



Health Workforce  
Queensland

# Health Works

## Issue #14

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# CEO Message

## Cessation of the John Flynn Placement Program

I wish to express our disappointment at the Federal Government's decision to cease funding of the John Flynn Placement Program from December 2021.

This decision will have an immediate and direct impact on medical students. A raft of evidence supports the importance of early exposure to rural clinical practice and the unique lifestyle opportunities, as a key influence in ultimately choosing a rural medical career in future. This is exactly what the John Flynn placement Program has successfully done for over 20 years.

JFPP Scholars consistently express their appreciation for the program and the opportunity to experience supportive rural immersion placements that provide a balance between experiencing the diversity of rural practice and expanding their hands-on skills and exposure to life in a rural community. This is a key difference between the JFPP and standard University placements, which concentrate almost exclusively on the clinical component of the placement without placing rural practice in the context of rural life.

In the 2020 JFPP survey, over 93 percent of Scholars indicated that the placement had provided a positive or very positive impact on their ambitions to practise in a rural location. Major reasons for that impact, selected by more than half of the Scholars, were the mentor and community relationships they had developed.

The cessation of the JFPP will not only impact medical students. Rural Doctors also value the JFPP as they can see the direct influence the Program has on Scholars. This important mentor role over several years, is integral to the success of the JFPP and these supportive relationships often last for a lifetime as the JFPP Scholars progress through their rural medical career and become mentors themselves. This important opportunity for medical students ceases with the decision to cease the JFPP as there are no other longitudinal immersion programs that provide the same opportunities.

## Continuing Connections

We continue to monitor the current COVID-19 environment. Prior to the recent lockdown I am delighted to say that workshops, conferences, and events have been attended either online or in person successfully, we look forward to this continuing throughout the remainder of 2021.

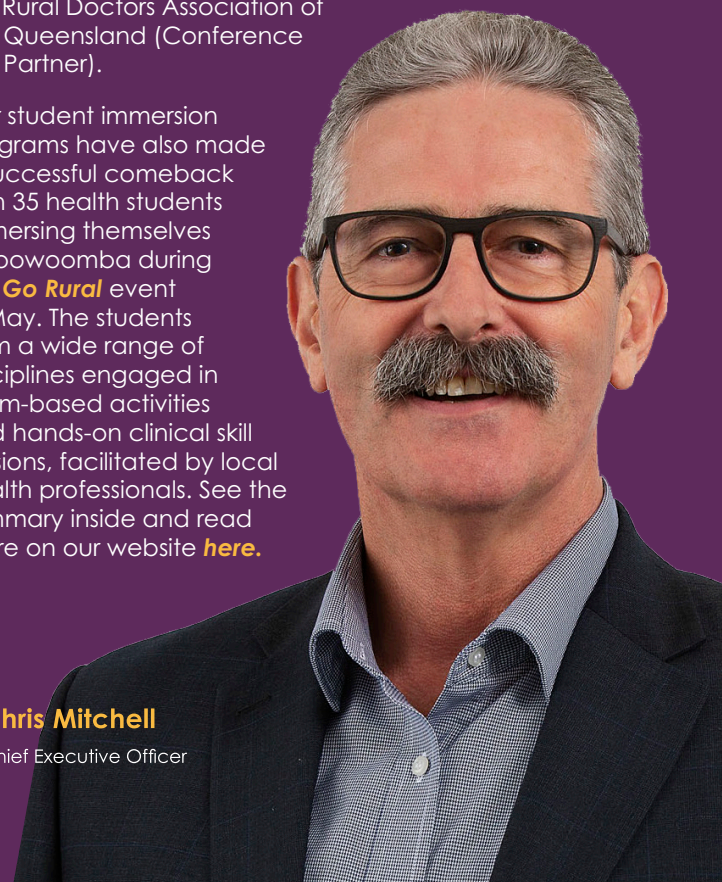
We've had two successful workshops this year so far, the Emergency Cardio Workshop in April and Emergency Paediatric Workshop on the Gold Coast in May. You can read more about these in this edition. Next up is Emergency Trauma Workshop in Cairns in July, then Emergency Mental Health in Brisbane in August. For more info on upcoming workshops go to our [website](#).

It has been wonderful to reconnect in person with our colleagues and be back exhibiting at the following conferences;

- 5th Australian Nursing & Midwifery Conference (trade exhibitors),
- Close the Gap (delegates),
- RACGP Practice Owners (trade exhibitors),
- Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (Future Leaders Partner) and;
- Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (Conference Partner).

Our student immersion programs have also made a successful comeback with 35 health students immersing themselves in Toowoomba during our [Go Rural](#) event in May. The students from a wide range of disciplines engaged in team-based activities and hands-on clinical skill sessions, facilitated by local health professionals. See the summary inside and read more on our website [here](#).

**Chris Mitchell**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Queensland Rural Medical Family Network: Supporting Community

## QRMFN Bursary Helps Rural Practice Nurse Provide Screening Service in Local Community

Meet Bec Telfer, a practice nurse located in Stanthorpe, who identified a gap in cervical screening options for her patients. Bec writes about her experience in receiving a bursary from the Queensland Rural Medical Family Network (QRMFN) and how it has helped the women in her local community and surrounding area.

In 2020 I applied and received an Individual Bursary through QRMFN to complete the **Cervical Screening for Health Professionals** course run in Brisbane from October 29-31, through True (previously Family Planning Queensland). There were five online modules to complete before the course and at least 15 cervical screening tests to perform in the six months afterwards to complete the course.

I work as a Registered Nurse in a GP practice in Stanthorpe. During 2020 there was only one female GP who was working one day a week. I was noticing other GPs' patients were regularly booking in with her to have their cervical screens completed and felt these women needed an extra choice of health care provider for their cervical screening tests. It would also mean the female GP would be freed up to see more of her patients.

To help complete the necessary cervical screening tests I posted on Facebook to recruit volunteers and was overwhelmed at the positive response I received. Many women wrote to me saying they would prefer a nurse to complete their test for them. Several of the volunteers had not been tested for 7-10 years but were prepared to volunteer for me.

I have been very well supported by Dr Claire Walter who has come in on her non-work days to supervise me. Together we have run three short cervical screening clinics and are about to run

a final one in mid-April. It's not always easy to gain access to a choice of health care provider when you live in a rural area. I am very pleased to be able to tell members of my community I have been financially supported by QRMFN to complete this course, as I hope it makes them realise their access to health care is worth investing in.

*Written by Bec Telfer, Practice Nurse at MyFamily Medical, Stanthorpe*



**Bec Telfer**  
Practice Nurse



# Future Workforce: Supporting Health Students

Health Workforce Queensland's Future Workforce team provided sponsorships for students to attend the General Practice Students Network (GPSN) Rural Farm Stay Weekend in October last year.

It was a successful weekend with students from various universities coming together to experience life and work in rural Queensland. Griffith University first-year medical student, Harrison Piaggio was one of the lucky few who participated in this event and we caught up with him to get his thoughts on the program.

## What interested you in the GPSN Rural Farm Stay opportunity?

I was interested in attending the GPSN Rural Farm Stay because as a pre-clinical medical student, I wanted to keep an open mind to all career pathways, and actively attend events for different specialties to see what I found most engaging.

## How has the Farm Stay event benefited you as health student?

The Farm Stay took me by surprise; I was not expecting how engaging I would find the career pathway of a rural generalist. The talks given by the doctors highlighted some incredibly valuable benefits of the pathway: more hands-on training in a rural setting compared to tertiary hospitals; the ability to form a continuation of care in smaller communities; getting to know many of the patients and improving care by being familiar with the patient's history, and the opportunity to build a therapeutic alliance.

These are all aspects of medicine I value highly; knowing that they can be realised as a rural generalist was very insightful.

## Had you considered working in remote and rural Queensland prior to this event?

I had not seriously considered working in remote or rural Queensland prior to the Farm Stay, but since the event, the option has become more tangible and appealing to me.

## What is your favourite memory from the Farm Stay?

*"Walking with someone on their journey through health"*, a line spoken by one of the rural generalist doctors, encapsulates how I aspire to approach my future practice. I also really enjoyed meeting all the medical students from other universities.

## Would you recommend the GPSN Farm Stay events to other health students?

I would absolutely recommend the GPSN Farm Stay to any medical students, whether you're interested in working rurally or not. You might be surprised by how intriguing and appealing the idea of working rurally can be!

Health Workforce Queensland have a number of student immersion programs all designed to experience health care practice and life and remote and rural Queensland. Go to our [website](#) for more information.

### Harrison Piaggio

Griffith University first-year medical student



# Inter-disciplinary Health Students Exposed to 'Go Rural'

35 health students travelled to Toowoomba on Saturday 8 May 2021 to participate in Health Workforce Queensland's (HWQ) annual 'Go Rural' immersion event. Health students from a wide range of disciplines engaged in team-based activities and hands-on clinical skills, facilitated by local health professionals.

*Go Rural* is a one-day rural immersion event which aims to introduce first and second-year health students to the possibilities available to them in rural practice, whilst exposing them to the skills required to work in primary care.

HWQ CEO, Chris Mitchell...

**Immersion events such as Go Rural are vital for students, especially students in the early stages of their tertiary education. It is encouraging to connect with enthusiastic students, learning skills they'd not usually experience until later in their training. Today, all of them have developed an understanding of the possibilities of rural practice and how primary care in rural communities can be a rewarding career.**

The day commenced with a Welcome to Country and an Aboriginal art activity lead by Uncle Colin Jones of Kalkadoon and Nunukul tribal descent. Colin has a rich and diverse knowledge of Aboriginal culture, and over many years has undertaken extensive graduate work.

Next, the day focused on practical skill sessions with topics related to rural health that promote interprofessional collaborative practice. The team of amazing facilitators from our Gold Sponsor, Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) led skills sessions in intravenous cannulation, speech pathology and occupational therapy.

**It was a pleasure to host Go Rural at SQRH Toowoomba this year**

SQRH CEO, Geoff Argus.

**It provided a great opportunity for health students to interact and learn from health professionals who live and breathe rural health. To see 35 students from a range of disciplines working and learning together is at the heart of what we do in creating a highly skilled and interprofessional collaborative rural health workforce.**

At the end of a very full day students were enthusiastic about the experience. Now they have commenced their discovery of rural practice Health Workforce Queensland will continue to engage with them to support their journey into rural careers.

Go Rural is a previous initiative of the Department of Health which has been developed and now delivered by Health Workforce Queensland with support from the event sponsors:



Gold Sponsor

SQRH  
Southern Queensland  
Rural Health

NORTHERN QUEENSLAND  
REGIONAL TRAINING  
HUBS

Silver Sponsor





# Training & Events: Supporting Health Professionals

Our Emergency Paediatrics Workshop held on the Gold Coast in May was a successful event, attended by 14 delegates from around Queensland.

Remote and rural general practitioners are commonly faced with a number of medical scenarios which requires them to be multi-skilled, and in particular paediatric care can be very challenging. The aim of this workshop was to provide rural doctors with cross domain, team-based learning opportunities related to paediatrics.

The workshop consisted of eight sessions across two days and they were really well received with delegates expressing what **'a valuable learning experience'** it was, with an **'excellent interactive format and sharing of director and participant experience'**

and that is was **'hands on, interactive with very clear instructions which can be taken back to clinical settings'**. The workshop was **'another short, high quality learning opportunity, well presented by enthusiastic & knowledgeable educators'**.

Facilitators were Dr Sonia Twigg (Lead), Dr Gary Wood and Ms Louise Dodson. Health Workforce Queensland recruited Dr Gary Wood to his position with Goondir Health Service in St George earlier in the year and it was wonderful to work with him again in this capacity.

Platinum sponsor for the workshop was Integer Financial Group, and Equipment Sponsor was Karl Storz. Thank you to our sponsors, facilitators and delegates for all coming together to make this event a success. For future Health Workforce Queensland workshops please go to our **website**.



## Conference Wrap Up

It's been a busy time with conferences back up and running. Here is a wrap up of recent events.

### Closing the Gap on Indigenous Health, 25-26 May 2021

The gap in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remains unacceptably high. On a national level, the life expectancy gap has persisted at the same level since the introduction of the initial Closing the Gap targets. Prevention and treatment in chronic disease, oral health, eye health, diabetes, alcohol and drug abuse, maternal and infant health and nutrition are some of the most pressing challenges that face health services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

The Closing the Gap on Indigenous Health conference brought together over 35 organisations from the health sector to discuss strategies and activities which are seeking to address the disparity. Over the course of two days, presenters shared how they have kept communities safe during the COVID-19 pandemic; forged partnerships with mainstream health services to deliver better health outcomes and engaged local communities for the more effective conception, development and delivery of health services.

### RACGP Practice Owners Conference, 19-20 Jun 2021

It was a great turnout at the RACGP Practice Owners Conference held in Brisbane in June. The event showcased a dynamic program, and it was so great to be able to network with friends and colleagues new and old. It was an inspiring two days, and the team were busy at our trade stand in the exhibition hall. Our Health Workforce Solutions team connected with delegates and discussed workforce shortages and recruitment opportunities for health professionals within the remote and rural regions of Queensland.

The Health Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) team provided information to delegates about the opportunities available for health professionals living and working in remote and rural communities in Queensland. The HWSP can assist with funding to attend workshops, conferences and training opportunities to maintain and expand their knowledge and skills.

Contact the team for more information or visit our **website**.



### RDAQ Conference, 24-26 Jun 2021

Hundreds of rural doctors and their families attended the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (RDAQ) annual conference, held at the RACV Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast in June. Another excellent event connecting rural doctors, leaders in rural health and medical students from across Queensland.

We are proud to again support the RDAQ conference as conference partner. Our Chair, Dr Ross Maxwell and CEO, Chris Mitchell addressed rural doctors at the health workforce forum. On the day we released the 2020 Minimum Data Set which reports on primary care workforce in Qld. It is also available on our **website**.

We had several staff attend the conference as delegates and had a trade stand in the exhibition hall. We were on hand to provide delegates with information on the Health Workforce Scholarship Program and how this could assist them in attending workshops, training and conferences in the future, and also discussed ways we can help to attract and retain a workforce in remote and rural areas where there is an identified gap.

We are extremely delighted by the professionalism of our Training and Events Team, in the way they expertly supported another great event for RDAQ. We look forward to seeing everyone next year in Gladstone.



Dr Stephen Johnston with new RDAQ president Dr Michael Reinke



# HWQ Staff: Out & About



# HWQ Staff Profile: Tessa Niumata

## Tell us a little about your role at HWQ.

As part of the Health Workforce Solutions team of coordinators, our primary focus is to provide responsive workforce solutions and increase the highly skilled, culturally competent primary healthcare workforce for remote and rural communities that need it most.

As the Regional Coordinator for Darling Downs, West Moreton and Brisbane North, I work closely with the primary health stakeholders in the area to help facilitate workforce placement and retention and supporting rural communities to gain access to good quality primary healthcare services.

## How long have you worked with HWQ?

I've been with Health Workforce Queensland for three and half successful years!

## What is the best thing about being back in the office again, after working from home for 12 months?

The new office is great, and it's good to see it all works as well as it did remotely. Being able to work with my amazing team in person again has been wonderful and having the additional support available in the office also helps make a difference in the work we do.

## Where is the best location you have visited in remote/rural Queensland?

I am very fortunate to be in a role where part of my job is to attend health conferences and visit primary health care practices in Rural Queensland. All locations are unique in their own way, but I would have to say Chinchilla has been my best visit so far and it was the people I met that made the visit more memorable.

## Tell us something that might surprise us about you.

After graduating from University many moons ago, I decided I wanted to do a year of travel and to live in a country I knew nothing about, and being in my early twenties at that time it sounded like a great idea! I decided to move to South Korea and worked as an ESL Teacher for a Middle school on an island called Geoje-do. Being Samoan Kiwi,

living in a foreign country was definitely an eye opener and learning a new culture and another language was challenging but worthwhile. I eventually moved to Seoul and that one year turned into five years! It was probably one of the craziest decisions but an unforgettable experience.

## What was the most recent TV show you watched on Netflix/Stan/TV?

I am that person who has never seen an episode of Game of Thrones. I don't watch much TV, if I do it's the news or sports. I think the last television show would've been reruns of Seinfeld.

## Finally, do you prefer cats or dogs?

I have cat allergies so definitely dogs. My brother has the cutest and most obedient Border Collie Bull Staffy. His name is Bruno and I have pretty much claimed him as mine too.





# Region in Focus

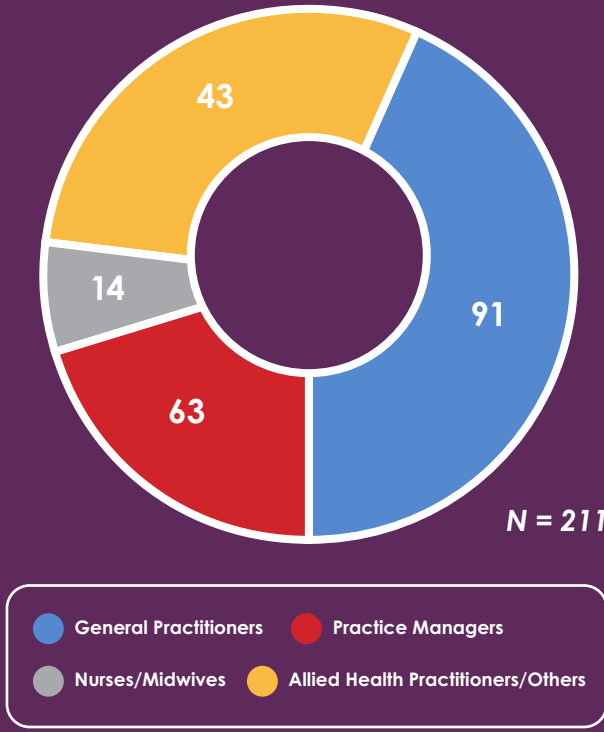
## Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast Data Snapshot

Health Workforce Queensland continues to build an evidence base for remote, rural and regional communities through our annual Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA).

This edition of Health Works focuses on the Central Queensland, Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast region, providing a snapshot of workforce gaps, primary care service gaps, and concerns identified by health practitioners and managers in their communities of practice, as well as perceptions about telehealth.

211 health practitioners/managers from Central Queensland, Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast region responded to the 2021 surveys. The majority of participants were either general practitioners (43%) or practice managers (30%).

Figure 1: Number of CQWBSC Region participants by type



Survey participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements about workforce and service gaps along a sliding scale from '0 = Strongly disagree' to '100 = Strongly agree'. Higher scores indicate a stronger perception of the existence of a workforce or service gap in the community.

Figure 2 shows the highest six workforce gaps for the Central Queensland, Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast region (CQWBSC) as well as the rating for each Hospital & Health Service (HHS) in the region.

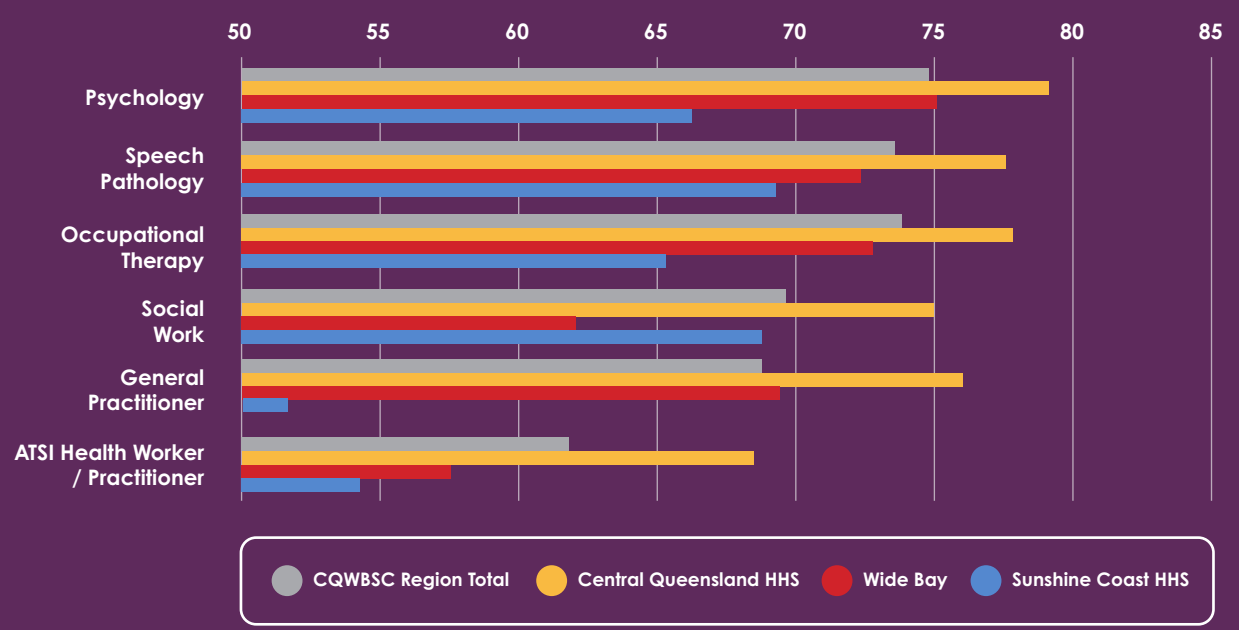


Figure 2: Mean workforce gap rating for CQWBSC Region and each HHS region

# Region in Focus

Overall psychology, speech pathology and occupational therapy had the highest workforce gap rating across the Central Queensland, Wide Bay, & Sunshine Coast region. The highest gap rating in the region was for the psychology workforce in the Central Queensland HHS. The Sunshine Coast HHS had the lowest average gap ratings in all of the CQWBSC region.

The most notable result was the consistently high workforce gap rating for the psychology workforce found throughout the CQWBSC region, Central Queensland HHS, and Wide Bay HHS, but not the Sunshine Coast HHS who instead reported speech pathology as their largest workforce gap. The top six service gap means are provided in Figure 3.

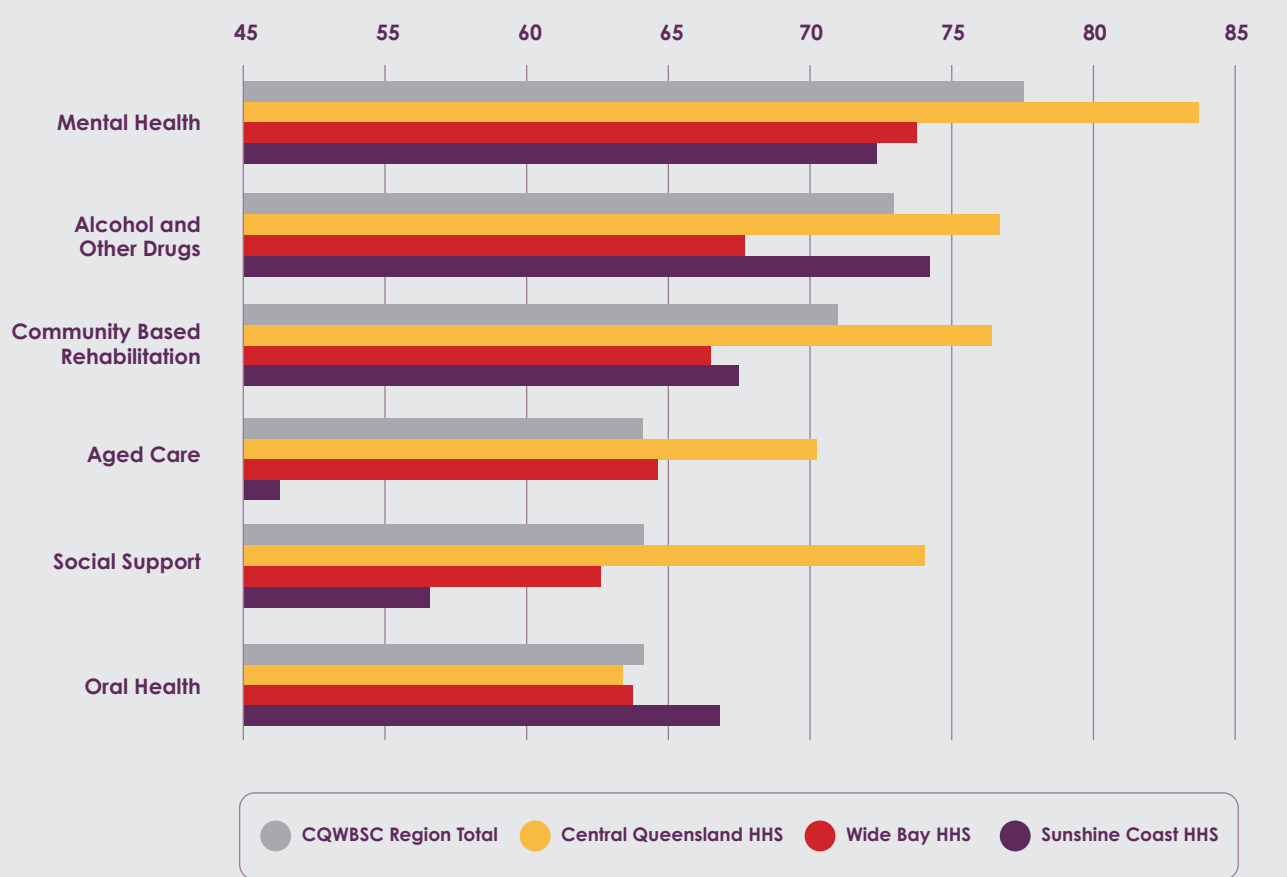


Figure 3: Mean service gap rating for CQWBSC Region and each HHS

The highest service gap means for the CQWBSC region were for mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and community-based rehabilitation services. The Central Queensland HHS had the highest service gap mean for any region for mental health services.

Comments about workforce and service gaps were thematically analysed and the following themes emerged:

- Little/no allied health workforce
- Excessive wait times
- High cost of services



# Region in Focus

“The town that I work in, XXX has two doctors’ surgeries and a pharmacy. For all other disciplines you have to travel to either YYY [town] or ZZZ [town] located approximately a 20- and 45-minute drive, respectively.”

“There is a major lack in Allied health workers in the XXX community. Those who are in the community are booked up for weeks, which reduces quality of care. There are no government funded allied health clinics within the community, only private clinics.”

## Telehealth

The COVID -19 pandemic has seen a large increase in the use of telehealth in primary health care. Practitioners and managers were surveyed about the impact and potential for telehealth. They were asked to respond on a scale from ‘0 = Strongly disagree’ to ‘100 = Strongly agree’ to the following three statements:

1. Telehealth has had a positive impact on my professional life
2. Telehealth has had a positive impact on primary care for community members
3. I would like telehealth to be more widely available for rural/remote practitioners

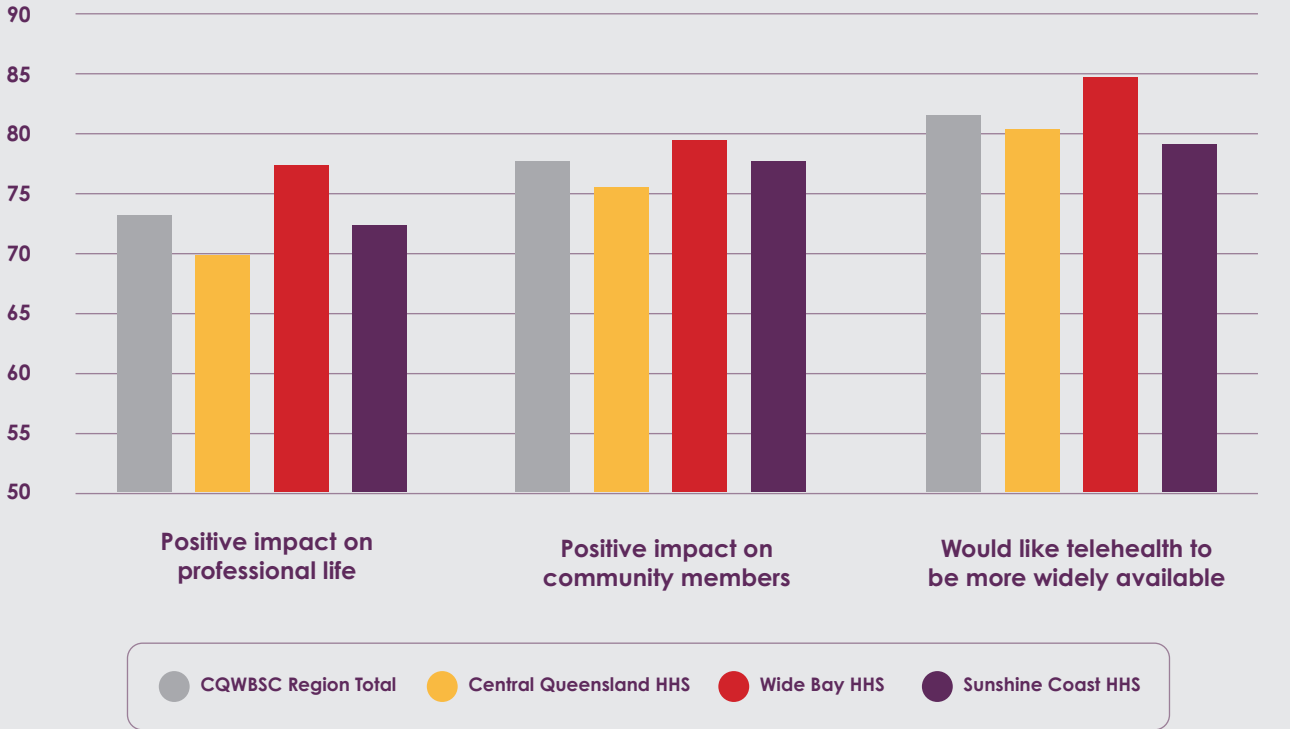


Figure 4: Mean telehealth impact ratings for CQWBSC region and each HHS region

# Region in Focus

Participants were also asked to suggest changes that would improve the provision of primary care via Telehealth in their community(s) and the following themes emerged:

- Improved support for telehealth
- Better connectivity
- Retain COVID MBS billing

“Provide an access point (at a GP clinic or library) for clients to be able to use for [Telehealth] health appointments or have a nurse/ social work or home visit access.”

“After-hours services who have got an after-hours agreement with local practices have been supplying Telehealth bulkbilled consults to Central Queenslanders; often provided by urban doctors who have never seen the patients before and do not have access to their records. This does not improve the health outcomes of these patients in many cases. We would support a change to the MBS descriptor of these items, so urban doctors in need of extra work can no longer service rural/regional patients without moving out of the cities.”

“Continue to be free through PHN - helpful when more patients have better internet. Telephone appointments with regular doctor or for scripts has been terrific.”





# Job Vacancies

Contact us for more information on our current vacancies:  
P: 07 3105 7800 | E: [hws@healthworkforce.com.au](mailto:hws@healthworkforce.com.au)

## General Practitioner

### Innisfail

The opportunity exists for two General Practitioners to make a real difference to health care working directly within an Aboriginal community-controlled health organisation that is owned and managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Your commitment to this clinic will provide vital services to the beautiful Innisfail community, located 1 hour south of Cairns and 3.5 hours north of Townsville. And your backyard will be the Great Barrier Reef, stunning islands, lush rainforests and waterfalls. If you are looking to be part of the change, to help close the gap on health care where it is needed, apply for this unique and important role. Further information can be found on our website.

## Podiatrist

### Mount Isa

Go for the life experience, stay for the lifestyle. Mount Isa is known as the 'Oasis of the Outback' and offers the relaxed lifestyle and close-knit, supportive community of a small town, without sacrificing the amenities of city living. A fantastic opportunity exists for a qualified Podiatrist with a genuine passion for rural/remote health care to join a practice in Mount Isa, where you can actually make a difference. Whether you are looking for a change of scenery or new adventure, this is an opportunity to make a real and valuable contribution. For more information go to our website.

## Registered Nurse

### Emerald

Emerald is located in Central Queensland, a one-hour flight from Brisbane and a three-hour drive west of Rockhampton, with a population of around 35,000. The second clinic of a successful practice was opened in Emerald in February 2020 and they are currently seeking a Registered Nurse to join them. It is a high-end general practice with a strong focus on quality and patient centred care. Accommodation and car allowance is negotiable depending on commitment to the practice. For more information on this position go to our website.

## Physiotherapist

### Warwick

Warwick, located 1.5 hours from Brisbane, is a well-resourced town with a number of excellent schools, medical practices, a vibrant shopping precinct, gyms and sporting clubs. It's a wonderful place to live, 'just down the road' from Brisbane and close to the beautiful wine region of Stanthorpe. A private practice that has been servicing Warwick for over 40 years, and is also the largest Allied Health practice in the Southern Darling Downs, requires another Physiotherapist to join the team. To find out more go to our website.

## Emergency Mental Health Workshop

14 - 15 August 2021, Brisbane

Level 4, 348 Edward Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

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