



Monthly overview

Next month, we are excited to announce the launch of our Manna Institute webinar series. It will be offered on **Thursdays over lunch, 12-1pm eastern standard time**, and moderated by our very own Sarah Wayland. Topics will be based on our growing expertise within Manna, and open to anyone interested in rural, regional or remote mental health. Stay tuned!

Manna Institute Director Myf Maple will welcome our new Senior Researchers at an orientation session on **11 July**. Their involvement represents a significant boost to Manna and we look forward to introducing the researchers here in *Trunk Line*, starting with Professor Kim Usher in this edition.

The Society of Mental Health Research (SMHR) **People and Place Conference** will be held from 29 November–1 December. The deadline for the submission of symposiums, abstracts and posters is **21 July**.

Chief Investigator check-in

Dr Mia Schaumberg, University of Sunshine Coast



My roles within Manna Institute including seeking out and coordinating new strategic partnerships; leading the priority populations research collaborative; and contributing to the Manna Position Paper working group, which includes leading one paper on priority populations and contributing to the authorship of the international position paper on working in regional areas globally.

I am currently on academic sabbatical in Sweden for three months. I recently spent a week at the University of Umeå in Northern Sweden, where I visited the Department of Epidemiology and Global Health. Much of the work at Umeå focusses on the health, wellbeing and care of rural and regional communities.

Umeå University has a similar ethos to the institutions in the Regional Universities Network and, given its remote location, focuses on supporting local community education and research needs. I was invited to present to the department and there was a lot of interest in Manna Institute and our work in RRR mental health, as well as the research I lead in healthy ageing and dementia prevention at UniSC. Umeå is very interested to be partnering with us and learning from our ways of working, with lots of opportunities for international collaboration moving forward. Here I am pictured with the Head of Department Prof Anna-Karin Hurtig, postdoctoral fellow Frida Johnsson and the infamous University Totem.

Chief Investigators face-to-face



L to R; Prof. Chris Doran (CQU), A/Prof. Dixie Statham (FED), Prof. Sonja March (UniSQ), Prof. Myf Maple (UNE), A/Prof. Christian Swann (SCU) and Prof. Russell Roberts (CSU). Absent Dr Mia Schaumberg (UniSC).

Our Chief Investigators met in Sydney for a two-day, face-to-face meeting earlier this month, where they were introduced to colleagues at HMRI to hear about our internal FAIT (*Framework to Assess the Impact of Translational*

Research) assessment. It was a terrific opportunity to hone in on the top priorities for the upcoming strategic planning days in August at SCU Coolangatta.

Regional Research Collaboration (RRC) Program update

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

- Manna Institute requires end of year 1 and 2 data from RUN university research offices. As part of Manna Institute's reporting to the Commonwealth, we are required to provide data on each of our researchers in order to demonstrate growth. **Due 31 July.**
- Full report (Annual and Financial) **due October** to the Commonwealth, which will include the FAIT report card and updated external evaluation, bringing us back in line with October annual reports.

Manna meets with NSW Health

Manna Institute kicked off June with a meeting with Luke Sloane, NSW Health Coordinator General for Regional Health, and Dr Brendan Flynn, Executive Director, Hunter New England Mental Health Services. It was a great opportunity for us to bring the NSW Department up to speed on the work of Manna and to learn more about its [NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022-2032 - Regional Health](#) priority framework. We are looking forward to working together in the future.



How do you look after your mental health?

Grief and sadness of the kind we have seen in recent weeks can be overwhelming. It also reminds us of the need to focus on our own and collective wellbeing.

Our partners at Everymind have produced a wonderful fact sheet – **Looking After Yourself and Others Following a Traumatic Event** – that recommends:

- Taking a break;
- Switching off;
- Staying connected;
- Feeling your feelings; and
- Reaching out.

Finding the Sun

In this and future issues of Trunk Line, we will be asking our partners and members how they take care of their mental health, starting with Manna Institute Director and avid cyclist Professor Myfanwy Maple.

She says exercise and ample sleep have always been the best balm for her during challenging times. Myf loves walking in nature, but says there's nothing like cycling to de-stress and restore perspective.

"It boosts my mental and physical health and provides huge social benefits," she says. "I love riding. I am part of QueenBees, an online community of wonderful female cyclists from around the world – we all met during COVID via the Zwift platform and have continued to ride together ever since. I also ride with the DUBBUGs – Dorrigo, Urunga, Bellingen Bike User Group – a diverse and supportive group of cycling enthusiasts, and love to explore the beautiful mid NSW coast on two wheels."

Myf has a weekly target of cycling 150+ kilometres and regularly sets herself the challenge of competing in events.



She has just completed the 10th anniversary Tour de Rocks and, in August, will participate in the Brisbane to Gold Coast ride – both cancer fundraising rides. Myf will be pedalling again in September, completing the intensive Cycle Around the Globe in support of the International Association for Suicide Prevention.

"I like to link my cycling targets to something meaningful," Myf says, "and the wonderful thing about such fundraisers is that they help you to focus on others. My work always reminds me that there are people more vulnerable than me. Through an altruistic activity you are able to help people you don't know. It takes you above and beyond your regular sphere and gives you back much more than the mental and physical benefits of the exercise."

"This way I can cycle with more purpose and mindfulness. And when I talk to others about what I'm doing, why I'm doing it, and about mental health and suicide, that often leads to reducing stigma, and helps others to feel comfortable in reaching out for support and services, and that's good as well."

[READ MORE](#)

Welcome new senior researchers

We are delighted to welcome the following senior researchers to Manna.

- Warren Bartik, Associate Professor, Clinical Psychology, UNE;
- Dean Carson, Professor in Cultural Geography, Umeå University, Sweden;
- Dan Fassnacht, Associate Professor in Psychology, UniSC;
- Gillian Gould, Professor in Health Equity, SCU;
- Anne Graham, Professor of Childhood Studies and Director Centre for Children and Young People, SCU;
- John Hurley, Professor of Mental Health, Director Higher Degree Research and Training, Faculty of Health, SCU;
- Julie Jomeen, Professor of Midwifery/Executive Dean Health, SCU;
- Matthew Leach, Deputy Director: Education at the National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine, and Deputy Associate Dean Education, Faculty of Health, SCU;
- Amy Lykins, Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology, UNE;
- Pamela Meredith, Professor and Discipline Lead of Occupational Therapy, UniSC;
- Neil Smart, Professor of Clinical Exercise Physiology, UNE;
- Mathew Summers, Professor of Psychology and Discipline Lead (Psychology), UniSC;
- Einar Thorsteinsson, Professor and Head of School, Psychology, UNE;
- Kim Usher, Professor of Nursing, School of Health, UNE
- Jonathan (Jon) Wardle, Professor of Public Health and Foundation Director, National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine, SCU; and
- Stuart Wark, Professor of Rural Medicine, School of Rural Medicine, UNE.

We look forward to continuing to welcome new researchers, with additional senior researchers still coming on board beyond the RUN Network and from our partner institutions. Later in the year we'll be looking for interested HDRs, ECRs and MCRs who are keen to join us too!

Manna Institute webinar series kicks off

Starting on **10 August**, Manna Institute will host thought-provoking webinars to firmly cast the spotlight on rural and regional mental health. These will occur on Thursdays 12-1pm AEDT.

As the first virtual research and training institute of its kind in Australia, Manna Institute is dedicated to improving mental health and wellbeing beyond our cities. Our researchers, industry partners and those representing important interest groups will be discussing topics of importance to regional mental health, proposing areas of focus and innovations to inform and update interested parties from across Australia.

Our focus is on being open to fresh perspectives, including those that challenge our existing ways of thinking. With this in mind, we will be deep-diving into topics where Manna has vast knowledge across our key areas of focus: existing and emerging workforce development; individual health and wellbeing; priority populations; and the impact of changing environmental conditions on mental health. Each webinar will feature a presentation or panel discussion, followed by a Q&A

We warmly invite existing members of the institute and its partners, mental health service providers and Australian researchers, as well as peak bodies active in regional mental health to tune in to this landmark series. Watch your inbox or sign up for updates via our website!

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.

Unlocking mental health support

Two Manna Institute members have joined forces to better assist defence, first responder and remote worker families and the educators they partner with.

ECR Dr Marg Rogers, from the University of New England, and machine vision specialist and MCR Dr Anwaar Ul-Haq, from Charles Sturt University, collaborated with full stack developer Asama Qureshi to improve access to the suite of online resources designed and developed by Marg and her Children's Family Resilience Programs (CFRP) team. Parents, educators and support workers now need only complete a simple online form to receive a personalised program recommending the free linked resources best suited to the child's needs.

Marg said the ability to screen the database for the most relevant online resources, and easily retrieve them, will be a boon to time-poor users of the popular e-books, learning modules and educational activities.

"This is a direct response to feedback from users, who found our resources relevant and of high-quality but difficult to navigate," she said. "Making them more accessible through the automated retrieval system will hopefully mean they are used more frequently by vulnerable families and those working to support them."

And in an era of growing machine learning cautiousness, the initiative demonstrates how technology can be co-opted for good. "The system can enhance these online community programs through technological advancements while significantly improving usability through our co-design approach," Anwaar said.

Indeed, it's a positive outcome that Marg believes would never have been possible without her membership of Manna. "It is a strong example of the power of Manna partnerships," she said. "And of the continued contributions of the CFRP project team, including Emily Small from Small Hands Early Learning and UNE's Dr Stoo Sepp and stakeholders, who helped co-design the retrieval system." [READ MORE](#)



Senior researcher spotlight: Kim Usher

"I have had a very privileged career and life. Now I want to offer whatever help I can to see other people with potential succeed."

Manna Institute's membership has been boosted with the addition of senior UNE researcher Professor Kim Usher, who brings a wealth of experience, scholarship and expertise.

A mental health nurse of some 35+ years, Kim is passionate about the subject. This has inspired a vast body of well-cited research, primarily within rural and remote communities. Kim's latest work has explored mental health issues associated with disasters and trauma, but she has also studied the experiences of nurses and first responders, victims of domestic violence and those who have experienced substance abuse.

"I have also spent a lot of time working collaboratively with Indigenous communities in the past decade – in Quirindi, Coledale, Toomelah, Moree, Tingha and Inverell – to enhance their mental health," Kim said. "These people have become very important to me and I am dedicated to championing their health in the future."

At a time in Manna's evolution when we are seeking to more actively contribute to leadership and training of the next generation of mental health researchers, Kim has much to share. She has extensive expertise in submitting and securing large grants, is on the College of Experts for the Australian Research Council, and is an experienced assessor of DECRA and Discovery grant applications.

[READ MORE](#)

HDR spotlight - Danna Lee (UniSC)



What attracted you to the idea of HDR studies?

As a child and young adult, I always struggled with the question 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' My answer was always 'I want to be everything!' – from a ballerina to an astronaut. That was until my sixth-grade science teacher

introduced me to the pivotal role of science. Her class really kick-started my career as a researcher.

As a university student, I became interested in psychology, cognitive science and neuroscience. I worked as a research assistant for a number of years, before deciding that I wanted to do my own research. So here I am, a PhD student at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

What is your particular research area of interest?

My Bachelor's degree from the University of California, San Diego, was in psychology and cognitive science, and my Master's degree in neuroscience is from King's College London. I love learning about the mind and the brain, particularly how changes in the brain can drastically affect who we are and how we interact with our world.

However, it wasn't until my grandparents were diagnosed with dementia that I decided to focus on dementia research. As their

caregiver, I witnessed first-hand the difficulties they faced performing everyday tasks and their heartbreaking struggle to retain cherished memories and personal identities. So now I am working on how we can practically modify habits and behaviours to reduce the risk of dementia.

How does your research impact rural, regional and remote mental health research?

My PhD projects focus on reducing dementia risk among older adults in rural and regional Australia, which has limited health infrastructure and poorer health outcomes compared to metropolitan areas. They will assess the current levels of dementia knowledge and attitudes in rural and regional communities in an effort to improve dementia awareness and literacy. Through a series of focus group sessions, I will also analyse the barriers preventing older adults from adopting healthy lifestyles to reduce their dementia risk. My goal is to develop feasible, sustainable and impactful interventions.

What do you hope to gain from this experience with the Manna Institute?

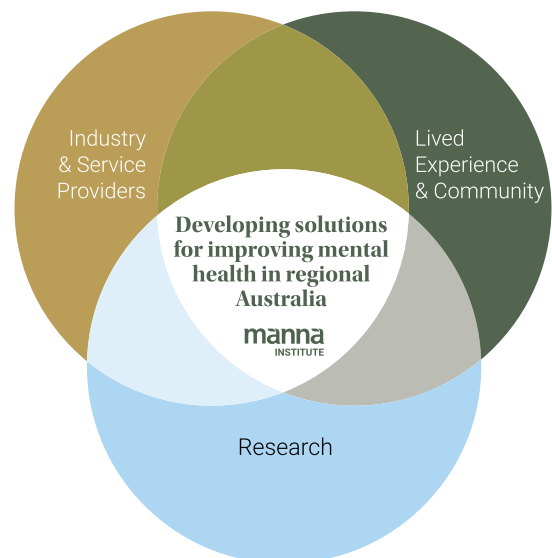
I hope to acquire valuable knowledge and expertise by collaborating with a network of like-minded researchers who share common goals. Research efforts need to consider the distinct and individual needs of rural and regional Australians. Manna is capable of leading and advocating for impactful research initiatives aimed at addressing the specific challenges faced by these communities.

Join us



We warmly invite researchers, community members and industry bodies in rural, regional and remote Australia to partner with us to develop and deliver tailored, community-driven programs. To pioneer the approaches – and introduce the tools – so desperately needed.

[View our 2023 Prospectus](#)





Research Fellow profile: Dr Tracy Kolbe-Alexander

A/Prof Health and Medical Sciences,
University of Southern Queensland

Tracy is Associate Head of School – Research in the School of Health and Medical Science at the University of Southern Queensland and an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Cape Town (South Africa).

Her research has focused on the role of physical activity and other health-seeking behaviours on health and wellbeing.

Using various strategies and approaches, Tracy has developed, implemented and measured the effectiveness of health promotion programs in different settings (community, schools and workplaces). She serves on the International Society of Physical Activity and Health's (ISPAH) Education Committee, is part of the Asia-Pacific Society for Physical Activity's Advocacy committee, and is a Senior Associate Editor for the Journal of Physical Activity and Health.

[VIEW TRACY'S PROFILE HERE](#)

Manna Institute fact sheets

Our [resources page](#) is now up and running, featuring fact sheets on developing effective partnerships and suicide bereavement. Simply download and share.

At Manna, our researchers are partnering with service organisations, communities and individuals with valuable personal experience to conduct mental health research that matters. Our research is underpinned by respectful relationships and a spirit of goodwill. A huge thank you to our wonderful partners at LifeLine Direct and Everymind for providing the valuable content for our [Partnerships With Purpose](#) fact sheet. A must read!

Navigating the emotional turmoil and grief that follows the death of a loved one to suicide is extremely challenging. Our [Suicide Bereavement](#) fact sheet, compiled following research conducted by UNE, Everymind and the Centre for Mental Health and Research at ANU, provides practical advice on when and how to help.



We will continue to add resources relevant to the work of Manna and its partners. [Please contact us](#) if you have an idea or would like to contribute to a future fact sheet.

In the news

Suicide support in schools

UNE expertise in suicide postvention and education is being employed to support high school communities struggling with loss and grief throughout Australia.

[READ MORE](#)

Nature prescriptions

How reconnecting with the landscape healed a bushfire-ravaged community.

[READ MORE](#)

Out and about

Manna Institute ECR Dan Wadsworth (UniSC) recently presented “Every little helps: Physical Activity for health and wellbeing” at the *Making Retirement Great Symposium* at the UniSC Moreton Bay Campus. The event was conducted by the Sandgate Men’s Shed in partnership with the Queensland Men’s Shed Association, the Wellness Hub of Brighton Health and the University of the Sunshine Coast. Nice cheese board Dan!



The panel (including Dan, 3rd from left) being presented with cheeseboards made by the Sandgate Men’s Shed.

Expression of interest

The National Centre for Farmer Health is looking for members of the NSW farming community to test and provide feedback about *Steering Straight: My Plan to Keep on Track*. This resource aims to help farmers look beyond the endless cycle of tasks to do and to help with reflection, planning for challenges, and preparing for action. The plan has been developed in collaboration with members of our farming communities for farmers to use in their everyday lives.

We are now looking for people who can complete the plan in (taking roughly 15–30 minutes) and then partake in a short phone interview about 6 weeks later.

If you want to help us improve the wellbeing of our farming communities, we would love to hear from you! Please contact Brittany Doolan s223512135@deakin.edu.au or call the National Centre for Farmer Health on 03 5551 8533.



This study has received Deakin University ethics approval (reference number: 2020-232)

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!



Manna's Social Impact



Fans	Engagement	Impressions
61 ^{19.6%}	215 ^{330%}	2.8K ^{5.8%}



Followers	Engagement	Impressions
179 ^{175.4%}	513 ^{126%}	4.8K ^{76.6%}



Followers	Engagement	Brand Awareness
283 ^{22%}	139 ^{52.7%}	30 ^{200%}

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

July	August	November	December
<p>21 July, SMHR, People and Place Conference 29 November-1 December: Deadline for submission for symposiums, abstracts and posters.</p>	<p>10 August, Manna Webinar series launch.</p> <p>Manna Institute PLG meeting and F2F Strategic Planning Days Monday 28-Wednesday 30 August, SCU Coolangatta Campus.</p> <p>Monday 28 August (evening event), Tuesday 29 August (PLG) and Wednesday 30 August (Planning Day).</p>	<p>Manna Institute pre-workshop Tuesday 7 November, Albury, NSW.</p> <p>Rural and Remote Mental Health Symposium 2023, Wednesday 8-Friday 10 November, Albury, NSW.</p>	<p>29 November-1 December, Society of Mental Health Research (SMHR) 43rd Annual Conference.</p>

We want to hear from you!

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

