

2019/20

 HealthWISE

# ANNUAL REPORT





# Acknowledgement of Country

HealthWISE would like to acknowledge that we operate and function on the lands of the traditional custodians.

We pay respect to these lands and all that they provide for us.

We acknowledge and pay respect to the ancestors that walked and managed these lands for many generations before us.

We acknowledge and recognise all Aboriginal people who have come from their own Country and who have now come to call this Country home.

We acknowledge our Elders, past and present, who are our knowledge holders, teachers and pioneers.

We acknowledge our youth who are our hope for a brighter and stronger future and who will be our future leaders.

We acknowledge and pay respect to our community members who have gone before us and recognise their contribution to our people and community.

## About Us

**H**ealthWISE has been delivering federally funded primary health and social services for over 5 years. We are a not for profit organisation dedicated to creating healthy communities.

We service the New England North West region of NSW and parts of the Darling Downs and West Moreton regions of QLD.

By employing skilled and experienced local health care providers, we provide efficient and effective programs that improve access, increase awareness, decrease cost, empower communities and foster long term health.

We are a specialist provider of rural and remote services.

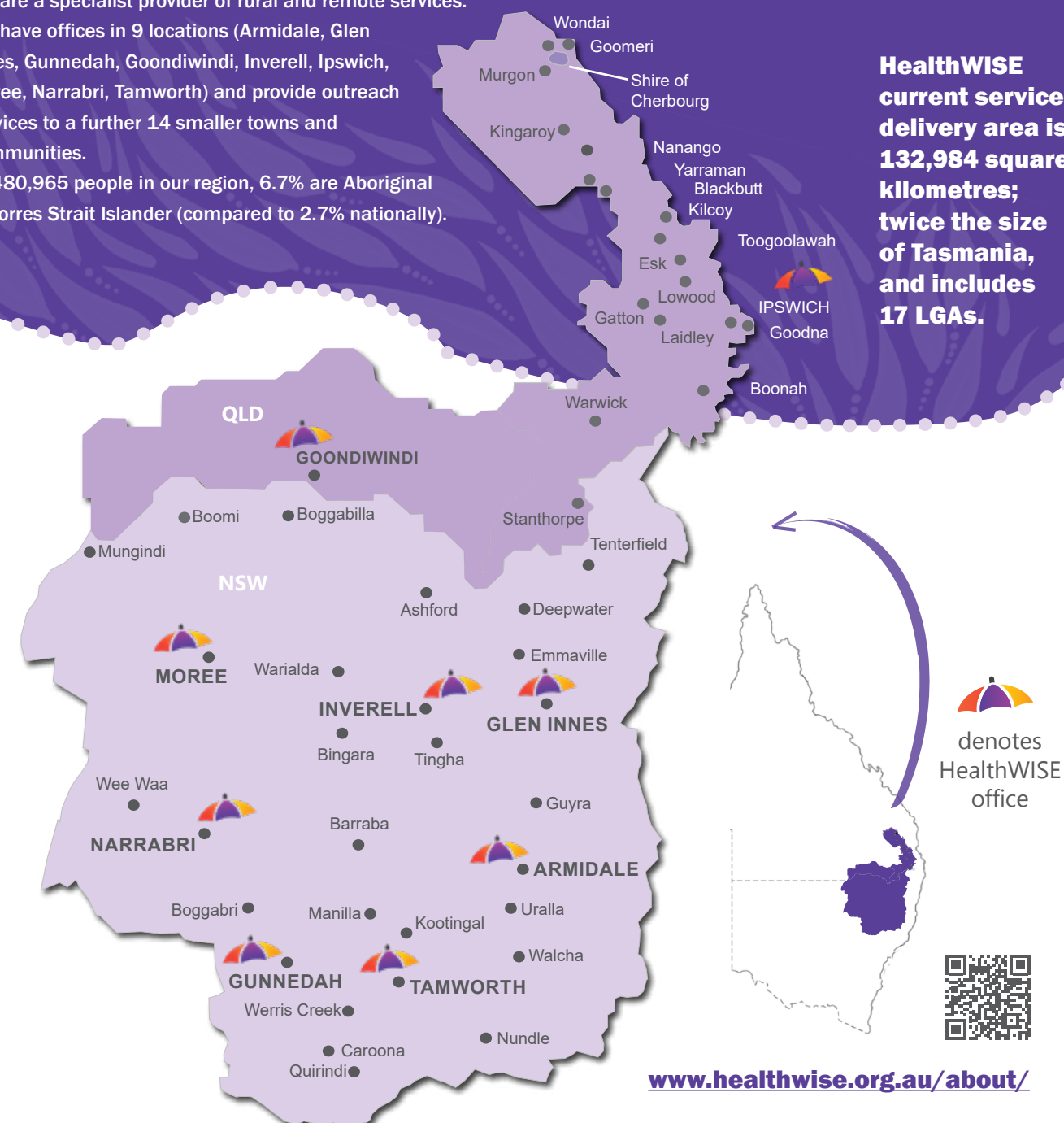
We have offices in 9 locations (Armidale, Glen Innes, Gunnedah, Goondiwindi, Inverell, Ipswich, Moree, Narrabri, Tamworth) and provide outreach services to a further 14 smaller towns and communities.

Of 480,965 people in our region, 6.7% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (compared to 2.7% nationally).

### Our core business:

- Mental health services
- Allied health services - physiotherapy, speech pathology, podiatry, exercise physiology, dietetics, occupational therapy and memory assessment.
- Supporting clients to prevent or manage chronic disease
- Co-ordinating medical specialist services where there is specific need
- Health education and screening in small towns
- Supporting after hours GP services in small towns.

**HealthWISE current service delivery area is 132,984 square kilometres; twice the size of Tasmania, and includes 17 LGAs.**



[www.healthwise.org.au/about/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/about/)



# Our Gift Fund

**Providing small sums of up to \$3000 to organisations for activities that share our focus of disease prevention.**

HealthWISE is a registered not for profit organisation that is committed to improving health and wellbeing in our communities with a particular focus on the prevention of disease. One initiative that supports our not for profit aims is our ability to provide small grants to organisations for activities that share our focus on the prevention of disease.

Each year, the HealthWISE Gift Fund accepts applications from community groups for grants up to \$3,000. We select up to three eligible organisations and partner with them to deliver a successful project.

Most HealthWISE services are made possible through government funding, however the HealthWISE Gift Fund relies on donations.

The 2019 Gift Fund grants supported the Pilliga New Generation club to participate in a knockout competition. The experience created a sense of belonging, bringing people together and developed goal setting within the community for improved mental and physical health. Moree Secondary College Girl's Fitness program also benefited from Gift Fund support. Girls from years 7 to 12 engaged with fitness activities within the school and were nourished with a healthy breakfast.

[www.healthwise.org.au/support-us/gift-fund/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/support-us/gift-fund/)



[www.healthwise.org.au/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/)

*You don't just have to read our Annual Report!*

Watch videos or go to websites either by clicking links or using your phone camera to scan the code.

*Watch out for these symbols throughout our report.*

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HealthWISE branding encompasses Aboriginal artwork as well as images and language to help Aboriginal people feel welcome and respected.

Each HealthWISE office displays a copy of "Eurah – Medicine Tree" by Rod McIntosh, an Aboriginal artist of the Kamilaroi tribe. This work was commissioned by HealthWISE as a visual representation of wellness and was inspired by the HealthWISE Vision "Healthy Communities".



COVER SHOT – Brolly, our HealthWISE Mascot, visited Mount Kaputar which is located near Narrabri in northern New South Wales. Mount Kaputar is part of the Nandewar Range and is on Kamilaroi Country.







# Our *Purpose*

**Creating better health  
for our communities**

# Our *Vision*

**Healthy communities**

# Our *Values*



## **Empowerment**

We know every employee has an equal role to play. We support each other by building confidence and capabilities, while working together to create healthier communities.



## **Equality**

We work to maintain reciprocal relationships based on mutual trust in the communities we serve. We embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and beliefs.



## **Community**

We are committed to serving and empowering our communities.



## **Client focused**

We put our clients first, listen to their needs, and seek to exceed their expectations with accurate and practical solutions.



## **Passion for excellence**

We have pride in our work and excel at what we do. We are open to new ideas and committed to best practice and efficiency. We seek out the best talent, promote development and learn from our mistakes.



## **Visionary**

We create an environment in which staff are solution focused, encouraged to take initiatives, producing new ideas and processes. We thrive on creativity and ingenuity.





# Message from Our CEO

**2019-20 has been a year like no other. One that has tested our flexibility and ability as an organisation to adapt quickly in the face of adversity. In 2019 we continued to endure one of the worst droughts in history. Communities already struggling with the loss of livelihood were hit by some of the worst bushfires in living memory. Just as the welcome rain brought relief to our stricken communities, the COVID pandemic was upon us, bringing a new way of life, the economic and health consequences of which we will no doubt see for many years to come.**

When reviewing the year, it is difficult to see beyond these events, as they have significantly influenced HealthWISE's business, not just in the way we manage our day to day operations and how we provide our services, but also the level of distress and illness our

clients and communities are presenting with. We were fortunate to have secured funding through the Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network (HNECCPHN) for additional mental health services at the commencement of the 2019-20 year and this was instrumental in enabling us to provide much needed services and support to communities across the region suffering from natural disasters and the pandemic. Small bush fire grants enabled us to help communities through the delivery of training, such as Stormbirds to assist teachers to support children dealing with tragedy; deliver additional events to bring small communities together; and offer additional mental health services in targeted towns. HealthWISE continued to grow its services in QLD, securing a tender to deliver Integrated Team Care across the Goondiwindi LGA, which

saw the opening of a HealthWISE office in the town of Goondiwindi. We also expanded our mental health programs across additional QLD LGAs, introducing a lived experience and mental health nurse workforce.

The announcement by the World Health Organization on the 11th March 2020, that COVID-19 was a worldwide pandemic, triggered the HealthWISE Business Continuity Plan, a new experience for everyone. HealthWISE was fortunate as our services were classified as essential and so could continue to be provided. A new phenomena, known as social distancing became the norm, government restrictions saw the rapid transfer of services to telehealth, and staff moved to working from home, for their own and client safety. Zoom became the great connector for staff to staff, clinicians to clients, individuals to family and friends. The agility of the business and flexibility of the staff enabled the community to continue to access the healthcare they needed, reducing the barriers of distance and general access issues.

A HealthWISE survey undertaken to understand clients' experience of using telehealth enabled us to determine the advantages and disadvantages of telehealth sessions, and a mixed model of service delivery is now firmly embedded in the organisation. The increased use of telehealth has provided staff with an increased flexibility of where they work from, and many are choosing a mix of working from home and the office, which is providing them with an increase in work/life balance.



Our Allied Health team learning how to safely wear face a mask from one of our primary health nurses via Zoom meeting



A new COVID-19 world



A new way of service delivery



A new way of working



# Message from Our CEO & Chair



Watch a video about what Fiona and Lia have to say about the year that was

## Two large and exciting projects commenced in 2020:

1. HealthWISE commenced the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural inclusion framework, a large piece of work currently being undertaken by a committed team of staff. This innovative approach will truly embed inclusivity into every HealthWISE process and activity. This work will continue to develop over the next 12 months and guide the organisation into the future.
2. HealthWISE launched the online version of the already successful Sounds good to me course for early educators, making the original 1day workshop available online and on demand. This foray into online training has been a huge learning curve for the organisation but one that

will prove very useful into the future. In such a year, the collective strength of the team was evident especially as we worked our way through, and continue to work through, the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The resilience of the organisation shone through at all levels, demonstrating its capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, and always keeping the vision of Healthy Communities at the fore. Thank you to the Board and the HealthWISE team for their ongoing commitment and dedication to the organisation. As a team we achieve so much more than as individuals.

*Fiona*

**Fiona Strang**  
Chief Executive Officer

Giving our pre-school aged children the best chance of success at school

## Sounds Good to Me

Some children start school with the skills they need to learn to read and write without difficulty.

They have age appropriate speech and language skills, can hear and attend to verbal information, are familiar with books and stories and they understand that words and sentences are made of up of sounds. These are the building blocks for success in literacy learning. Success at school opens doors for further education, training, employment and ultimately, health outcomes in life.

Many children, especially in rural or socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, will start school without these skills. As Speech Pathologists, we know that phonological awareness or the awareness of sounds in words can be easily taught, and that studies have found it to be beneficial for most children and critical for some.

Local kindergarten teachers, early childhood educators and speech pathologists recognised this back in 2014 and Anne Williams and Linda Foskey, now HealthWISE Speech Pathologists, created and delivered a series of sell-out workshops across the New England North West region of NSW. Sounds good to me is professional learning for early educators including a program to implement with children in early childhood settings.

In 2020, the HealthWISE team created an online version of Sounds good to me, opening up our market to educators in Australia and abroad.

This project has engaged people across the wider HealthWISE team and challenged us in many ways.

We've acquired on-the-job skills in digital content creation, online sales, digital marketing, developing resource kits, business to business sales models and connecting with potential customers.

Our talent, Anne Williams, has presented dozens of hours of teaching, mastered the art of live webinars and developed a fan base with her professional integrity and personalised after sales service.

We launched [www.soundsgoodtome.com.au](http://www.soundsgoodtome.com.au) in July 2020 and work is already underway to add a course especially for parents of preschool aged children, giving us access to much wider market.

In a future that may see further workforce shortages in allied health, capacity building within early education may go some way to improving access to pre-literacy learning for children and the HealthWISE team will be part of that future.



Watch a video about Sounds good to me





# Our Board of Directors

**Ms Lia Mahony (Chair)**

BPharm (Hons), MClinPharm

Ms Mahony is a Pharmacist based in Tamworth.

- Appointed Chair in September 2016.
- Director on the Clinical and Cultural Governance Committee.

**Mr James Wallace**

BEcon, AssocAICI, AssocFPAA, Accredited SMSF

Specialist Advisor, Member SMSFPAA, JPMs

Mr Wallace is an accountant based in Tamworth.

- Appointed as a Director in January 2016.
- Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

**Mr David Aber**

BE. MLGM

Mr Aber has a background in local Council.

- Appointed as a Director in January 2016.
- Director on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- Chairs the Corporate Governance Committee.

**Mr Stephen Doley**

MBA, Member AICD, Adv Directors course

Mr Doley has an executive background working in large not for profit organisations

- Appointed a Director in June 2018.
- Director on the Corporate Governance Committee.
- Director on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

**Dr Cheryl McIntyre**

MBBS, BSc(Med), FACRRM, FACGP, DRANZCOG(Adv),  
DipPaed, DipDerm

Dr McIntyre is a GP Obstetrician based in Inverell.

- Appointed as a Director in May 2015.
- Director on the Clinical and Cultural Governance Committee.

**Ms Lyn Rickard**

B.Sc, Grad DipEd

Ms Rickard is the Director Learning Environment for TAFE New England.

- Appointed as a Director in May 2015.
- Director on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- Director on the Corporate Governance Committee.

**Ms Amy Creighton**

MPhil, BHSc, Cert IV Aboriginal Health

Ms Creighton is a Gomeroi woman with over 30 years specifically in Aboriginal health.

- Appointed as a Director in June 2018.
- Director on the Clinical and Cultural Governance Committee.

**Dr Stephen Howle**

MBBS, FRACGP, DipPhysMed

Dr Howle is a recently retired GP based in Tamworth.

- Appointed as a Director in May 2015.
- Chairs the Clinical & Cultural Governance Committee.

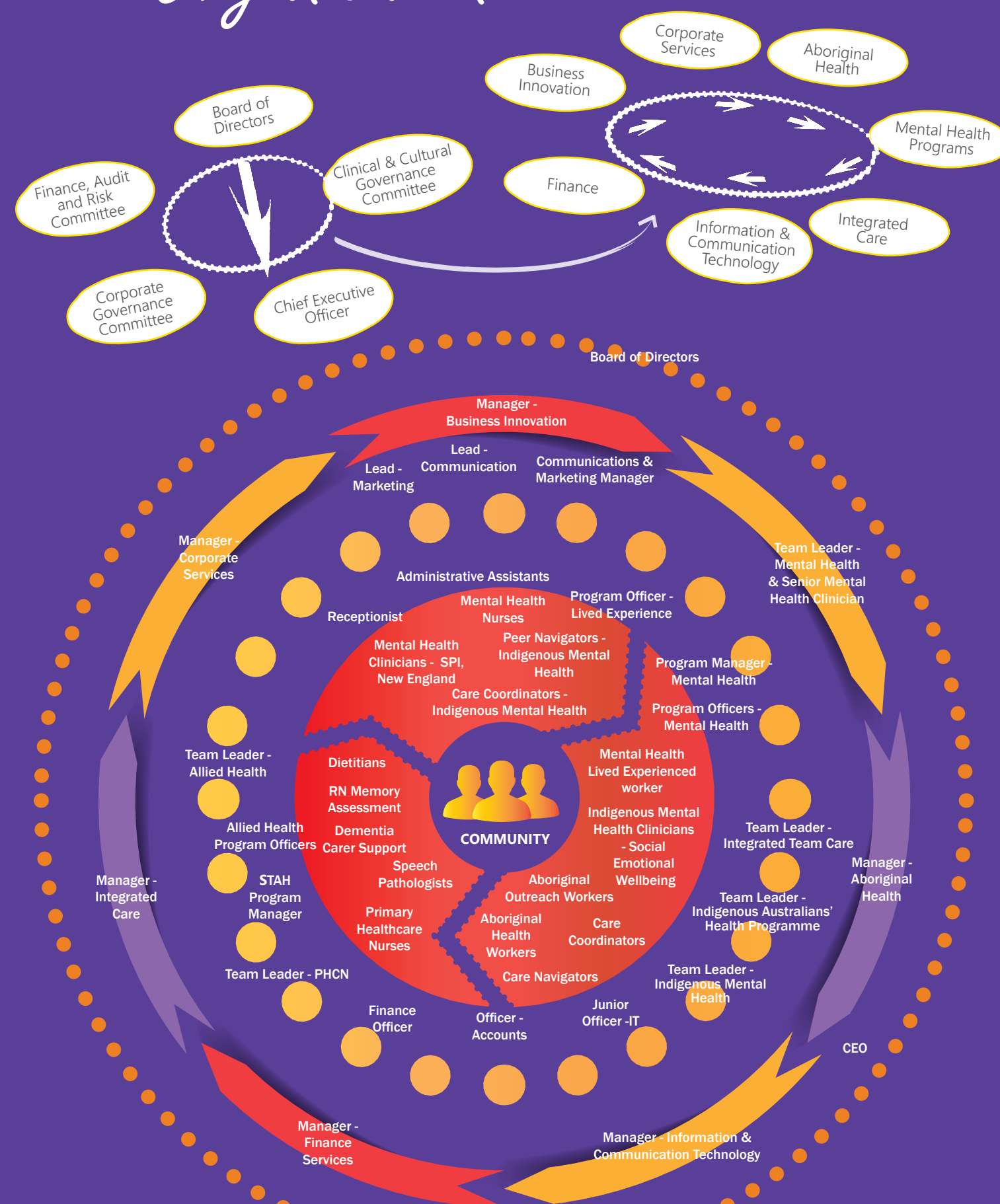
**Ms Ann Houston**

MBA, GAICD, BEd

Ms Houston has an extensive background in management consultancy and is based in southern QLD. Ann brings a commercial and entrepreneurial perspective to our Board.

- Appointed a Director in February 2020.

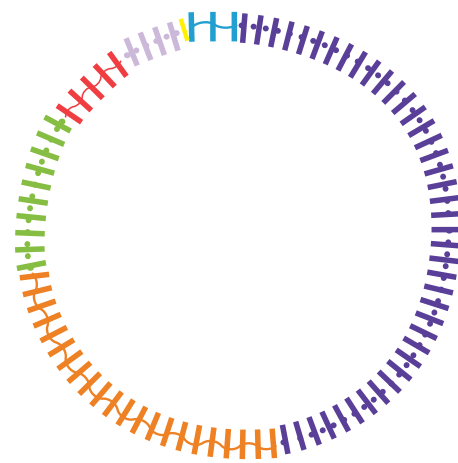
## Our Organisation



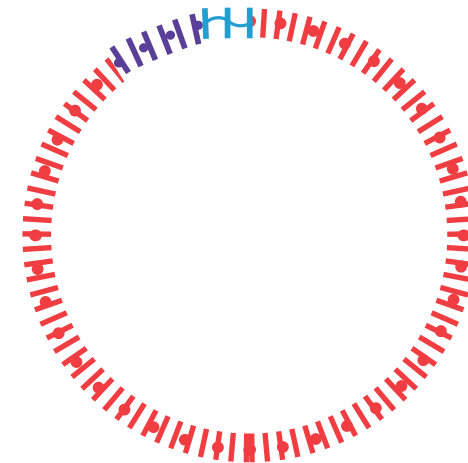


# 2019 - 2020 *Finance*

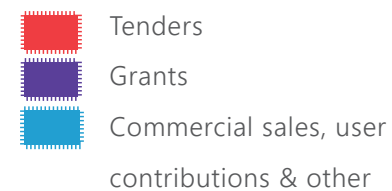
**Nicolette Randell**  
Finance Manager



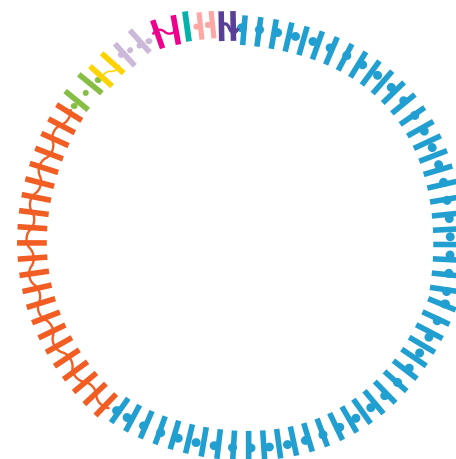
## Revenue by Service Area



## Revenue by Income Type



## Key Expenses



**The Finance Team is:**  
Nicolette Randell  
& Dianne Bannigan



# *Operations*

HealthWISE has continued to grow over the 2019-2020 Financial Year.

Additional funding won through the tender process prompted the sourcing and set up of the new Glen Innes office at the end of September 2019. In February 2020 another new office was launched in Goondiwindi and 2 employees were brought on board just prior to the onset of COVID -19. This created some extra challenges for the HealthWISE team in supporting these new team members. A combined approach very quickly provided some basic IT access and supplies to facilitate working from home until it was possible to cross the border.

The HealthWISE fleet has now increased to 24 vehicles and 2 of the older vehicles have been updated.

Incidents for 2019-2020 continued the trend of previous years, with 66% of incidents resulting from minor vehicular incidents. The total number of incidents for the year was 15.

**Christine Kershaw**  
Operations Manager



**The Operations Team is:**  
Christine Kershaw,  
Gemma Booker, Leanne Coghlan,  
Wendy Newman, Kelly Browning,  
Cailin Jolliffe &  
Caroline McDonald

# Human *Resources*

**21**  
New employees  
joined HealthWISE  
during 2019-2020

Staff retention was  
**84%**

**25%**  
of staff identified  
as Aboriginal

**85**  
The total number of  
staff at the end of  
2019-2020

**Goondiwindi  
office**



**Glen  
Innes  
office  
opening**





# Happy 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday to Us!



Visit our IT support business site!

myTechWISE

[www.mytechwise.com.au](http://www.mytechwise.com.au)



**The  
Information &  
Communication  
Technology Team is:**  
Michael Gill &  
Jacob McLeod

## Information & Communication Technology

2019-2020 introduced a wide variety of challenges for the IT team at HealthWISE. New HealthWISE offices were opened in Glen Innes and Goondiwindi with IT playing an important role in bringing these online.

A continued theme of overall growth in staffing numbers saw the need to improve and expand upon a number of our existing IT systems, with the migration and deployment of Microsoft 365 services adding great value to our distributed workforce.

The onset of COVID-19 related lockdowns meant the IT team were instrumental to enabling our staff to easily and quickly transition to a working from home environment. HealthWISE has been

well prepared for this situation; the majority of our IT resources are hosted within private and public cloud-based infrastructure. This enabled staff to quickly continue their work from home. Our cloud-based VoIP telephone system also meant staff were able to keep in touch with colleagues, enabling them to take and use their desk telephones at home.

Through the use of video conferencing technologies such as Zoom and Skype, our clinical staff were able to conduct their appointments with clients via telephone and video linkups. Mobile phones were purchased and provisioned for staff to allow further capacity for contact with colleagues and clients.

**Michael Gill**

Information & Communication Technology Manager



Zoom



Telehealth



Working from home



# Integrated Care Team



It has been another successful year for the Integrated Care Team as we continue to rise to meet the challenges faced by our communities. The team demonstrates innovation and resilience every day. Drought, bushfires and a global pandemic and the associated social and economic downturn has seen an increase in both referrals and the complexity of clients presenting for services.

Our team has swelled to 50 people this year, with particular growth in the mental health access, referral and primary mental health programs in NSW.

The teams continue to be led by Alicia Pratt, Anne Galloway and Fiona Robertson who live and work the HealthWISE values and who I rely on totally and gratefully. This year we welcomed Sandie Davis to the team in the new role of Integrated Care Team Executive Assistant, which has been a huge success and benefit to all.

Integrated care is the name of the team, so thank you to our colleagues in Aboriginal Health Access, Operations, IT and Communications for helping us meet our goals and find some innovative solutions to service delivery. Thank you to Fiona Strang and the Board for their support and guidance always.

**Anne Williams**  
Integrated Care Manager



## Allied Health Team Program

Alicia Pratt - Allied Health Team Leader

### RDN Funded Services

**RHOF – Rural Health Outreach Fund**

Despite COVID-19 disruptions...



**121**  
visits were delivered  
by 15 specialists

Services included Dermatology, Rheumatology, Psychiatry, Neurosurgery, Ophthalmology and Paediatrics.



**1708**  
hours of service

This represents Providers who were quick to offer telehealth in response to COVID-19 restrictions, so people didn't miss out on the care they needed.



**3826**  
people received  
a service



**11%**  
of people  
identified as  
Aboriginal

**The Allied Health Team is:**  
Alicia Pratt, Amelia Smith, Anna Haire, Anna Hicks, Cate Doyle, Kate Perrett, Linda Foskey, Miranda Wright, Rany Chou, Sally Henry, Samantha Humphries & Susanne Kable.





## RDN Funded Services

**MOICDP – Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program**



256

visits conducted



2876

services provided to people



71%

of people identified as Aboriginal



507

people were new to these services

Services included Exercise Physiology, Podiatry, Diabetes Education, Dietetics, Paediatrics, Aboriginal Health, Gynaecology, and Endocrinology.

### Gunnedah Indigenous Chronic Disease Groups – Health and Resilience

The Indigenous Chronic Disease Support Groups recommenced with renewed vigour. Many participants attend straight after the exercise physiology sessions at Rural Fit (also funded by RDN).

Cooking sessions and presentations with Amelia, the HealthWISE dietitian, had a seasonal focus and participants were encouraged to taste/use/ make fresh foods that they hadn't tried before.

### Morning tea:

CUCUMBER STICK & BHUJA NUT MIX

### Lunch:

NO-CHOP SURPRISE MINCE CURRY

The recipe used Turkey mince, but it could be made with any lean mince. All veggies were pre-cut frozen versions so it was quick and easy to make, with great participation from the group. Keen's curry was used as it's a popular pantry item for Aboriginal families. This dish is perfect for feeding the mob because it makes 10 serves in around 30 minutes for less than \$35 (\$3.50 per serve).

Attendees took home a copy of the recipe, complete with photos.

Few of the participants had tried quinoa before but many enjoyed this lighter alternative to rice.

In addition, we spoke about the fat and sugar content of foods with resources provided and did a little label reading of the products used.

Dessert was a little watermelon plus the 'mindful eating' of grapes and a chocolate Easter egg. We spoke about eating less but enjoying it more through mindful eating.

Mental Health clinician Krinent was introduced to the group and is interested in attending one of the next classes to discuss mental health and self-care.

[www.healthwise.org.au/services/dietetics-and-nutrition/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/services/dietetics-and-nutrition/)



One of our HealthWISE dietitians, Samantha Humphries, became a fully Accredited Practising Dietitian this year! Samantha travels to see clients in Narrabri, Moree, Bingara, Barraba and Wyallda.



### Watch Amelia make a smoothie

Cooking with Amelia - Smoothies







## Priority Allied Health Service (PAHS)



**9069**

appointments  
were provided  
in our area

The PAHS program continued to provide a range of allied health services to communities across the New England North West.

## Small Town After Hours (STAH)



**1681**

patients have  
been seen  
by the STAH  
program

That means 1681 people could be seen at their local hospital even though the usual GP was on leave! That represents a huge saving as those people didn't need to be transferred to another town.

**Thank you to our 8 STAH GPs who help provide 24/7 care in some locations.**

[www.healthwise.org.au/services/allied-and-primary-health/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/services/allied-and-primary-health/)



## Memory Assessment program

### Good news story

The Memory Assessment service was able to respond to client needs when COVID-19 restrictions seemed insurmountable.

An 81 year old woman was referred due to cognitive decline, in particular short term memory issues, with the view to referral for services, an appointment with a geriatrician and possible placement in an aged care facility.

Initial information was gathered over the phone but this was not overly successful due to the client feeling suspicious of service providers and in particular, specialists. A home visit was necessary once COVID-19 restrictions eased. From the home visit, cognitive impairment and memory decline were observed and a referral was made to the geriatrician.

The Zoom appointment with the geriatrician was organised and attended by the client and her son, who lives in Europe. It was 3:30am his time! The client also had friends in the room as support.

The client's son who is a doctor, was able to have a discussion with the geriatrician prior to the client coming into the zoom 'room'. This was very helpful for the geriatrician and the son, who

was able to speak more freely. The client was quite emotional at the thought of being able to see her son on Zoom.

The client's friends also sat in on the appointment and were able to confirm the short term memory issues and how they are impacting her life, particularly around medications.

A diagnosis of dementia was made.

The client was supported by her friends after the appointment, which was reassuring.

The son was appreciative of being involved and is up-to-date with the discussion, diagnosis and plan to support his mother. We received an email from him, expressing his thanks for involving him in the consultation and for supporting his mother.

We were also able to provide the client's friends with information cards and a DVD with the HealthWISE 'Caring about Dementia' video resources. This was also sent to the client's son and the client's Sydney friend. The client, after her initial suspicion, commented on how lovely the specialist was!



Watch the introductory video in our series 'Caring about Dementia'



# Primary Health Care Nursing

Fiona Robertson - Primary Health Care Nursing Team Leader

Our Primary Health Care Nurses (PHCNs) provide education, health promotion and screening activities and events in more than 50 communities of less than 2000 people across the New England and North West of NSW.



221

4 PHCNs provided events



7781

people participated



12%

of people identified as Aboriginal

The PHCNs travel for countless hours and work in partnership with a wide range of trusted stakeholders. The Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) team in our service area has been a particularly strong partner this year.

Feedback on the PHCN program is consistently high, with communities really valuing the work the PHCNs do. Despite COVID-19 restrictions in the final quarter, the PHCNs exceeded their targets.

Early in 2020 in response to the devastation from fire and drought in Glen Innes and Tenterfield, we secured 12-months funding to employ an additional nurse to expand this important program and assist these communities to get through these hard times. The COVID-19 restrictions limited the way we worked, but 10 events were completed in the 2019-2020 year. Feedback from the community has been positive particularly for screening services to this extra PHCN based in our Glen Innes office.

## The Primary Health Care Nurse Team is:

Fiona Robertson,  
Chloe Wilkin, Chris Connor,  
Letecia Kearney &  
Jillyan Jopson.



The PHCNs are committed to ongoing professional development.

- Two nurses participated in the Heart Foundation ambassador program
- Two nurses completed their immunisation certificates
- One nurse completed a professional certificate in dermoscopy and is completing the advanced certificate in dermoscopy

## Good news story

In February and March the PHCNs partnered with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, supporting the "What a Relief" comedy tour of drought affected areas.

The PHCNs attended each of the 21 performances, offering health checks and information for participants on referral pathways to their local services. **1,693 people attended.** The smallest village visited was Kingstown (population 94) and the largest town visited was Tenterfield, where the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, attended the event.

### Feedback from the project manager from the Department

"The tour was a huge success thanks to the incredible contribution of HealthWISE! You all went above and beyond with the huge distances travelled, the very late nights and long hours. The commitment shown by you all was inspiring and I can't thank you enough on behalf of all of those who benefitted so significantly from your care and invaluable support over the course of the tour. You are all amazing and have my greatest respect and admiration."



See our Facebook page for all upcoming events!





## Mental Health Team

Anne Galloway - Mental Health Team Leader

### The national psycho-social supports program



# 120

clients were referred to the program

Two part-time lived experience workers provide support to clients referred to HealthWISE in the Southern Downs and South Burnett and Cherbourg areas in south eastern Queensland. The lived experience workers provide services in partnership with the mental health nurse program.

### Mental health nursing



# 140

clients were referred to the program

Over the year we had 2 mental health nurses employed in the program. The nurses work in partnership with the lived experience workers and support the recovery and management of people living in the Southern Downs and South Burnett and Cherbourg.

### Social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



# 503

people taking part

A team of 3 clinicians work in this program. The model is flexible, culturally safe and appropriate for the people accessing this program. Referrals remain high. We have been grateful for some additional funding from the DDWM PHN to pilot lived experience workers in this program. The pilot runs until 31 December 2020.

## Stormbirds

HealthWISE was pleased to host the Stormbirds program training in Glen Innes in collaboration with Good Grief and Hunter New England Health in early February 2020. 23 service providers attended and trained as facilitators to deliver this program as a mental health promotion / prevention strategy to support children and young people affected by local bushfire events. Services represented at the training were: HealthWISE, Department of Education, Armajun, Catholic Schools Office/Centacare, headspace and HNELHD youth mental health program.

Stormbirds is an education program and does not replace counselling or therapy programs. This training equipped the participants to facilitate the Stormbirds four session program. The program offers children and young people the opportunity to share and process their experiences following an experience of natural disaster.

The feedback from every participant was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of participants rating the day as highly effective (4 or 5/5) in meeting the training aims. COVID-19 restrictions have interrupted the implementation in some areas, however participants plan to deliver this program in the lead up to the first anniversary of the bushfires in the region.





Anne Galloway, Adam Dunn, Alex Stephenson, Anne Edwards, Ayden Riethmuller, Brad Jorgenson, Dean Johnson, Donna Boughton, Elizabeth Shepherdson, Jenna Grills, Jenny Roberts, Kate Stewart, Kerry Smith, Kersha Harding, Kirsty Walker, Krinent Singh, Leon van der Linde, Lisa Staples, Lynn Hall, Malcolm Watts, Marielle Braz, Melissa van Leewuen, Nicole Stubbs, Peter Gurren, Rathi Ramanathan, Rod Cooper, Samantha Sheppard, Sean Kijurina, Stacy Barnett & Stephen Savage.

And during the year we said farewell to Meehan McSpedden, Francis Hayes, Candice Quinn, Natalie Wallace, Vernita Hanrahan & Sophie Armit.

## Primary Mental Health Access - PRIMA

A new addition this year, Primary Mental Health Access (PRIMA) provides a triage service which supports the intake and allocation of clients who have a current mental health treatment plan and have been referred for mental health services in the HNECC PHN region. PRIMA determines the level of care for the client which can range from low intensity services, psychological services to clinical care co-ordination.



Target number of referrals for the PRIMA program team to process



Number of referrals the PRIMA program team actually processed

## Mental Health Nursing

### A client's story. (names have been changed)

Wal, 59 is of Maori descent, and was referred to the Mental Health Nurse (MHN) program by a local General Practitioner (GP) with diagnoses of depression and alcohol misuse. The treatment goals on his mental health treatment plan (MHTP) were to minimise symptoms and improve functioning associated with depression and to moderate or cease alcohol abuse.

Wal's goals were identified during the initial appointments. He was quite clear on what he wanted his life to be. He wanted to get re-baptised through the church and for this he is required to be non-smoking and non-drinking. He is interested in studying counselling online through TAFE, as he would like to be a drug and alcohol counsellor. Once qualified he wants to be employed. In therapy he wants to develop skills to improve his mood and anxiety.

Wal has been engaged in the MHN program with home-visits and phone calls. This is because he has no access to transport. The interventions and psychological strategies that have been effective include

- Motivational Interviewing
- Cognitive behavioural therapy strategies, including the cognitive model and Socratic questioning
- Mindfulness and grounding exercises
- Recognising, accepting, reframing thoughts and harm minimisation strategies, primarily in the form of financial management

Wal's insight into his own struggles with mental health and substance abuse has increased. His motivation to control his substance use has culminated into quitting smoking. He has begun reframing what were negative circumstances as opportunities for positive growth. He continues to engage positively with health service providers and is willing to engage with our Lived Experience Workforce.

[www.healthwise.org.au/services/mental-health/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/services/mental-health/)





Primary Mental Health Care

The clinicians and program staff met overall service targets with **8669** sessions delivered to **2970** clients over the **12 month** period. This is an extraordinary achievement in the first year of a new program and in the context of the COVID-19 restrictions.



This year HealthWISE delivered primary mental health care services in 12 local government areas in the New England and North West. We won additional areas through tender in May 2019. Along with providing psychological therapy for people experiencing mild to moderate mental illness, the program also delivers clinical care coordination for people with complex mental illnesses and a stepped care model for residents of residential aged care facilities.

We are grateful to our funding partner HNECCPHN for supporting these programs.

The suicide prevention aftercare program has had another successful year and we participated in evaluation activities for this program during this year. The program provided 902 clinical hours of service to people following a suicide attempt and to those affected by suicide in the community as well as support and attendance at postvention groups and community education. The Lived Experience reference group continues to give clients a voice in the way this program is managed and delivered.

In this period we also completed a pilot program and packages of transitional care to assist in transferring clients from inpatient mental health services back into primary care.



The role of a Lived Experience Worker

Names have been invented for the purpose of this story

Ben, 32, has children and is in a relationship. Ben identifies as Aboriginal. He lives in a small town in the South Burnett region. Ben was referred to the lived experience worker (LEW) by a mental health clinician from the social and emotional wellbeing team. He identified the need for support with several psychosocial issues and the psychologist had introduced him to the LEW role. He accepted the offer of support, in conjunction with ongoing psychology support.

Ben and his family had ongoing financial hardships. He lived with a chronic back injury that made working or maintaining work impossible. He had been advised by a job network provider to apply for the Disability Support Pension (DSP). He made his application through the Department of Human Services with minimal support or available evidence and had been rejected.

He was also experiencing ongoing issues with his pain management regime. His GP was unable to further support his needs due to the level of his injury and had referred him to a pain clinic in Brisbane. The wait time and difficulty in accessing this clinic had left Ben feeling despondent and helpless regarding his level of support.

Ben identified a need for advocacy and advice on the DSP. He wanted to know whether he should reapply or appeal the decision as he and his family desperately needed the extra funds. He wanted support in finding out the status of his application to access the pain clinic in order to gain a sense of hope for better pain management. He also expressed a wish to learn more of the Lived Experience role so he could benefit from its insights into recovery and as a possible career for himself in the future.

The LEW helped Ben contact the pain clinic, only to discover that he was not on the wait list and his GP referral had been lost. The LEW and client contacted the GP to re-start this process. Ben decided to reapply for the DSP and the LEW supported him to gain better information to support the application, e.g. getting reports from both his GP and his mental health clinician. The LEW did not do this work for Ben, rather he stood beside him supporting Ben's own efforts with reminders and encouragement. Ben has commented that the LEW had assisted him to "retrain his brain" regarding ways of thinking of his mental health issues, why they occur and how they affect him and others around him. Support is ongoing through advocacy for the DSP and access to the pain clinic.





**The  
Communication &  
Marketing Team is:**  
Sally Urquhart,  
Louise Ingall,  
Naomi Shumack &  
Georgia Etheridge

# Communication

**Sally Urquhart**  
Business Innovation Manager

## & Marketing



**ENGAGE IN SPECIAL PROJECTS THAT:**  
• Support our vision and purpose

**51**  
episodes



**SUPPORT OUR RECRUITMENT PROCESS:**  
• Advertise with high exposure and industry specific platforms  
• Utilise our social media

**25**  
episodes



**UTILISE DIGITAL MARKETING**  
• Promote our events and news across social media platforms  
• Share, like and comment about information which encourages healthier communities on our social media

**195**  
episodes

**1712** **↑** **2192**

HealthWISE Facebook  
page followers July 1, 2019

HealthWISE Facebook  
page followers June 30, 2020



**ENGAGE WITH MEDIA:**  
• Regular press releases about our events and good news stories  
• Generate content  
• Build relationships with media and to be considered as a first contact  
• To be known as experts in our field

**30**  
episodes

Visit us on Social!



Data from Q1,  
Q2 & Q3 2019/20

# The Exchange

**Offering a chance for  
women in business  
and leadership to come  
together for insights  
and inspiration.**

The establishment of The Exchange in the New England North West provided an opportunity for women in business and leadership to come together to share ideas and experiences.

Themes explored in 2019-20 included launching new businesses, risking a change in career and planned and unplanned business impacts.

The Exchange panel is led by HealthWISE CEO Fiona Strang. Guests enjoyed the experiences which allowed them to meet women from across different sectors and relished "feeling like you aren't alone" and "listening to some great women speak and sharing their empowerment".



If you would like to watch the second Exchange event, please go to **The Exchange website** for the link and instructions to register and watch.

*Watch Fiona talk about the second Exchange event*



HealthWISE CEO Fiona Strang talks about the virtual Exchange on 4 June, where women in business discussed facing adversity but still find the positive.



[www.healthwise.org.au/the-exchange/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/the-exchange/)



# Aboriginal Health Team



It has been a year of growth, problem solving and achievements for the Aboriginal Health team.

Firstly, I would like to say thank you to the communities across the region who continue to embrace the support we are able to provide to them and who help us to shape the services we deliver.

I would like to acknowledge all of the Aboriginal Health Team Leaders and staff for their commitment, their efforts, their innovation and their passion – without them, these programs can't happen.

And last but not least, thank you to the various stakeholders and partners we have worked with during the past year.

**Jay Ramirez**  
Aboriginal Health Manager

[www.healthwise.org.au/services/aboriginal-health/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/services/aboriginal-health/)



Mary Porter - Integrated Team Care Leader

## Integrated Team Care (ITC) - NSW 18,022

Episodes of services to clients through a combination of care coordination and outreach services across the New England North West region.

Numbers are related to care coordination, outreach workers and supplementary services that support people living with a complex chronic disease. This program is making specialist and allied health services accessible for Aboriginal people living with chronic disease or unable to access the care and follow up. It is not only improving health outcomes, but improving quality of life. Partner organisations Armajun, Pius X and Walhallow AMS continue to help enhance the Integrated Team Care program across the region.





**The Integrated Team Care Team is:**  
 Mary Porter, Val Williams,  
 Chris Southwell, Glenn Allan,  
 Coreena McKenzie-Ride,  
 Talitha Gardner, Jess Keynes  
 Geraldine Campbell,  
 Toni McGrady &  
 Rebecca Bell

## Integrated Team Care Service Delivery during COVID-19

### *Flexible Delivery*

COVID-19 has changed the way many services are being delivered and when it was first declared a pandemic, a lot of people were unsure of what was going to happen.

The ITC Team quickly went into action and in the midst of setting up to deliver services from home they also ensured that they gained the skills to pass on correct and timely information to all ITC clients. As ITC clients are considered a vulnerable group, the team wanted to ensure they remained safe.

Telehealth became the preference for delivery of specialist services and proved a success in keeping clients safe while attending appointments.

Care coordination became even more important during this time and the team ensured that if appointments could not be delivered via telehealth, all precautions were taken to support clients to attend face to face.

Collaboration became more important than ever and we built on existing relationships with other organisations that can support our clients.

The team also completed health and wellbeing checks over the phone to make sure clients were coping and to ensure that they understood the latest information being delivered by state and federal health departments.

The can-do attitude shown by the team was amazing but not unexpected, as client-centred care is always at the heart of why they do the job that they do.



## Integrated Team Care (ITC) - QLD

September 2019 saw this service commence in the Goondiwindi LGA. It is funded by the West Moreton and Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network. For the first 6 months we were engaging with the communities, general practices and key stakeholders across Goondiwindi, Texas and Inglewood. In March 2020 we employed a Care Coordinator and were able to establish an office in Goondiwindi.

All episodes of care are directly related to care coordination, outreach work and supplementary services through supporting and working with people living with a complex chronic disease in Goondiwindi, Texas and Inglewood.

## A story from a Care Coordinator

### *The importance of a great rapport with Service Providers*

An ITC Client required a liver transplant. After many trips to Sydney to ensure he was suitable for transplant, he was finally put on 'the list'. He was also in the top 10%, which meant he was in dire need & time was running out.

Over the months his health went on a sharp decline and he had many admissions into the local hospital. Once I'd been told he was on the list, I started support arrangements.

I received up to date information from his specialists & head nursing staff of where things were up to & expected time frames.

With all this information, I was able to start arranging support for the client & his partner. Finding accommodation in the city for a length of time isn't easy! Firstly, I made contact with the manager of Norland House, the accommodation attached to RPA Hospital. I explained that the client is waiting for 'THAT' phone call. When transplant patients receive the call, there's a limited time frame of getting to the hospital. The manager (Tanya) understood our situation & assured

me there would be accommodation available when they get the call. Tanya gave me her personal mobile number & told me to call her at any time. The patient received the call at 2:30am Friday, 28th February. The transplant team arranged for them to be flown to Sydney at 8:30am. Our client received his life-changing transplant that same day.

A phone call to Tanya, and the partner was accommodated at Norland House. The original time frame was about 6 weeks, all going well. Things didn't work out like that - they ended up being in Sydney for nearly 7 months, with accommodation paid by IPTAAS.

The transplant patient recovered well, but his partner, who'd received a liver transplant 4 years prior became very ill and was admitted to hospital. During this time I received updates from Tanya on both ITC Clients. Through many phone catch ups, we've built a great rapport.

It's a great comfort to me to know our clients are being supported when away from their home base.

## Indigenous Australians' Health Programme

Emma Costello - Team Leader

# 7500

episodes of service to clients through a combination of clinical services, chronic disease management, healthy lifestyle and support programs across Tamworth, Gunnedah, Narrabri and surrounding areas.

### These IAHP services included



Assisting with the completion of **715** Health Assessments.



Assisting with Allied Health appointments.



Assisting with Specialist appointments.



Transport services.



The completion of basic health checks/observations.



Assisting GPs with reminders and recalls, and follow ups if needed.



Coordination of the Indigenous chronic disease clinics.



Healthy lifestyle and support programs.



**The Indigenous  
Australians' Health  
Programme Team is:**  
Emma Costello, Jye Millgate,  
Tammy Wade,  
Dalton Dorrington,  
Antoinette Wenner &  
Alma Saunders



## Good News Stories from the IAHP Team

All names have been changed.

Norma has been consistently attending the ICD clinics and podiatry clinic, making the most of these programs.

Norma is type 2 diabetic. She has lost 50kgs so far and is eager to lose more. Norma weighed 160kgs when she first began attending.

She likes attending the clinics and programs because she thinks it's great to be around our mob and says it motivates her to go see the dietitian and diabetes educator. The client likes working with HealthWISE because of the friendly service and staff.



Lena normally attends our Hydropool and Fitness Program. I called the client regularly over the COVID-19 period just to check in with her during this tough time. She informed me that she was struggling a bit with joint pains. The client normally attends the Hydropool Program to help with this problem. I told her that I'll contact her straight away when I hear back from the guys for a start back date for Hydropool Program. She seemed happy for our service to stay in touch with her through this time.

Debbie was one of our highest achieving new participants.

Debbie has been a client of HealthWISE since 2015 but did not really engage in the services until early in 2019. This is when we linked Debbie into The Gate Post Support Services for mental health services.

- Debbie has Type 2 diabetes. We (HealthWISE) contacted her regarding some education. (ICD)
- From our first contact with Debbie we started kicking field goals with other appointments such as a dietitian, optometrist and podiatry.
- Besides attending these ICD appointments, Debbie did not want to join the gym or walking groups because she felt that she was not ready.
- After months went by, we talked Debbie into attending one session, and if she didn't like it she was more than welcome to leave. Debbie participated a little and said it was fun.
- The second session was similar to the first one, but she went a bit better with the support of an AH worker.
- By the third session there was no stopping her. She participated in all activities and needed little support from the AH worker.

Since our first contact with Debbie she would always doubt herself in doing things that didn't fit her comfort zone, but after a bit of guidance she has been willing to participate with all of the HealthWISE AH programs.

Now with just a little support and guidance, Debbie is reaching out to HealthWISE, wishing for the gym programs to start again.

Lennie normally attends our Men's Group Program and our Fitness Program. Lennie contacted me over the COVID-19 lock down period looking for a bit of a yarn & some tips on doing some exercise at home. I informed him of some good little exercises he could do until our programs were back up and running. He was grateful.



Steve normally attends our Hydropool program. He a few health issues over the COVID-19 period. He hadn't heard from any family & friends over the lockdown period, and seemed to be doing it a bit tough at the time. He was really grateful for me checking in on him and just having a yarn to someone.





## The Indigenous Mental Health Team is:

Deslee Mathews,  
Lionel Solomon,  
Frances Prowse &  
Glenys Mulley



Our present day environment has seen the Indigenous Mental Health team willing, able and available to respond to the demands of current times, and adapting to changing circumstances in client needs, technologies and systems of service delivery.

The team kept abreast of COVID-19 compliance to service delivery, functioning as part of a remote team and managed the added responsibilities of care for staff, clients, family or loved ones, and themselves.

Working collaboratively with other community services, our IMH groups have been delivered alongside Health NSW, Freeman House Armidale and One Connection Disability Services. We delivered a variety of programs to our local communities such as yarning circles, walking for wellness, Aboriginal arts and mindfulness/Dadirri.

## Indigenous Mental Health

This program has exceeded client targets of **406**

by over **53%** particularly in group support and care coordination services.

Partner organisations Armajun and Walhallow AMS and Flourish Australia continue to report high satisfaction with the partnership.

We were able to keep connected via telehealth and continued to support people while working remotely. A yarning group was held providing a safe space to come together and yarn. Participants expressed how wonderful it was to have the group, and the difference it had made for them at this uncertain time in their lives.

New networks continue to develop as we deliver our service, both within the local community and across HealthWISE services and branches, and NSW Health services.

The team is strengthening and establishing local networks with local council in Aboriginal Community Development, other community Indigenous and non-Indigenous services providers such as Community Neighbourhood Centres, Services Our Way and Homes North – Housing Offices, Family Referral Services / Path Finders, National Disability Insurance Scheme, Aboriginal Health Unit – NSW Health, Armajun Health Services and other Local Health Services.

Deslee Mathews – Team Leader

The Indigenous Mental Health group in Tamworth meet every Friday. The group program takes a social and emotional wellbeing approach using art, yarning and exercise to connect and heal.

Recently we enjoyed a gorgeous sunny day at the Botanic Gardens in Tamworth. The garden is a display but also aims to conserve the flora of the region.

There's a lot to see while you are there, including the excellent lookout, the bush chapel, native gardens surrounding the ponds, and the new Asian garden. The gardens also feature an indoor exhibition space with Aboriginal artefacts.

Did you know that whether it's the warmth of the sun or being surrounded by a beautiful green landscape, nature can speed up the healing process? That's why many doctors continue to prescribe gardening and other outdoor activities to help people overcome low energy, negativity and depression. Equally, gardens help to boost immunity against disease and ill health and serve as an important preventative measure as well!



NAIDOC was postponed, keeping the community safe. In consultation with group members, we decided to continue celebrating by holding a virtual NAIDOC on Facebook. The goal was to work together to give our community a creative NAIDOC Week despite the circumstances.

In collaboration with the Bumbirra Arts & Culture Group and the Tamworth LALC, the IMH program made up ten packs to give away to participants who produced art that expressed what the theme 'Always was, Always will be.' meant to them. Participants were encouraged to take a photo of their art and upload it to the HealthWISE Facebook page with their story.

This provided IMH group participants and other community members a space to express their cultural identity and how they related to the 2020 NAIDOC theme while engaging the wider community, making the most of our social media channels and supporting community ties through individual perspectives on culture.





## Care Navigation Pilot Program – Tamworth

We provided care navigation services to over

80

clients in the Tamworth LGA.

Clients are referred by their GPs or can self-refer.

Sessions have highlighted the need for health literacy skills for clients who need to navigate the health system and to understand the terms used to manage their own health. Assistance has also been requested in housing, navigating the NDIS and Centrelink.

The Care Navigators have been able to link clients into services and assist in completing the correct forms.

This program has highlighted the community's need for this assistance. It enables clients to focus on their health while receiving support in managing other issues that are affecting their health outcomes.

Partner general practice MyGP continues to report high satisfaction with the partnership.

[www.healthwise.org.au/services/care-navigation-program/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/services/care-navigation-program/)



The Care Navigation Pilot Program Team is:  
Tara Anderson and  
Tess Johnstone



## Continuity Management Team

Following the WHO pandemic declaration which triggered the HealthWISE business continuity plan, the Business Continuity Team have coordinated the HealthWISE response to the pandemic.

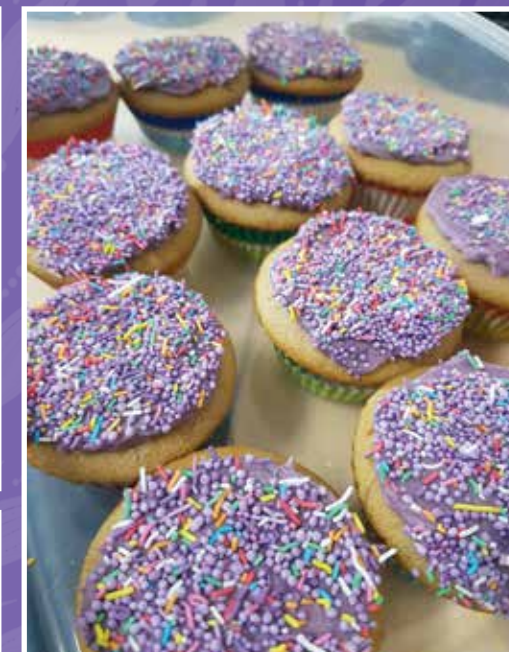
This has evolved from daily 15 minute morning team teleconferences while most staff members worked from home in the autumn to weekly zoom meetings after social distancing restrictions were relaxed in NSW and QLD.

Fact Sheets and All Staff webinars have been produced by the Continuity Management Team to decipher the pandemic world of daily statistics, road maps, restrictions on movement and socialising, emerging areas of community transmission and planning service delivery to our communities in the safest way for our teams and our community populations.

Local flexible solutions continue to be implemented as risks and regulations change on a daily basis.



HealthWISE became a member of ACON's 'Welcome Here Project' this year. We display the sticker and charter in all offices.



HealthWISE proudly celebrated Wear it Purple Day to show our commitment in fostering safe, supportive, empowering, inclusive environments in all healthcare settings.









# RU OK?

HealthWISE ran an RUOK Day initiative where we paired up with local coffee shops to provide free coffees and mental health information to customers.



Read more about this on our blog!

[www.healthwise.org.au/blog/a-special-treat-for-coffee-lovers/](http://www.healthwise.org.au/blog/a-special-treat-for-coffee-lovers/)



# Thanks and Acknowledgements

Aboriginal Hostels Ltd – Tamworth	Good Start Learning – Gunnedah	One Connection Disability Services
Apsley Riverview Hostel	Gunnedah High School	Oxley Vale Public School
Armajun Aboriginal Health Service	Hillvue Public School	Phoenix two390 Gym and Personal Training
Autumn Lodge	Heart Foundation	Pilliga New Generation
Baptist Pre-School – Gunnedah	Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network	PIUS X Aboriginal Corporation
Benevolent Society	Hunter New England Health - Integrated Chronic Care for Aboriginal People	Professor Sue Kurrle
Bloom Hearing	Hunter New England Health – Population Health	Quirindi Retirement Homes - Eloura
Calvary Mater Hospital Accommodation Services	Hunter New England Health Hydrotherapy Pool Staff	RENTFAST
Cerebral Palsy Alliance	John Hunter Patient Relative Accommodation	Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Accommodation Office
Challenge	Kambu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health	Rural Adversity Mental Health Program
Cherbourg Regional Aboriginal & Islander Community Controlled Health Service	Hymba Yumba Independent School - Springfield	Roses in the Ocean
Clontarf Foundation	Local communities in our area	Rural Fit
Club Synergy 24/7	McLean Care Gunnedah	Standby National Suicide Postvention Services
Cotton Research and Development Corporation	Medical Specialists, Allied Health and Mental Health Providers	Services Our Way
Country Care Link	Miss Ju Ju	Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service
CrossFit 2340	Miyay Birray Youth Service Moree	Hon Bronnie Taylor, NSW Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women
Curlewis Public School	Moree Secondary College	The Welder's Dog
Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network	Moree Secondary College Girl's Fitness Program	The K Factor
Dementia Australia	Namoi Valley Christian School	University of Newcastle Department of Rural Health
Department of Health	Narrabri Shire Council	University of New England
EACH	Narrabri Public School	Vision Australia
Elizabeth Hunter Lodge	NSW Ministry of Health	Walhallow Aboriginal Corporation
Flourish Australia	NSW Rural Doctors Network	Winanga-Li (Gunnedah & Narrabri)
General Practices throughout our region		Yaamanhaa Aboriginal Men's Group
Gomerioi Gaaynggal Centre		



### **Armidale**

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### **Gunnedah**

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### **Moree**

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### **Tamworth**

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