Strategic Plan
2017-2020

Western Australian Centre for Rural Health
Foreword

The Western Australian Centre for Rural Health (WACRH) has steadily grown over the last few years, making the most of additional investment by government in infrastructure and staffing. WACRH staff have responded magnificently to these opportunities and the challenges associated with rapid growth, developing an expanded range of programs that contribute to our regional communities and supporting a diverse range of health students.

Mindful of the need to expose students to more remote environments, we are pushing our programs out of the regional cities of Geraldton and Karratha to offer a range of innovative rural placement experiences.

We have embraced working across the rural health pipeline but there is much more to do, particularly in supporting the existing health workforce and encouraging Aboriginal people into health careers.

In concert with our efforts at quality teaching and learning, have been continued efforts in research and evaluation to ensure that we embrace innovation and make a difference to our communities.

We recognise that health therapies alone will be insufficient to overcome health inequities. Social and structural determinants of health must inform approaches to improving the health of those living in our regional, rural and remote regions.

Our work is underpinned by our organisational teamwork and our collaborations and partnerships with external agencies. We recognise that this alignment of thinking and harmonizing our efforts with others is what underpins achieving our mission and ensuring we maximize value from the resources we are entrusted with.

Professor Sandra Thompson
Director, WA Centre for Rural Health
Our Story

The WA Centre for Rural Health (WACRH) – (formerly the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health) was established in 1998 as one of six University Departments of Rural Health (UDRHs) across Australia. There are now 15 UDRHs around Australia funded under the Federal government’s Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program (RHMT). WACRH operates with support from The University of Western Australia and works closely with numerous health organisations on a local and national level.

WACRH contributes to the objectives of the RHMT program by:

- Actively promoting rural and remote health careers
- Creating innovative rural and remote practicum placements for undergraduate and degree students
- Offering ongoing learning opportunities for health care professionals
- Providing education, training and support programs relevant to rural and remote practice
- Undertaking collaborative research and knowledge translation with a particular focus on health service delivery, public health and Aboriginal health.
Mission
Innovative rural health education and research to improve health in rural communities

Vision
Optimal health and wellbeing for people living in rural and remote communities in Western Australia

Our Guiding Principles
1. Work collaboratively with our partners and in our professional networks
2. Value and respect the rich cultural diversity of Western Australia, in particular, work with Aboriginal communities to help them build on their strengths and address disadvantage
3. Undertake our work with integrity and transparency, and always seek to do the right thing
4. Promote socially inclusive approaches that engage individuals and communities to identify their needs, and work with them to promote their physical, psychological and social wellbeing
5. Commit to continuous improvement and reflective practice so that we continue to learn and extend our reach
6. Foster an organisational environment that provides opportunities for all to grow and excel
Theory of Change

WACRH recognises that Western Australia is a highly diverse community, and that geographical distance, availability of health care professionals, and sustainability of the workforce are major challenges.

We aim to influence change in health service delivery and health workforce models through education and training of the future health workforce, research, by providing innovative teaching and learning opportunities, advocacy and community engagement.

Our theory of change summarises what we do, the outcomes we achieve and shows how these outcomes align with our central vision and mission.
WA Centre for Rural Health
Theory of Change Model

**Our Vision**

Optimal health and wellbeing for people living in rural and remote communities across Western Australia

- A skilled and sustainable health workforce in rural and remote WA
- Health Policy and programs address the health needs of Australians living in rural and remote communities
- People in rural and remote communities have improved access to appropriate, high quality health services
- Research and Evaluation findings are translated to inform practice and policy decisions.
- Increased visibility of priority health issues in rural and remote communities (local, state and national)
- Health care models address Aboriginal health care inequities
- Graduates and health care professionals have the knowledge and skills to work effectively in diverse communities
- Health professionals are rural ready
- Research and Evaluation findings are effectively disseminated to the community, to agencies and to the academic community
- Increased access to appropriate, high quality health services
- Community and agency partnerships achieve intended goals and are sustainable
- WACRH has effective systems in place, strong governance, and is accountable for its performance
- A culture of high performance and continuous improvement

**What We Do**

**Innovative Teaching and Learning**

1. Provide intensive teaching and learning opportunities for students and health care professionals
2. Develop, implement and evaluate new models of care provision
3. Influence academic institutions about emerging health needs and appropriate teaching and learning models
4. We work across the rural health pipeline to promote health literacy, and expand options for health career choices

**Research Into Practice**

1. Conduct research on topics that are important to health professionals and to the community, with a particular focus on Aboriginal health, community health and health service delivery
2. Build research capacity of staff and partners, stakeholders agencies and our community
3. Publish research and evaluation, and disseminate findings to communities and to key stakeholders

**Engagement and Advocacy**

1. Form and maintain strategic alliances to influence health policy and practice
2. Collaborate with communities to identify health priorities and models to address them
3. Identify opportunities to engage effectively with the Aboriginal community to address health care disadvantage

**Quality Organisational Processes and Systems**

1. Establish effective policies and procedures
2. Ensure culturally safe and culturally secure work practices
3. Explore systems and IT developments that will support staff and partners
4. Monitor and evaluate our initiatives
Our Priority Areas

WACRH has four priority work areas – Teaching and Learning, Research and Evaluation, Community and Engagement, Organisational Processes and Systems.

These work areas overlap and are interdependent. We achieve outcomes by working collaboratively within our staff team, and with external agencies, partners and the community.
Teaching and Learning

Ultimate Impact:
A skilled and sustainable health workforce in rural and remote WA

Outcomes we influence:
- Graduates and health care professionals have the knowledge and skills to work effectively in diverse communities
- The Community has equitable access to high quality and appropriate health care services

What we do
- Provide intensive teaching and learning opportunities for students and health care professionals
- Develop, implement and evaluate new models of care provision
- Influence academic institutions about emerging health needs and appropriate teaching and learning models
- Develop and adopt new training approaches to ensure skilled health professional for rural and remote areas
- Work across the rural health pipeline to promote health literacy, and expand options for health career choices within our communities
Research and Evaluation

Ultimate Impact:
Evidence into Practice

Outcomes we influence:
- Research and Evaluation findings are translated to inform practice and policy decisions in rural and remote communities
- There is increased visibility of priority health issues in rural and remote communities in local, state and national contexts

What we do
- Conduct research on issues that are important to health professionals and to our communities, with a particular focus on Aboriginal health, public health and health service delivery
- Build the research capacity of staff, agency partners and with our community
- Increase competitive research applications and success to support relevant project and person support activities
- Publish research and evaluation findings and disseminate them to communities, to agencies, to our academic networks and to key decision makers
Community and Engagement

Ultimate Impact:
Appropriate models of health care

Outcomes we influence:

- Rural and Remote communities are engaged and have the capacity to advocate for their health care needs
- Health care models address Aboriginal health care inequities
- Highlight structural and systemic issues that adversely impact on the health and wellbeing of rural populations

What we do

- Form and maintain strategic alliances to influence health policy and practice
- Collaborate with communities to identify health priorities and models to address them
- Engage with Aboriginal people to address their social, structural and health care disadvantage
Organisational Processes and Systems

Ultimate Impact:
Sound governance and accountability to our community

Outcomes we influence:
• A culture of high performance and continuous improvement across WACRH and in our partnerships with others
• Our partnerships increase focus and action on priority health issues in local, state and national contexts

What we do
- Establish and implement effective organisational policies and procedures
- Ensure culturally safe work practices and a culturally secure work environment
- Explore systems and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development that will support staff and partners and contribute to enhanced health communication
- Monitor and evaluate our initiatives
Western Australian Centre for Rural Health

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