



MONASH  
University

MONASH  
RURAL  
HEALTH

# RESEARCH STRATEGY

2024-2027



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

MONASH UNIVERSITY acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which our teaching sites are located. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

Photograph: Warisa Somsuphangsri



**PROFESSOR SHANE BULLOCK**  
Head of School  
Monash Rural Health

## MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Monash Rural Health is an established leader in meaningful health-related research that promotes thriving regional, rural and remote (hereafter referred to as rural) communities. We are committed to conducting high quality and impactful research that reflects the values of our School, Faculty and University.

In partnering with local community organisations, health services and researchers from both within Monash and external to it, we are investigating important issues relevant to rural health. Our priorities are the recruitment and training of the rural health workforce, the utility of innovative models of care for rural healthcare delivery, and the health outcomes of rural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In this document our research priorities are stated and the implementation of the strategy is laid out in detail. The aims of the strategy are to build greater research capacity within the School, grow and develop our research partnerships and publicly celebrate our research achievements.

On behalf of the School, I am very pleased to present to you the Monash Rural Health Research Strategy 2024-2027.

## RESEARCH STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Our research priorities are aligned with the:

- Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program and the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network (MDMSN);
- Impact 2030: Monash University Strategic Plan 2021-2030;
- Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences Research Plan; and
- Monash Rural Health 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

Our vision is to conduct research to improve the health outcomes of the population living in rural Australia.

## RESEARCH PRIORITIES

### Rural health workforce and training

The recruitment and retention of health professionals into rural areas remain challenging. Overall, the Australian health workforce is inequitably distributed. Compared to the distribution of the population and the level of healthcare need, people in rural areas have poor access to healthcare services. Specific factors affecting the rural health workforce include fewer career opportunities, limited infrastructure and resources, and geographic and professional isolation. A better understanding of these unique challenges will allow for tailored solutions that address the specific needs of rural health professionals and inform health workforce policy. Our focus will be on conducting research into:

- factors that improve recruitment and retention of the rural health workforce; and
- training and development of rural health professionals.

### Health service delivery models in rural areas

Challenges for health service delivery in rural areas are caused by limited healthcare facilities including diagnostic services, transportation barriers, and limited internet connectivity. In response, research is needed to identify and evaluate models of care that address the differential in access to healthcare across populations such as community health navigator programs, appropriate telehealth-based models of care, and collaborative primary care models that involve multiple healthcare providers. The focus will be on conducting research into:

- innovative models of care and health service delivery; and
- partnerships aimed at improving access to and coordination of care.



## The health of rural populations

At an aggregate level, rural populations have poorer health outcomes than their metropolitan counterparts. However, health status varies considerably across and within sub-populations in rural areas. For example, some rural communities may have different demographic characteristics or face greater socioeconomic disadvantage than others, contributing to poorer health. More isolated rural communities may face greater healthcare access challenges than those in closer proximity to regional centres. Community needs will inform the choice of projects we engage in. Our focus will be on conducting research into the:

- health and wellbeing of rural populations, and targeted approaches to address inequities; and
- health initiatives that benefit rural communities.

## The health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Research aimed at improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations must be community-driven and serve the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Participation and leadership of community members in all stages of research, from design to implementation and dissemination of findings ensure that research is culturally sensitive. This means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can take ownership of research initiatives. Research that is community-driven is also more likely to address the specific health priorities identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Given this, the focus will be to:

- initiate culturally sensitive steps to develop research partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations; and
- work in projects that are initiated and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.



## IMPLEMENTATION

The following three strategic principles will be embedded across our four priority areas:

### I. Research performance

We will work with our Research-Only and Teaching and Research academic staff to achieve the individual research performance metrics such as external research grants and tenders, quality and impact of journal research articles, and PhD enrolments set by the Sub-Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences and the University, including external research grants and tenders, quality and impact of journal research articles, and PhD and Masters by Research enrolments. We will invest in our staff and students to create and support research opportunities and promote research excellence. We will also provide, or link into Sub-Faculty and Faculty systems to provide, additional support to our early and mid-career researchers.

### II. Research partnerships

We will partner with our Sub-Faculty colleagues and with other Monash University schools, health services, industries and communities across our footprint.

### III. Celebrate our research

We will showcase the work we do to demonstrate the relevance of our rural health research and share our learnings with Monash University colleagues, partners, policy makers, funders and the wider community.

### Actions on the priority areas

To ensure our research is focused on our four priority areas, we will audit all research activity within the School. Administrative support, resources and reporting will be provided against the research priority areas. All existing and new (un/funded) projects will be registered to demonstrate they are linked to our research areas and goals. Project outputs, funds, and early career researcher (ECR) and student opportunities will be documented.

We will affirmatively direct resources to research priority areas where there is relatively less overall activity without compromising areas of research strength.

### Review process

Monash Rural Health will review the terms of reference of the Research Committee so it is structured to oversee the implementation of the strategy. We will monitor and formally report on our actions annually and respond to changes in the external research environment as needed.



## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Our goals	Actions	Performance measurement	Responsibility
<b>I. Research performance</b>			
<b>i) Identify, assess and increase awareness of research performance</b>	We will review academic staff classifications for teaching and research (T&R), research-only (RO), professional practice (PP), and education focused (EF) roles to ensure staff roles are reflected in their position description.	100% of academic staff are classified according to their roles	Head of School School Manager
	All new advertised positions and position descriptions for academic staff to include the appropriate T&R/RO/PP/EF/Practice classification.	100% academic staff are classified according to their roles	Head of School School Manager
	T&R and RO staff to regularly attend and participate in the School's research seminar series (research seminars will be recorded for staff unable to attend).	Increase in attendance and participation rates	Research Director
	<p>Amongst research academics, such as T&amp;R and RO staff we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) quantify the proportion of their time spent on research;</li> <li>b) examine how their research aligns with the School's research priority areas;</li> <li>c) assess and manage, in partnership with their supervisor, their current research performance against metrics; and</li> <li>d) provide them with access to mentorship to support their research career development.</li> </ul>	<p>All new academic staff who are appointed to T&amp;R and RO positions meet with the Research Director within three months of starting to plan support</p> <p>Increase in percentage of included staff who meet research performance metrics</p>	Research Director

Our goals	Actions	Performance measurement	Responsibility
	Provide governance support via research project registration.	Adherence to University research ethics requirements, Good Clinical Practice guidelines and Monash Rural Health research priority areas	Faculty/School Research Manager
	<p>The School will provide training sessions for academic staff supervisors of T&amp;R and RO staff to inform performance review (MyPlan) discussions. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) provide research performance induction and training for all included supervisors.</li> <li>b) provide Clarivate analytics training for all included supervisors; and</li> <li>c) undertake strategic data analysis to monitor research outputs against goals.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in percentage of included supervisors who have attended training</p> <p>Increase in number of training sessions and invitations to staff</p>	Research Director
<b>ii) Build research capacity</b>	<p>We will provide mentoring and support for T&amp;R and RO staff by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) providing opportunities for staff to join established research projects within the School, Sub-Faculty or with our partners that align with our priority areas</li> <li>b) affirmatively supporting early career researcher (ECR) staff via a dedicated program that includes an ECR guide, biannual meetings and supervision mentoring</li> <li>c) promoting membership of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) by one staff member from the School; and</li> <li>d) encouraging staff to present at a School research seminar prior to sharing with an external audience.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in number of staff who participate in projects</p> <p>Identification of and uptake of programs by ECRs</p> <p>Increase in number of staff presentations at the School's research seminar series</p>	<p>Research Manager</p> <p>Research Director</p>

Our goals	Actions	Performance measurement	Responsibility
	<p>We will support and mentor research degree students across our footprint by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) by opportunities to join existing research projects</li> <li>b) monthly support sessions; and</li> <li>c) access to formal research training opportunities.</li> </ul>	Number of research degree students who join projects and attend formal research training	Graduate Research Coordinator  Research Director
	<p>Hold an annual writing workshop, or direct staff to Sub-Faculty/Faculty workshops, targeted at ECR staff and research degree students.</p>	Number of Monash Rural Health staff and students who participate in School, Sub-Faculty or Faculty writing workshops	Research Director  Research Manager
	<p>Facilitate processes whereby staff publish in the highest quality Clarivate-listed journals with the highest impact factors relevant to the research discipline.</p>	Increased research outputs in Q1/Q2 journals	Research Director
	<p>Strategic appointment of researchers in the School's research priority areas.</p>	Increased research outputs and grant applications	Head of School
	<p>Support supervisors to scope and support appropriate Scholarly Intensive Placement (SIP) research projects.</p>	Number and experience of students doing research and/or health service SIPs	SIP Coordinator
	<p>Deliver research training, skill development and research support to local health professionals and community stakeholders. This is achievable through participation in established School research programs.</p>	Increased research participation with local health professionals and community stakeholders	Research Director  Head of School

Our goals	Actions	Performance measurement	Responsibility
<b>iii. Increase numbers of externally funded research applications, tenders and awards</b>	<p>We will support T&amp;R and RO staff to apply for appropriate research grants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) assessing all grant applications and tenders prior to submission to ascertain alignment with the School's priorities and that they are appropriately costed</li> <li>b) working with staff who are leading research applications to ensure their application has been reviewed and strengthened</li> <li>c) providing seed funding, where available, for projects focused on research priority areas that need additional support</li> <li>d) facilitating opportunities for mid-career researcher (MCR) staff to lead research projects; and</li> <li>e) providing opportunities and support for leading research staff to further develop their capacity to apply for and obtain prestigious research grants.</li> <li>f) ensuring staff have the opportunity to join a research grant application (commensurate with their joint track record and prior collaborations)</li> </ul>	<p>Number and type of research grant applications and awards</p> <p>Number of staff attending cross-faculty grant idea pitch panels</p> <p>Number of projects proposed and supported that target identified priority areas</p> <p>Number of projects led by MCRs</p> <p>Number of research grant applications that are reviewed and awarded</p>	<p>Research Director</p>
<b>iv) Increase number of domestic &amp; international research students</b>	<p>We will work with lead researchers to identify opportunities for honours and research degree student projects.</p>	<p>Number and type of student projects offered and taken up</p>	<p>Research Director</p> <p>Graduate Research Coordinator</p> <p>Honours Coordinator</p>

Our goals	Actions	Performance measurement	Responsibility
	<p>We will support our staff to ensure they are skilled and able to propose appropriate student projects. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) ensuring all RO and T&amp;R academic staff who are Level B or higher have completed Monash University supervisor training</li> <li>b) establishing a Student Research Review Panel that includes graduate research, honours and SIP coordination, to review and approve graduate research or other student project proposals</li> <li>c) embedding student project opportunities in research partnership projects; and</li> <li>d) providing teaching and other academic staff professional development opportunities for graduate research students, where possible and appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>Proportion of included staff who are accredited to supervise student projects</p> <p>100% of projects on Supervisor Connect are linked to research priorities and have been approved by the Student Research Review Panel</p>	<p>Research Director</p> <p>Graduate Research Coordinator</p> <p>Honours Coordinator</p> <p>SIP Coordinator</p>
	<p>Where possible and excluding SIP projects, we will facilitate the development of inter-school supervision and student projects</p>	<p>Increase in inter-school supervision and student projects</p>	<p>Research Director</p> <p>Graduate Research Coordinator</p> <p>Honours Coordinator</p>

Our goals	Actions	Performance measurement	Responsibility
<b>II. Research partnerships</b>			
<p><b>Increase and enhance internal and external partnerships</b></p>	<p>We will increase the number of funded research project partnerships with other schools within Monash University (particularly within the Sub-Faculty of Health Sciences), community organisations such as Primary Health Networks (PHNs), health services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs); industries and communities across our footprint as well as with other Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program participants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) working with Sub-Faculty members to identify and progress projects of mutual interest;</li> <li>b) encouraging staff to include appropriate research partners on un/funded projects;</li> <li>c) exploring opportunities to partner in research with reputable national and international organisations that align with our priorities;</li> <li>d) complying with <i>marra ngarrgoo, marra goorri</i> (the Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical and Wellbeing Research Accord) and the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC's) Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders (2018) protocols for working with and doing research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander populations;</li> <li>e) prioritising allocation of seed funding, where available, including seed funding for active collaborations with external organisations; and</li> <li>f) auditing and reviewing our membership and contribution to stakeholder/ discipline groups (e.g. the Victorian Regional Research Network and the Australian Rural Health Education Network research groups).</li> </ul>	<p>Increase in the number of projects with external partners</p> <p>Number and type of projects that include Sub-Faculty partners</p> <p>Culturally safe and respectful track record with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations and populations aligned with community priorities</p>	<p>Research Director</p> <p>Aboriginal Community Engagement Lead</p>

Our goals	Actions	Performance measurement	Responsibility
	Facilitate and support shared research governance at the Sub-Faculty level.	Coordination of research processes at the Sub-Faculty level	Research Manager
	Seek appropriate external funding to support community consultation to address local research needs.	Increase in targeted community research projects aligned with the School's research priorities	Research Director Head of School

### III. Celebrate our research

<p><b>Promote our research widely, both internally and externally</b></p>	<p>We will demonstrate that rural research is recognised, valued and rewarded. We will celebrate our research excellence, its impact and its relevance to the University, our colleagues, partners, and communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) providing a fortnightly School research seminar series at a time that is accessible to a wide audience</li> <li>b) disseminating our research to our colleagues, partners and communities through existing networks such as the Australian Rural Health Education Network and appropriate rural forums</li> <li>c) updating and maintaining the Monash Rural Health website</li> <li>d) conducting a biennial School research forum/showcase</li> <li>e) participating in Sub-Faculty or Faculty research forums</li> <li>f) holding an annual community research forum</li> <li>g) publishing an annual Year in Review booklet and supporting website, highlighting our research achievements</li> <li>h) establishing annual Monash Rural Health research prizes for ECRs; and</li> <li>i) encouraging high performing staff to apply for the Dean's Excellence in Research awards.</li> </ul>	<p>Presentations and attendance at the School's seminar series</p> <p>Annual research forum</p> <p>Year in Review</p>	<p>Research Manager</p> <p>Research Director</p> <p>School Research Committee</p>
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## OUR LOCATIONS

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## MONASH RURAL HEALTH

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