

# Monash Rural Health

## Research Development Strategy 2019 -2022

This document outlines strategies to enhance the MRH research profile, and increase the positive impact we have on our rural communities. The implementation of these strategies will pave the way to a financially sustainable research program that not only has a tangible impact on the health of rural communities in Australia, but also acknowledges the diversity of skills within the School, and provides both individual and team opportunity to grow.

Research goals in current strategic plan	Parameter 5 in the RHMT	Faculty of MNHS requirements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To foster an environment in which relevant, collaborative, multidisciplinary research is undertaken and published, thereby enhancing the strengths of the School</li> <li>2. To maximise the School’s research productivity by fostering collaboration and avoiding duplication through the sharing of research resources. To build the capacity of staff, students and members of partner organisations to undertake research. To grow research funding through an expanded approach to grant procurement</li> <li>3. To promote and conduct relevant research in rural and Indigenous communities. To build the graduate research program, with increased enrolment, improved supervisor support and optimal completion rate</li> <li>4. To scope and develop global research partnerships and collaborations with institutions whose outcomes and objectives align with MRH research goals</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support research into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural health workforce development (including retention and recruitment strategies)</li> <li>• Rural training strategies</li> <li>• Innovative rural service delivery models to enable the provision of health services to meet community needs</li> <li>• Health issues directly impacting on rural people, with a focus on benefitting communities within the University’s catchment area through the delivery of better health services</li> <li>• Improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Support rural research opportunities for students in accordance with curriculum requirements</li> <li>3. Collect and maintain data on Rural Workforce outcomes resulting from rural training activity through the RHMT program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish tracking systems for graduates or utilise national data collections</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Monash University is pursuing research excellence and innovation and in its strategic plan “...aspires to leadership in all areas of research activity, and advocacy for policy – locally, nationally and internationally – to improve health and social outcomes and health inequalities.”</p> <p>Academic staff are required to meet the performance standards in two of the three indicators to satisfy requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research Output <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Cumulative impact factor</li> <li>ii. Proportion of Q1 journal</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Research Income <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Basic (cat 1)</li> <li>ii. Applied (cat 2, 3,4)</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. HDR Supervision <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Supervision load</li> <li>ii. Student count</li> <li>iii. Completions</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

Figure 1: Existing frameworks that formed the basis of this research development strategy

In developing these research strategies, we synthesise and build upon the research goals outlined in the current strategic plan, our research obligations under the RHMT, the University's pursuit of excellence, innovation and leadership in research "...to improve health and social outcomes and health inequalities" and to be consistent with the performance standards outlined by the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

To increase our research outputs, build our profile, attract quality graduate research students and attract and develop highly competent researchers we will focus on four intersecting pillars:

- (i) defining and developing our research focus;
- (ii) valuing and investing in our people;
- (iii) strengthening our collaborations and developing our partnerships; and
- (iv) diversifying and building our funding sources.



*Figure 2: The four major pillars of this research development framework*

# 1 DEFINING AND DEVELOPING OUR AREAS OF RESEARCH FOCUS

## 1.1 Rationale

Having a stronger focus on fewer areas of research will encourage the growth of teams, increasing the capacity within research groups to achieve greater impact.

## 1.2 Key Objectives

- To identify our key areas of research strength which align with rural and regional health priorities.
- To build multidisciplinary teams and collaborations around our existing areas of research strength (research themes), resulting in greater research output, more successful funding applications and ultimately greater impact on improving health outcomes in rural and regional settings.

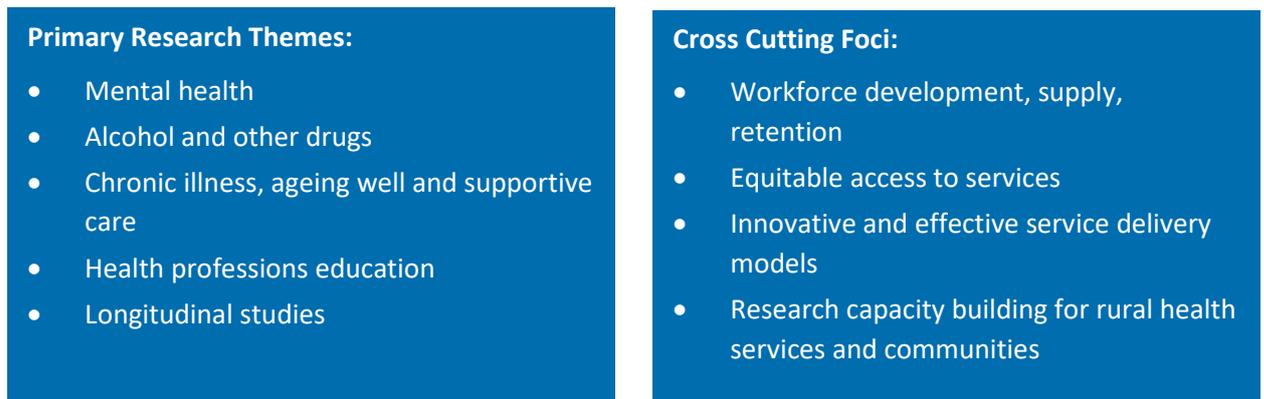


Figure 3: The primary research themes and cross cutting foci which form the basis of this research development framework

The genesis of the themes occurred through a desk review of current projects, human resources and funding, and are aligned with current areas of community need, our RHMT obligations and existing School strategy.

The activities that underpin this document were developed based on multiple consultations with the MRH Research Committee and Executive, along with input from staff consultations at multiple sites across the MRH footprint.

### 1.3 Strategies to support development of themes:

- Identify theme lead(s) to play a coordination and strategizing role to grow and synthesise the School's research and opportunities in that topic area
- Conduct an inventory of research skills within the School, and make this inventory available to all
- Develop ways in which less experienced/less engaged researchers can be invited into a project within a research theme and/or be supported to develop their skills and research track record
- Establish an avenue of funding to support the stipends of graduate research students recruited specifically for projects within the themes
- Specifically recruit graduate research students and BMedSci projects into themes, where possible
- Fund small internal grant rounds to kick-start new intra-school collaborations aligned with primary research themes and cross cutting foci.
- Use these themes as a platform to think beyond "place-based" research and build our small projects up into larger collaborative projects with greater impact and meaning
- Continually seek synergy between the themes and between researchers, encouraging innovation
- Hold an annual research symposium showcasing research within each theme and encouraging collaboration and discussion



THE AIM IS FOR EVERYONE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT TO  
ACHIEVE THEIR RESEARCH POTENTIAL AT MONASH RURAL HEALTH

## 2 VALUING AND INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE

MRH currently have 46 staff who are listed as Teaching and Research by the FMNHS, spread across sites spanning a wide geographical footprint. All sites have a primary focus of clinical teaching, and the staff at MRH have a diverse range of skills and research interests, and various levels of research experience. Our research strategy acknowledges this diversity, and aims to outline a series of initiatives that will support individual and team growth. Our strategy also acknowledges that the FMNHS requires the School and staff to reach and maintain at least the minimum performance standards for research at their level. Considerable effort has been made within this strategy to create a supportive environment for all researchers, including a focus not only on increasing support for already productive researchers, but also on developing research capacity for people with limited experience and previous opportunity.

### 2.1 Rationale

- People who feel valued within their role at work will be more likely to contribute the discretionary effort required to make research projects achieve meaningful and high impact outcomes in a timely manner
- Investing in our research staff will increase our capacity, and create an environment in which staff and students want to work
- Staff who are new to research will be more likely to consider continuing their research career in a supportive environment

### 2.2 Objectives

- To provide a supportive environment for research staff at all levels of experience
- To ensure that staff and students within MRH feel that contributions they are making to the research program at MRH are valued and acknowledged
- To ensure that staff and students at MRH have access to appropriate professional development opportunities



## 2.3 Strategies to value and invest in our people

- The professional development review process will be strengthened, ensuring that individual staff are fully aware of their research responsibilities, increasing the emphasis on supporting individual research involvement, and devising strategies for targeted improvement
- Barriers to research that many teaching-focussed staff experience will be explored and workshopped, leading to initiatives to break down barriers, creating opportunity and capacity to be involved in research
- Our renewed research themes will provide a framework for less experienced researchers to learn from those with more experience. We will actively seek to link people together where synergies exist
- We will review the support offered to early and mid-career researchers within the School, and adjust according to need
- We will ensure our Graduate Research students continue to receive adequate support, enjoy their candidature and complete in a timely manner
- Opportunities, such as writing workshops, will be created to encourage timely publication of research findings
- We will acknowledge and celebrate the research success of our staff, through MRH School announcements, newsletters and research symposia
- More effort will be made to ensure that the results and impact of research conducted by groups and individuals within the School are publicised internally, through our seminar series, but also through other means
- We will create an annual publication prize, and potentially other prizes, such as supervision and capacity building prizes
- We will establish a more creative forum for ideas sharing, with the aim of providing greater mentorship around the development and progression of ideas to projects, grants and outputs
- We will continue to provide support for conference attendance and other professional development opportunities
- The newly formed Research Directorate will provide support for the development of ideas, and the preparation of grants, proposals and tenders
- We will be inclusive and celebrate the diversity of our staff and students

# 3 STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING OUR COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

## 3.1 Rationale

As a small School, we acknowledge that our research strategy requires multiple collaborations and partnerships to progress our research agenda of improving health outcomes for people in our catchment and other non-metropolitan settings.

## 3.2 Objectives

- To strategically align with research partners with the same values and objectives as us, both within Monash University and externally
- To develop partnerships with researchers and organisations in a mutually beneficial manner
- To develop and strengthen partnerships with health services in our catchment area, continuing to build capacity and answer questions of clinical need for rural Australians
- To investigate and develop strategic partnerships with industry partners

## 3.3 Strategies to support the development of collaborations and partnerships

- Building on our collaborative relationships with health services, we will work to develop a structure around key relationships to facilitate communication, productivity and

achievement of mutual research outcomes and capacity building objectives

- We recognise the importance of increasing our partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, in order to support Aboriginal led, and culturally relevant, safe and wanted research.
- We will continue to learn from and collaborate with the Gukwonderuk Indigenous Engagement Unit at the FMNHS
- We will conduct a scoping exercise to identify other industry partners who may be strategic collaborators
- We will listen to the communities in which we work, and aim to work collaboratively and inclusively with them
- We will foster existing and develop further our academic partnerships, building upon existing collaborative research portfolios
- To ensure our research is recognised by policy makers, is transferable and of use to our communities, we will continue to work closely with Local, State and Federal governments
- We will engage with social media and cloud infrastructure for information sharing and the promotion and circulation of research success stories and important research findings

## 4 DIVERSIFYING OUR FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE RESEARCH INCOME

### 4.1 Rationale

Research funding from traditional sources (NHMRC, ARC) in Australia is extremely competitive and highly reliant on very strong collaborative track records, something that not all researchers within MRH currently have. We recognise that we need to strategically consider our best approaches to developing a sustainably funded research program, thinking more broadly than traditional funding sources.

### 4.2 Objectives

To develop an approach to funding that is realistic for our current capacity, with an ambitious view to growth.

### 4.3 Strategies to support increased funding

- Building research teams within our School will bring a broader skill set together, and also build joint track records which, in turn, will lead to greater grant success.
- We will engage with Monash partners and FMNHS (including MRFF) in our areas of research strength, aiming to increase our voice, influence and access to and competitiveness for funding initiatives.
- Developing stronger relationships with support structures offered within FMNHS and Monash University will facilitate our grant development process
- We will build on our capacity to be competitive for evaluation and other consultancy tenders that may lead to research opportunities aligned to our strategy.
- We aim for this renewed structure to be more supportive for people wanting to work towards fellowship applications.
- We will look for innovative ways to attract and support graduate research students with scholarships.

#### Document history

Version Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
1.0	21 May 2019	Executive Committee	Strategy approved by Executive Committee

MRH Research Development Strategy_FINAL.docx	Version: 1.0
Contact: Darryl Maybery	Page 8 of 8