

Trunk Line

Reimagining mental health in regional Australia

April 2024 / Edition 10



Manna Retreat 25-27 March

A big shout out to our Southern Cross University partners for hosting our retreat at their Gold Coast campus. We could not have been better looked after.

It was a wonderful opportunity to again meet face-to-face, compare notes and celebrate our achievements, with Manna Institute director Professor Myf Maple giving an update on Manna Institute sustainability beyond our initial funding envelope. Members of each of our research streams enjoyed precious time together to discuss their work plans, priorities and deliverables.

Manna Research Fellow, Professor Tracy Kolbe-Alexander from the University of Southern Queensland, said the retreat was a reminder of how institute members are “stronger together”.

“These in-person gatherings are one of the highlights for me as a Manna researcher,” said Tracy, who leads the physical health stream. “I particularly enjoyed some of the informal catch-ups – opportunities to hear more about other people’s work, get to know them and build on partnerships.

“As a stream, our narrative and work plan is taking shape as

we continue to grow. Like other Manna events, I left the retreat with enthusiasm and a renewed sense of purpose to make a difference in regional communities.”

The retreat gave us time to consider how to truly embed Lived Experience and First Nations perspectives in everything Manna does, and we heard from keynote speaker Peta Marks, Chief Operating Officer with the Australian Eating Disorders Research and Translation Centre and National Programs Manager with the InsideOut Institute.

Apart from the team-building activities, the 10-minute Shark Tank-style research pitches were a retreat highlight, giving our streams the chance to hone their presentations before a panel of senior researchers, industry partners and community representatives. Reflecting on their 2024 aims was a great exercise and many of our presenters commented on the value of receiving feedback from more senior colleagues, especially when it comes to all-important funding applications.

In fact, the panel presentations proved so successful that we are planning a further two via Zoom this year. So stay tuned.

Celebrating our partners – Manna at CSU



Professor Michael Friend (PVCRI), Dr Anwaar Ulhaq (now at CQU), Associate Professor Belinda Cash, Ms Sonia Diab and Professor Russell Roberts.

CSU's Manna team includes researchers from its schools of psychology, management, health, social work and biostatistics. Their work extends across three faculties, the School of Rural Medicine, Three Rivers University Department of Rural Health and the Rural Health Research Institute.

- [Professor Russell Roberts](#), a Manna CI, works closely with Manna colleagues across a number of initiatives such as [Equally Well](#) (with Hazel Dalton and Belinda Cash, and PhD students Sonia Diab, Victoria Erskine and Michael Elwan). This focusses on the physical health of people with mental health conditions, who generally experience poor health and reduced life expectancy, especially when living in rural communities. This research directly influences [policy and practice](#) through over 300 associated [initiatives](#) to enhance the physical health of Australians.
- The [Physical Health Care Navigators in Rural Australia project](#), supported by a \$1 million Medical Research Future Fund grant, involves 10 Manna researchers, including Manna CI, Associate Professor Christian Swann from Southern Cross University and Manna's Lived Experience representatives Ashley Holzapfel and Paul Klotz. Comprising researchers from 11 universities and six states/territories of Australia, this research will help shape the nature of peer work and holistic mental health care across rural Australia.
- [Associate Professor Julaine Allan](#), is a senior Manna fellow from CSU's Rural Health Research Institute (RHRI). Her research focuses on mental health and substance use implementation science, particularly the patient-reported experience, and implementing and evaluating evidence-based programs that are unavailable in rural Australia. Her team, including a number of Manna colleagues, were recently awarded \$4.3 million to fund research into [schizophrenia-focused therapy](#).
- [Associate Professor Belinda Cash](#) is an Early Career Researcher who is contributing to Manna projects relating to the mental health and wellbeing of older persons and their care-givers, including the ROAM (Regional Older Adults Mental Health) project (along with Dr Kristy Robson, Three Rivers) and Health and Wellbeing in Later Life. Belinda is interested in tackling the "too hard basket" and is working on the Care Coordination Toolkit that aims to provide place-based support for rural mental health practitioners. She says connecting with other passionate and likeminded researchers, industry partners and Lived Experience experts through Manna has had an enormous impact on her work.

Manna at CSU Continued

- Associate Professor Larissa Bamberly leads the [Rural Workforce Organisational Resilience \(RWOR\)](#) group exploring the experiences of workers in regional Australia and the factors that contribute to their physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Workforce mental health and wellbeing and its relationship to leadership and organisational resilience are key aspects of the RWOR group's research. Recent projects have considered the impact of body-worn cameras on the mental and emotional wellbeing of frontline workers in regional and urban NSW, and the impact of climate change on the wellbeing of regional aged care workers.
- Dr Hazel Dalton, also from the RHRI, has broad interests in rural mental health, from systems and policy to health services research and mental health promotion and early intervention. She has co-led Manna's development of an Australian position statement on rural mental health research (see the next page), co-chairs the Rural Behavioral Health Collaborative special interest group of the [Global Leadership Exchange](#) and is co-hosting the Rural Wellbeing match at the next Global Leadership Exchange in June. This will explore the role that community development and empowerment play in promoting health, preventing illness, and supporting recovery from mental health and substance use conditions. Hazel also supervises PhD student Peach Robb, who has joined Manna's HDR Community of Practice (CoP) and is investigating the factors contributing to the mental health and wellbeing of people as they age in rural communities.
- Other Manna Senior researchers include [Professor Navjot Bhullar](#), from the School of Rural Medicine, and [Associate Professor Clifford Lewis](#) and [Professor Suzanne McLaren](#) from the School of Psychology.
- Manna-sponsored PhD student Sonia Diab's research explores models of distributed leadership and the relationships between leadership dimensions, organisational climate and outcomes in the context of Australian health networks. Sonia appreciates the strong sense of community and relationships that Manna has fostered, particularly within the HDR CoP.



April topic: Environment and climate change

'In conversation' with Associate Professor Fiona Charlson, Principal Research Fellow in Climate Change and Mental Health at the Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research.

Monday 29 April 1-2pm AEST

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

Call for Expressions of Interest for a special issue of the Australian Journal of Rural Health

An upcoming special issue of the AJRH seeks articles reporting on primary or secondary data and a select number of commentaries and reviews on the use of digital interventions to enhance health outcomes in regional, rural and remote areas.

Digital interventions use internet-based technologies in the delivery, management and support of treatment, prevention or health promotion activities that aim to improve health outcomes.

Expressions of Interest for the special issue are due on 1 May 2024, and full papers will be due in August 2024.

[Further details of submissions are available here](#)

Ground-breaking international guidelines

Appropriate and respectful engagement with rural and regional communities is a cornerstone of research in the mental health space.

Which is why we applaud Manna members Dr Hazel Dalton and Professor Russell Roberts, who are leading Australian and international efforts to develop a ground-breaking statement on rural research that contains principles and practices to inform rural mental health research planning, funding and conduct.

Hazel, from the Rural Health Research Institute at CSU, says it represents a great opportunity to address the equity gap in rural mental health research funding and capacity. The statement will also provide much-needed guidance and reassurance – for researchers, the communities they collaborate with, as well as clinicians and other stakeholders.

“This is an attempt to ensure that rural and remote areas are not another frontier for opportunistic researchers – who come in, take data and depart, leaving communities dissatisfied and lacking in benefits,” Hazel said. “We are thinking through what ethical and responsible research engagement and best practices look like.”

In Australia, the team has been engaging with place-based, clinical, Lived Experience and research experts at Manna, the Western NSW Health Research Network, the National Rural Mental Health Conference and the expert group that



informed the [Orange Declaration on rural mental health](#). Internationally, it has also partnered with colleagues from 11 other countries (including Canada, America, the UK, New Zealand and Sweden) to support parallel activities in pursuit of a global statement.

The researchers hope to publish a position paper mid-year and launch the international statement at the Global Leadership Exchange (GLE) at Utrecht, Netherlands, in June.

“We hope the statement will influence funders and governments to set appropriate project guidelines and timelines, and that it can be used to advocate for fair and equitable funding for rural mental health research around the world,” Hazel said.

“Our aim is to produce research that is well informed, sensitively conducted and ultimately meaningful for the communities of interest, which brings into play questions of authorship, acknowledgement and recognition. It is vital that we maintain and respect the relationships we build – they are just too important to put at risk for short-term gain.”

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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.

Mindframe training



Mental illness tends to be negatively portrayed in the media, our primary source of information.

Being aware and thoughtful about communication surrounding mental health and suicide is vitally important. It can help reduce the stigma experienced by vulnerable people and ease their isolation. Manna contributor Amanda Burdon recently undertook Mindframe training and documents here how to share challenging topics in a safe and supportive way.

Communicating about suicide

Poor reporting can reinforce negative stereotypes and discrimination, and discourage people from seeking the help and treatment they need. Communication should:

- use inclusive language and avoid images that create a picture of distress, preferring instead those images that convey hope, connection and support;
- avoid or minimise details of the suicide method and location;
- provide individual context to stories, where possible;
- respect specific cultural conventions;
- promote Lived and Living Experience; and
- promote positive, help-seeking information.

Problematic communication about suicide deaths – in media reporting and social media – can be associated with increased rates of suicide and suicide attempts. A celebrity death (like that of Robin Williams), sensationalised reporting, and details of suicide methods or locations can increase the risk of suicidal behaviour.

Conversely, hopeful stories of how people have got through a suicidal crisis can help to prevent suicide and encourage help-seeking.

Content warnings or content advice gives the audience/reader the choice as to whether they engage with the material. And always accompany any story with contact details for one or two 24-hour support services.

Mindframe collaborates with the Australian media and other sectors to encourage responsible, accurate and sensitive portrayal of mental illness, suicide, alcohol and other drug use. Find more information on Mindframe online courses [here](#).

Promoting stories of Lived or Living Experience

Sharing the stories of people with a mental illness or those bereaved by suicide can have a powerful effect, helping to illustrate how complex and personalised the experience is. It can:

- improve community understanding of mental ill-health and its impacts;
- assist in reducing stigma;
- support and guide prevention, planning, treatment and education; and
- increase hopefulness.

Tips for safe and sensitive language

Opt for language that:

- is neutral and non-judgemental;
- is factual and accurate rather than sensational;
- reflects an individual's experience and avoids describing them according to their diagnosis; and
- uses correct terminology when it comes to treatment and support services.



Reaching out

THE CONVERSATION

Research-based news sites like *The Conversation* can be a vehicle for sharing Manna's work, and expanding our networks and potential influence.

"Everything we do, we are attempting to translate it back into something that's useful to others," said Manna director Myf Maple. "Disseminating any findings and discussing complex issues –through *The Conversation*, media releases or presentations to community groups – is a high priority."

We asked three Manna researchers to share insights into contributing to news sites.

In September last year Marg Rogers (UNE) collaborated with fellow Manna researchers Cassy Dittman (CQ) and Govind Krishnamoorth (USQ) to produce a story for *The Conversation* on how to handle children's complaints, which received 31,737 page views. She is a regular contributor and sees it as a great opportunity to create impact and share findings with Australian and international audiences.

"These articles attract partners and stakeholders to inform and guide your projects; it means your research is more likely to change practice by informing your stakeholders," Marg said.

"Policymakers and government bodies and agencies scan research-based news sites. My articles have led to many ABC Radio interviews, and being asked to inform NSW Education Department policies, resourcing and initiatives, as well as the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide."

Professor of Public Health at Southern Cross University,

Jon Wardle, has published in *The Conversation* on complementary medicine, telehealth and even Ebola.

"Publishing under Creative Commons means these sites are a great source of information for journalists," he said. "We have had a lot of radio and television interest in our published stories and that has helped to attract government, departmental and ministerial attention. It has been useful in building networks and gets a conversation with interested parties started, but it doesn't get offers automatically rolling in. You still have to leverage that opportunity."

For Jon, it has helped to identify research subjects, and attract industry and government interest. "It's a way to explain complex ideas to a more accessible audience and to improve your communications skills; it costs you nothing and it's relatively easy to pitch. You will get a lot more attention from a *Conversation* piece than a journal article and it can help boost your profile."

News sites serve as a bridge between the academic process and the people you hope your work will support, according to Associate Professor Eric Brymer, at Southern Cross University, who has published a number of articles in *The Conversation* and for other outlets on extreme sport psychology. However, he believes the potential impact might be related to your field of research.

"While my articles have had 10,000s of views, the impact for me has been negligible," Eric said. "If my articles have changed lives or altered the way we see something, I don't know about it. At best, you hope it helps you to connect with others, open discussions, increase your reach and change lives."

A few final tips from the trio:

1. Read the news site's guidelines, then practise and refine your pitch. Ask yourself of the topic "so what?".
2. Pitch in the lead-up to a journal article being published. Sites like *The Conversation* want breaking, not old news.
3. Pull from your research the most interesting findings and statistics, to streamline your message.
4. Be ready to respond quickly to breaking stories or report releases you have expertise on.
5. Be prepared to work closely with the editor(s).
6. Remain true to your data and resist being coerced into adopting a certain angle.
7. If your pitch is unsuccessful (and most are rejected), consider other news-based publications relevant to your work.
8. Don't forget to mention that you are part of Manna.

Finding the Sun

Susan King, General Manager, Services of Lifeline Direct

This month's inspiring Finding the Sun comes from Susan King, General Manager, Services of Lifeline Direct – one of our valued Manna partners. Susan is an active member of our Project Management Group and a great supporter of our face-to-face events.

"In today's fast-paced world, being intentional about our mental health and wellbeing is essential. For me, it's about simplicity and finding solace in everyday moments.

After a busy work week, I look forward to a 5 Rhythms dance class. This embodiment practice, a form of movement meditation, allows me to dance with abandon and release any pent-up emotions or stagnant energy. Witnessing the unbridled joy of fellow dancers, especially in my seven-year-old daughter, simply lifts the soul.

I also look to carve out moments of tranquillity in daily life. Savouring simple pleasures grounds me in the present moment. Reading a captivating book transports me to my imagination, while a leisurely bath becomes a sacred self-care ritual that centres me.

When my mood dips, I always took to nature. Whether it's a walk through bush, stirring up the butterflies seeking solace from the heat of the day in the fallen tree stumps;

a few stolen moments under a tree; or sitting by the dam to watch the dragonflies dance and flit, being in nature fosters a sense of calm and connection.

When I am feeling sad or discombobulated, practicing gratitude helps me find balance; there's always something to be thankful for, even when things get tough.

Rounding out my repertoire are the simple joys of walking my dogs and watching my two playful puppies wrestle. Their antics remind me to embrace the present moment and find joy in the little things."



Healthy Ageing Survey



QR code



Scan to start

Win prizes!

Participants can enter a prize draw to win one of five \$20 gift cards.

The survey aims to gather valuable insight into the thoughts and perspectives on healthy ageing in relation to current understanding of dementia, including knowledge, attitudes, and modifiable risk factors. We believe that the insights collected could contribute significantly to understanding community needs and developing targeted health initiatives.

Eligibility: Anyone who is 18+ years old or over, currently residing in Australia, and has not been diagnosed with dementia by their healthcare provider.

[Find out more](#)



NHMRC seeking help to find reviewers from those living and working in regional, rural or remote areas.

The MRFF and NHMRC are increasingly creating dedicated streams to support regional, rural and remote research in their grant schemes.

Through the Australian Health Research Alliance, NSW Regional Health Partners have been lobbying for these grant applications to be reviewed by people with expertise in regional, rural and remote research (i.e., those who live and breathe this every day, so can truly assess whether the proposed grant will respond to a need, is feasible and offers good value).

NHMRC is particularly keen to hear from those living and working in regional, rural or remote areas.

Manna strongly encourages you to take part in a grant review panel. If you are interested in participating, please contact NHMRC:

Email mrff@nhmrc.gov.au, and/or add your details [at this link](#)

Please indicate your proposed suitability in the free text field, and use one of the keywords to indicate your RRR speciality.

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 Dyirbal language of the Jirrbal people of north-eastern Queensland means "talking research".

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

[More details here](#)

Vale Britt

The Manna community has been deeply saddened by the sudden death of Brittany Abraham on 24 March, on her way to joining us at our retreat.

A much-loved UNE early career academic, Britt had only recently been welcomed into the Manna fold as one of our First Nations scholarship recipients and we were looking forward to her contributions.

Britt's PhD supervisor and Manna Research Fellow, Associate Professor, Sarah Wayland said Britt had been pivotal to ensuring the decolonizing of social work teaching at UNE.

"The power of Britt wasn't just her smarts and her enthusiasm, but the hidden work she embraced, that was never led by ego," Sarah said. "Britt never made people feel like she didn't have time for others. She was a joy."

Britt's lasting impact on all of those she collaborated with, supported or inspired is evidenced by the many letters of condolence directed to her family and friends in the past two weeks. Thank you for giving your permission to share this sad news. Our thoughts are with you at this very difficult time.

Picture used with permission of the family.
If you are feeling distressed please call 13YARN or Lifeline on 13 11 14.



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

April	May	June	July	August	December
29 April Manna webinar 'Environment and climate change'.	20 May Manna webinar 'Workforce'.	5-6 June NSW Aboriginal MH Workforce Forum Sydney. 17 June Manna webinar.	16-18 July Guwal Jilbay First Nations Research Student Conference. 22 July Manna webinar.	19 August Manna webinar. 27 August HMRI Early Career Researchers Summit – Newcastle.	2-4 Manna conference.

We want to hear from you!

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

