



Making a difference

Partnering with rural and regional communities towards better health



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Stands for
purpose



Bridging the health divide

Roughly one-third of Australia's population, around seven million people, live in rural, regional and remote areas with some of the lowest population densities in the world.

People living in rural, regional and remote Australia typically don't enjoy the same high standard of health and wellbeing as those who live in the cities, or the same access to health services and health-related infrastructure.

As a university with campuses across rural and regional NSW and with extensive health networks spanning much of the state, the University of Wollongong is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of people living in rural, regional and remote areas and has become a leader in this space.

The University of Wollongong has demonstrated this commitment from the training of doctors and nurses with placement programs in regional and rural settings to world-class research and Australia-first programs targeting Indigenous health, early childhood, ageing, dementia and mental health.

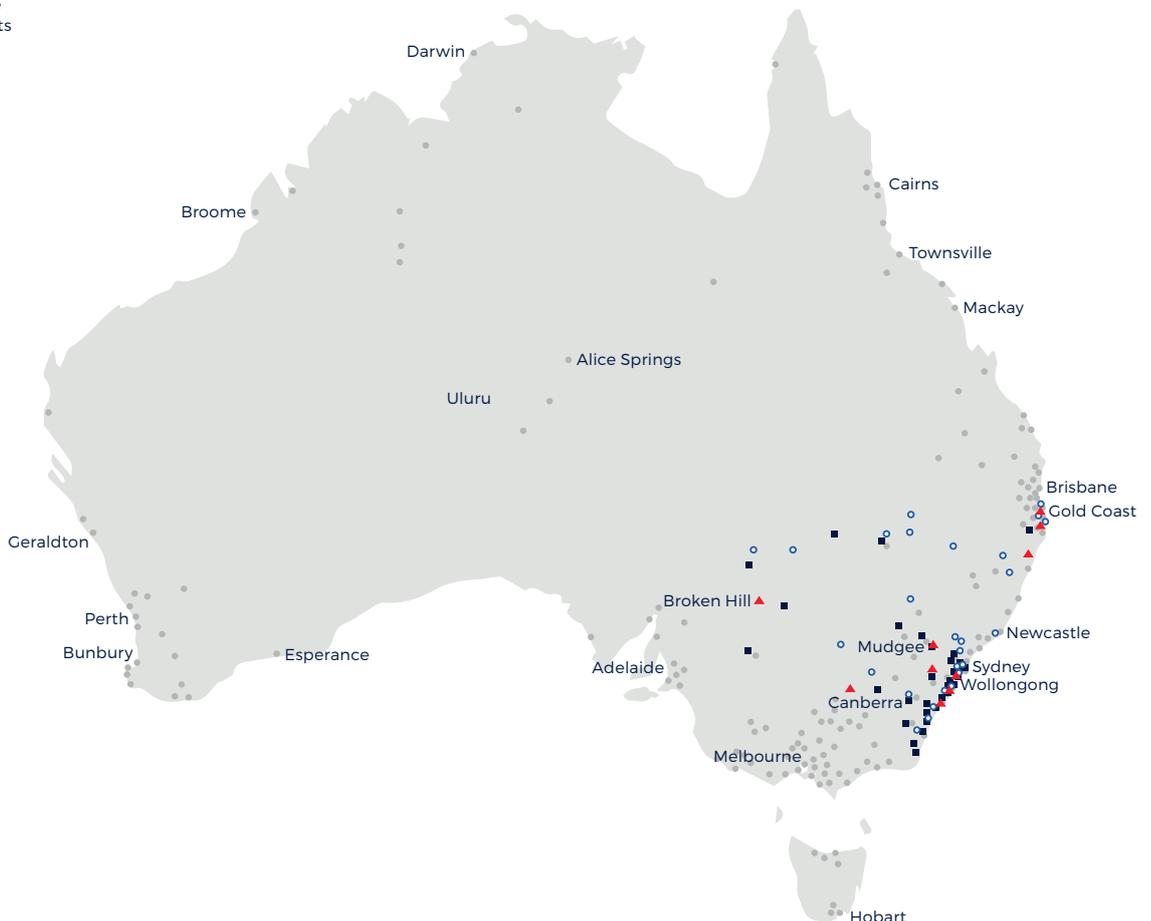
The University of Wollongong believes that an important part of improving rural and regional health is to ensure that the people affected most – communities, patients and their families – are included in the process. That's why we partner with an extensive network of communities and health providers right across NSW and across a range of settings and disciplines including general practices, hospitals, allied, community and Aboriginal health services.

Our Reach: Key regional, rural and remote health initiatives

- ▲ **DOCTORS:**
Graduate School of Medicine regional and rural placements
- **NURSES:**
School of Nursing regional and rural placements
- **EARLY CHILDHOOD:**
Early Start education and care centre partners
- **DEMENTIA:**
National education and consultancy projects

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE HUBS

- Illawarra
- Shoalhaven
- Milton / Ulladulla
- Southern Highlands
- Murrumbidgee
- Mudgee
- Broken Hill
- Grafton / Maclean
- Lismore
- Murwillumbah
- Forbes / Orange



In addition to the sites indicated on the map for medical training, during Phase 4 of the program, many students of the Graduate School of Medicine undertake elective placements in other rural sites Australia-wide.

Securing a stable medical workforce



Delivering doctors for regional and rural NSW

The University of Wollongong's Graduate School of Medicine was established in 2007 with a core focus on training doctors with the capacity and desire to work in regional, rural and remote communities.

The Graduate School of Medicine offers a unique and innovative medical education program that helps equip our graduates to care for their future patients in more effective and meaningful ways, and also makes a major contribution to addressing the maldistribution and critical workforce shortages in some of Australia's rural and regional settings.

The University of Wollongong is the only medical school in NSW whose admissions process places such a strong weight on outstanding academic achievement, personal qualities and experiences and a proven commitment to rural and regional communities. In addition, we prioritise students with a rural background, which results in almost 70 per cent of our students at the Graduate School of Medicine having a rural origin, compared to the national average of around 25 per cent.

Operating from two campuses – Wollongong (regional) and Nowra in the Shoalhaven (rural), all students at the Graduate School of Medicine undertake a portion of their study in a rural setting.

In fact, the Graduate School of Medicine is the only medical school in Australia to give all students the opportunity to undertake a 12-month longitudinal clinical placement in a regional or rural setting (Phase 3 program). The longitudinal clinical placements are offered in one of 11 regional

and rural communities across NSW, stretching from the Northern Rivers to the South Coast, and as far west as Broken Hill, with some even working as part of the Rural Flying Doctor Service.

As part of their longitudinal placement, students undertake a research project on a local rural or regional health issue. Results from these projects have provided evidence that has been used by clinicians to modify and improve their own practice as well as supplying important information to community members allowing them to better manage and improve their own health.

The University of Wollongong provides scholarships and incentives to support students to undertake rural clinical placements and to support Indigenous students progress through the course. The University also offers an alternative entry pathway for Indigenous applicants and three Commonwealth supported places dedicated annually to Indigenous students.

WHAT SETS US APART

- UOW attracts a higher proportion of rural applicants than any other NSW medical school.
- UOW is the only medical school in Australia where all students undertake a 12 month longitudinal clinical placement integrated across community and hospital in a rural (two-thirds of students) or regional (one-third of students) setting (Phase 3 part of the program).
- UOW has a network of 473 Honorary Clinical Academics in rural and

regional areas.

- All students undertake sessional immersion placements with Indigenous community groups during their first Phase of the course and up to six students can undertake their Phase 3 longitudinal community based (12 month) clinical placement from a base in an Aboriginal Medical Service.

PROGRAM SUCCESS

- 464 students (six cohorts) have now graduated from this program with the Graduate School of Medicine producing quality doctors and addressing the shortage of healthcare professionals in rural and regional Australia.
- UOW produces a significant proportion of graduates each year who elect to undertake an internship in a rural or regional area, with the intention of completing further training or clinical practice in a rural or regional area (an average of 61 per cent of our six graduating cohorts).
- 75 per cent of UOW graduating students would like to practice outside urban metropolitan regions upon completion of their training.
- UOW has contributed directly or through collaborative partnerships to over \$8 million in rural and regional infrastructure to support clinical education and training. This includes a direct contribution of approx. \$3.5 million into rural and regional medical practices to increase their capacity to facilitate medical training.



Addressing the need for nurses

The University of Wollongong has earned a proud reputation for nursing education and research since the School of Nursing was established in 1991. The University's School of Nursing delivers bachelor and advanced nursing degrees from five sites across predominantly regional and rural NSW – with campuses at Wollongong, Shoalhaven, Southern Sydney, Bateman's Bay and Bega.

The University of Wollongong's School of Nursing is committed to strengthening the rural and regional nursing workforce and is in fact the only school of nursing with a footprint across most of the southern half of NSW. By providing the opportunity for people to study nursing and undertake placements in regional and rural areas, the University of Wollongong is widening participation and encouraging a stronger rural nursing workforce with people able to study and work locally.

The University's School of Nursing has an extensive network of partnerships with communities across NSW working with a network of local nurses to help train and mentor the next generation of nurses. All of our nursing students have the opportunity to undertake placements in most regional areas of NSW and in rural NSW including Broken Hill, Bourke and Brewarrina. This

encourages our graduate nurses to continue working in a rural or regional setting.

The University's School of Nursing has continued to grow steadily since opening in 1991 and has seen over 6,000 nurses graduate through our nursing degrees. Our graduates enjoy an excellent reputation both academically and clinically and excellent employment prospects with 98.8 per cent in full-time employment within three months of graduating.

ADVANCED NURSING AND MIDWIFERY TRAINING IN RURAL CENTRES

The University's School of Nursing is part of a NSW-first regional clinical school partnership to advance clinical research and education in rural areas.

The Cooma Rural Nursing and Midwifery Clinical School is a partnership between Southern NSW Local Health District, Charles Sturt University and the University of Wollongong which began in 2014. The Clinical School provides opportunities for clinical nurses and midwives to engage with two university partners to promote advanced nursing practice through clinical teaching projects, education and clinical research. Importantly the initiatives undertaken as part of the Cooma Clinical School are expected to benefit the community by improving health outcomes, and securing a rural workforce that is responsive to local conditions and prospective needs.

SHARP - STUDENT HEALTH ALLIANCE FOR RURAL POPULATIONS

Student Health Alliance for Rural Populations (SHARP) is the University of Wollongong's rural health club designed to encourage students from multiple disciplines in health and medicine to seek work in rural, regional and remote communities upon completion of their degree.

SHARP is a student-run club with a membership of over 1,000 students studying nursing, medicine, and allied health with a common interest in rural, remote and Indigenous health.

SHARP provides opportunities for students who may never have experienced working in a rural setting to gain an early and positive rural experience and nurture their enthusiasm for bettering health outcomes for people outside of major cities.

SHARP activities range from rural high school visits, Indigenous festivals, rural road trips, social activities and mental health first aid programs to supporting students on rural placements.

As one of 28 member Rural Health Clubs of the National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN), SHARP members are able to not only join in on their local club's events, but are eligible to attend national activities.

Key strengths in regional health

Early Start: Giving children the best start in life

Early Start is a unique combination of community outreach, education and research initiatives brought together under one roof with the aim of helping children flourish and realise their potential.

Early Start aims to break the cycle of disadvantage for vulnerable children, inform professional practice, influence policy development and have a real impact on the lives of children, young people and families, particularly from regional, rural, remote and disadvantaged communities.

TACKLING DISADVANTAGE

Early Start is committed to long term partnerships with 41 early childhood education and care centres across NSW and the ACT, some of which are often isolated and under-resourced and serve some of the most disadvantaged communities. They range in location from Broken Hill in the West, to Tweed Heads in the North, to Eden in the South. These Engagement Centres are helping to inform and pioneer innovation in the early years and translate Early Start's research into practice.

Early Start is connecting children and educators in these centres with resources, technology bundles and experiences they would otherwise find challenging to access.

EARLY START RESEARCH INSTITUTE (ESRI)

More than 135 researchers and students at the Early Start Research Institute are engaged in interdisciplinary, evidence-based research across the spectrum of children's educational, physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.

With a focus on tackling the cycle of disadvantage that families in regional, rural and remote areas face, our research is making a difference to the lives of children in Australia and around the world.

Our projects have attracted more than \$7 million in research funding over the past three years with about 50 per cent of ESRI research involving staff and children in our Engagement Centres.

Key research includes a National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia funded project to increase physical activity among pre-school children from disadvantaged communities. Another key research project involves working with Movember Australia to develop a new program – Ahead of the Game – to improve mental health in adolescent males through community sport.

AUSTRALIA'S ONLY CHILDREN'S MUSEUM – EARLY START DISCOVERY SPACE

Early Start Discovery Space is a purpose-built, hands-on learning space that allows children, carers and educators to explore, create and play together. It's Australia's only children's museum, and the only one in the world on a university campus.

Open to the public six days a week, the Discovery Space is accessible to all and uses technology to connect to rural, remote and disadvantaged education and care centres, offering workshops and virtual tours, as well as bringing children into the centre for hands-on learning through play experiences.

Ageing and dementia

Dementia is one of the leading causes of chronic poor health and disability in Australia. Although the age structure varies between regions and differs from metropolitan populations, the number of people with dementia in rural and remote areas of Australia is considerable and will also increase in the coming decades with the ageing of Australia's population.

The University of Wollongong is committed to tackling the issue of dementia and researchers across a number of University faculties are working together on research projects and initiatives from dementia and driving to creating dementia-friendly communities.

The University of Wollongong also offers specific courses for dementia health care including a Graduate Certificate and Master in Gerontology and Rehabilitation Studies and Graduate Certificate and Master Science in Dementia Care – all of which can be delivered fully by distance.

DEMENTIA TRAINING STUDY CENTRES

The University of Wollongong is one of five Dementia Training Study Centres in Australia. Established in 2006 by the Australian Government, the Study Centres were created to strengthen the capacity of health and aged care sectors to provide appropriate evidence-based prevention and early intervention, assessment, treatment and care for people with dementia.

For the past six years the Australian Government has funded the NSW/ACT Dementia Training Study Centre at the University of Wollongong to deliver a national education and consultancy service aimed at providing residential aged care facilities and health care facilities with evidence-based information on the design of new and refurbished environments for people with dementia. This has seen researchers at the centre work with regional, rural and remote communities across Australia to support people with dementia.

DEMENTIA AND AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The University of Wollongong is leading a bold new research project in conjunction with Alzheimer's Australia aimed at creating dementia-friendly communities throughout Australia.

The project brings together University researchers from diverse fields, including public health, geography, medicine, information systems and technology, to change the way people with dementia interact with their social and physical environments and boost their quality of life.

A pilot project has been conducted in the South Coast town of Kiama and the learnings will be scaled and applied more broadly to rural and regional communities across Australia.

The multidisciplinary initiative has seen the development of Our Place – an interactive website that enables users to map dementia-friendly places in their area and share ideas about places that could be improved.

The University of Wollongong is also a member of the Age-Friendly Illawarra Alliance – an alliance of business, government and community organisations to help make Illawarra communities more age-friendly.

Improving Indigenous health

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face a unique set of historical and social factors which continue to impact on their health and wellbeing. The University of Wollongong is committed to improving the health of Australia's Aboriginal population and to training the next generation of Indigenous health professionals.

For over 10 years, the University of Wollongong has conducted the Bachelor and Masters of Health Science (Indigenous Health) and has now added a Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Trauma Recovery. Our doctors and nurses can undertake placements in Indigenous communities with all medical students undertaking sessional immersion placements with Indigenous community groups during their first Phase of the course.

The University of Wollongong has graduated a number of Indigenous Doctors through the Graduate School of Medicine and has established a scholarship program (of up to 10 scholarships) for Aboriginal students in years 11 and 12 to support Aboriginal students interested in a career in science, medicine or health.

ABORIGINAL CHRONIC DISEASE CARE PATHWAYS RESEARCH

Aboriginal Australians are known to experience chronic diseases at much higher rates than other Australians within the population. However little is known about the impact of chronic conditions on Aboriginal people, their families and communities or about how chronic disease is being managed in the Aboriginal community. In September 2014 the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) approved funding for an Aboriginal led research team at the University of Wollongong to conduct the 'Aboriginal Chronic Disease Care Pathways Research Project'. The research was conducted over an 18 month period from September 2014 to March 2016.

The research explored the factors that impact on Aboriginal people's experience of chronic conditions and the management of those conditions within the local health system, in order to inform improvements in care planning across the care continuum.

The research will contribute to the planning and delivery of services which are effective, accessible, acceptable and appropriate to Aboriginal people within the region.

AUSTRALIAN-FIRST TRAUMA RECOVERY PROGRAM

The University of Wollongong has developed an Australia-first Indigenous Trauma Recovery program offered for the first time in 2016.

The program provides health professionals and others working within the social services, education and justice sectors with the knowledge and skills to effectively address multiple layers of trauma across Aboriginal and other Indigenous communities.

It's the first program of its kind in Australia and follows research highlighting the alarming amount of trauma resulting from colonisation processes and the government policies which affected, and still affect, the lives of Aboriginal people in Australia.

A \$200,000 scholarship fund was announced by the Federal Government to allow more students to study the program.

INDIGENOUS CAMP TO ENCOURAGE ABORIGINAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The University of Wollongong continues to run a summer camp for Indigenous teenagers aimed at increasing Indigenous participation in tertiary education and the health workforce.

In Australia, only five per cent of the Aboriginal population attends university, compared to almost 24 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.

The camp, hosted by the University of Wollongong's School of Medicine, is supported by the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) and helps build confidence in Indigenous youth considering university.



Mental health

Regional, rural and remote communities face complex challenges in terms of mental health care and generally have less access to services than urban centres. The University of Wollongong recognises this issue and is undertaking a number of innovative programs to address mental health issues outside of the major cities and is investing in providing mental health services to the communities that need it most.

The University of Wollongong is also tackling mental health issues in the Illawarra as a member of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaboration.

MAKING MOVES ON MENTAL HEALTH

A joint initiative by the University of Wollongong and Shoalhaven City Council is tackling the issue of mental health and wellbeing in the Shoalhaven area by establishing an innovative mental health care facility providing patient-centred, holistic care.

The new purpose-built \$2.5 million MIND the GaP facility to be located at the University of Wollongong's Shoalhaven Campus in Nowra will address the high rate of mental health needs in the Shoalhaven community, particularly amongst younger people, and will focus on improving the prevention, early recognition and treatment of mental health issues, including suicide prevention.

The initiative is jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government's National Stronger Regions Fund and the University of Wollongong. The facility will be led by Shoalhaven City Council and the University of Wollongong, delivered in partnership with Lifeline South Coast, Lifeline Australia Research Foundation, Coordinare, Nowra Medicare Local, the Illawarra and Shoalhaven Local Health District, Noah's Shoalhaven and the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute.

AUSTRALIAN FIRST CAMP TO TACKLE MENTAL ILLNESS

The University of Wollongong has developed an innovative and award-winning Australian-first, Recovery Camp aimed to enhance the lives of people with mental illness while educating future health professionals.

In its fourth year, the five-day therapeutic adventure recreation camp pairs people with a lived experience of serious and enduring mental illness, such as schizophrenia, depression and bipolar disorder, with nursing, psychology, dietetics and exercise physiology students from the University of Wollongong.

The Recovery Camp develops essential life skills not only in training to become a health practitioner but to widen student's views and perspectives towards mental health in general.

Research excellence

The University of Wollongong has built an international reputation for world-class research and our researchers continue to make an impact locally and globally. In the past 15 years our research program has attracted almost \$1 billion in competitive funding for impact driven research from new drugs to treat antibiotic resistance to approaching Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder drug-free.

ILLAWARRA HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

IHMRI is an independent health and medical research institute based at the University of Wollongong. We are building a nationally and internationally-recognised centre of health and medical research targeting regionally-relevant health improvements through novel treatments, better clinical practice and preventative health.

IHMRI is committed to excellence and innovation in health and medical research supporting better health services and a healthier Illawarra community. IHMRI is focused on linking academic and clinician researchers around common health and medical issues, and strives for research findings that can be rapidly translated into clinical innovation and practical improvements to health services for the Illawarra region and beyond.

HEALTH TRACK STUDY

The HealthTrack Illawarra-Shoalhaven Healthy Lifestyle Study is an initiative of the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute.

Developed by a multi-disciplinary group of University of Wollongong and Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) researchers and health experts, the study is testing a 'novel' approach to weight loss. In fact, HealthTrack brings researchers with expertise in nutrition, psychology, public health, exercise physiology, medicine, social sciences and statistics together with members of the local community to look at the most effective approach to weight loss over the long term.

Over 360 Illawarra Shoalhaven residents aged between 25 and 54 have been recruited for this innovative study.

UOW AT A GLANCE

Top 20

of universities under 50 years old¹

Top 2%

of universities in the world²

5-Star

rating for Getting a Full-Time Job³

Top 1%

for graduates as rated by global employers⁴

Highest rated uni

in Australia⁵

¹ 17th in the world – QS Top 50 Under 50 Rankings 2015 ² 243rd in the world – QS World University Rankings 2015/2016 ³ 2016 Good Universities Guide ⁴ QS World University Graduate Employers Survey 2015/2016 ⁵ Most star ratings in the Good Universities Guide 2016 and highest percentage across the key 12 categories in the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) 2015

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