamoorthy
Postdoctoral Fellow, Manna Institute
Senior Lecturer, Psychology
and Wellbeing, University of
Southern Queensland

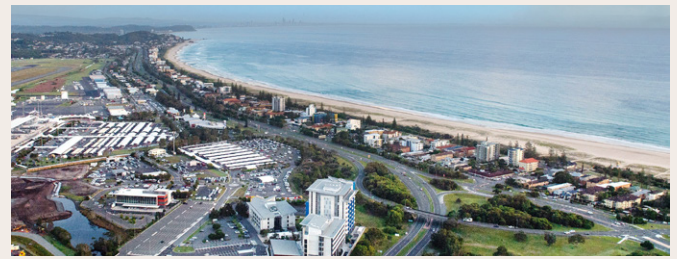
Govind is a clinical psychologist and Senior Lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland.

He has more than 15 years' experience in child and youth mental health services in both private and public settings and his research lab focuses on improving equity and access to mental health care for children, youth and their families.

Govind, a resident of Ipswich, is the author of Trauma Informed Behaviour Support, a novel mental health program that promotes trauma-informed care in education and healthcare settings. He coordinates several innovative industry partnerships promoting mental health in regional communities.

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.



Strategic Planning Days – All you need to know

As we near the first full year since Manna was launched, we are excited to welcome our expanded team to strategic planning days being hosted by Southern Cross University at Coolangatta **28-30 August**. We have a great agenda planned, including ample time to socialise and get to know each other better – one of the most necessary and often difficult to achieve activities for regionally-based researchers. Of course, we also have a lot of work to get through, and will be expertly guided by facilitator Brian Mooney, who many of you will remember from our launch.

After a welcome dinner on Monday we get stuck into our work on Day 1 with initial consultation discussions on our core positions papers. These are the foundation of how we work at Manna Institute – through collaboration focused on workforces, individual needs, the needs of priority populations, the community and the broader environment. We then move to reviewing what we have achieved in our first year, a check-in on priorities and some blue-sky thinking, to confirm our priorities for the next 12 months. Day 2 we roll up our sleeves to agree on our implementation roadmap, engage with our internal evaluation, and allocate roles and responsibilities moving forward.

Along with our core group of researchers, our governance group, expert First Nations and Lived Experience representatives and industry partners, many of our Deans, senior researchers and HDR students will be in attendance. Our diversity of interests, experiences and passion is extraordinary and will no doubt make for a stimulating few days as we move forward into the next exciting phase of Manna Institute.



Partner research priorities

Ahead of our all-important planning days, it's critical that we have a clear understanding of potential opportunities to collaborate. How Manna's work can continue to enhance or complement that of our major partners is a key consideration.

At a recent Project Management Group meeting we asked our foundation partners to share their thoughts on research priorities for regional, rural and remote mental health research from the perspectives of their organisations.



Everymind's research is focussed on bridging the knowledge-to-practice gap in the prevention of mental ill-health and suicide. Its research occurs across five priority areas, including promoting a mentally healthy approach across business and community, with a focus on workforce mental health and the small business community; influencing media, organisations and communities to apply best practice about mental health concerns and suicide; as well as transforming the supports available to families and caregivers, with a focus on empowering families and friends supporting someone experiencing mental health concerns or suicidal distress. It is also open to offering industry placements to Manna members.



Lifeline Direct has an emphasis on service provision; removing the barriers to providing care in regional, rural and remote areas; and expanding the evidence base for the main populations it services, including university students, people who have attempted and been bereaved by suicide; along with men at risk of suicide. It is also looking at service delivery modes, and challenges with data sharing and reporting on service delivery.



The **Centre for Mental Health Research** at the Australian National University has a strong focus on lived experience, improving help-seeking and the removal of barriers to accessing services and prevention support. It is interested in how people engage with formal and informal support; the implementation of evidence-based prevention services within communities; and the evaluation and trials of community prevention services.



Finding the Sun

Dr Jaelea Skehan, Director Everymind

We asked Jaelea (pictured above in the boa) how she maintains her mental health and wellbeing while simultaneously running a large, nimble organisation like Everymind.

“Taking care of your own mental health and wellbeing is something that you need to plan and action. The things I do are to set boundaries between work and my life outside of work. I don't work in the evenings; I don't work once I've left the office or logged off for the day. I need to pay close attention to my sleep, because once sleep goes, mental health and wellbeing is severely affected. I volunteer and have things outside of work. I run a netball club and coach young kids and that's a great circuit-breaker. I make time every week for meaningful connections with people that matter, whether it's a phone call to a friend, coffee or a catch-up with my partner.

It is important for everyone to find what works for them. Some people find mindfulness, yoga and meditation helpful, but I prefer more rigorous exercise and regular time with Dr Pacific Ocean. It helps that Everymind is opposite the beach in Newcastle.”



Senior researcher spotlight

Associate Professor Maryam Zoghi,
Federation University

Associate Professor Maryam Zoghi is an accomplished academic physiotherapist and neuroscientist with more than 20 years' experience.

She has a passion for studying brain function, particularly in motor control, sensory-motor integration and neuroplasticity, and is currently affiliated with the Discipline of Physiotherapy at the Institute of Health and Wellbeing, Federation University.

Throughout her career, Maryam has investigated the therapeutic potential of non-invasive brain stimulation techniques for various neurological and neuropsychiatric conditions. Her findings have provided valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying brain stimulation and its potential clinical applications.

Maryam believes it is important to explore the often overlooked relationship between physical health (especially motor control) and mental health. Motor

impairments like gait disturbances and balance problems can manifest earlier than psychological symptoms in conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, serving as early markers of the disease. Similarly, she has observed alterations in gait parameters and physical manifestations in individuals with anxiety disorders and depression.

"Considering physical aspects in assessment and treatment could enable regional communities to leverage existing resources, integrate movement-based therapies, and promote wellbeing in a cost-effective manner," Maryam said. "Addressing both physical aspects and psychological symptoms improves overall quality of life, empowering individuals and fostering self-efficacy."

Maryam's expertise extends beyond research and teaching. She has played a pivotal role in collaborating with clinical teams, contributing to the translation of scientific knowledge into evidence-based clinical practices and improved treatment for patients with neurological disorders.

Regional Older Adults Mental Health Project (ROAM)



The Manna Institute (University of the Sunshine Coast, Everymind, and Charles Sturt University) are seeking older adults (aged 65+), living in rural and regional Australia and with experience of poor mental health within the past five years, and carers of such individuals, to take part in **research exploring support for mental health and wellbeing in regional Australia.**

Participants will be invited to join a focus group or 1:1 interview, either in person or via Zoom video-conferencing to discuss their experiences and perspectives of mental ill health, and will receive \$50 for their time.

For more information and to register your interest, please email roam@usc.edu.au

In the news



Uncle Alex Munro says creating a painting of Mother Earth nurtured him. (ABC New England: Lani Oataway)

ABC New England

University of New England probes the effect of climate change and fire on Indigenous peoples' connection to country.

[READ MORE](#)



Sarah Wayland on Insight Part 2 of 'Seeking Justice' series

Justice: How do we define it and why do we seek it? In this special two-part series, Insight speaks to those who are still fighting for justice and those who've been wrongfully convicted.

[WATCH](#)

State of the Nation in Suicide Prevention

An annual Suicide Prevention Australia survey that provides in-depth intelligence to our members about the suicide prevention sector.

Share Your Insights

Suicide Prevention Australia are calling for researchers, subject matter experts and members of the suicide prevention and mental health sectors to participate in their State of the Nation in Suicide Prevention survey. Your response will inform the direction of their advocacy and provide a strong source of intelligence for Australia's decision-makers.

You need 15 minutes to **complete the survey**.

The survey closes on **Thursday 3 August** at 5pm.



[Formerly known as MPAN]

World-first masterclass to support families of missing people

The launch of National Missing Persons Week 2023 will feature a world-first masterclass created and hosted by Dr Sarah Wayland, Associate Professor at the University of New England (UNE), Manna Research Fellow and internationally-renowned missing persons expert.

The first masterclass video - Ambiguous Loss 101 - will introduce the concept of ambiguous loss, how it presents itself for families of missing people, and ways to manage reactions to that ambiguity.

It will be freely available online via missed.org.au



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

August

10 August, Manna Webinar series launch.

Manna Institute PLG meeting and F2F Strategic Planning Days **Monday 28–Wednesday 30 August**, SCU Coolangatta Campus.

Thursday **3 August** Manna Institute Research Opportunity Webinar.

September/October

September webinar **Thursday 7 September**, 12:00PM-1:00PM (AEDT)

October webinar **Thursday 5 October**, 12:00PM-1:00PM (AEDT)

November/December

November webinar **Thursday 2 November**, 12:00PM-1:00PM (AEDT)

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

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

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

We want to hear from you!

Please share your news of Manna achievements and opportunities via mannainstitute@une.edu.au

