
North Coast
Allied Health Association



June 2020-July 2021
ANNUAL
REPORT

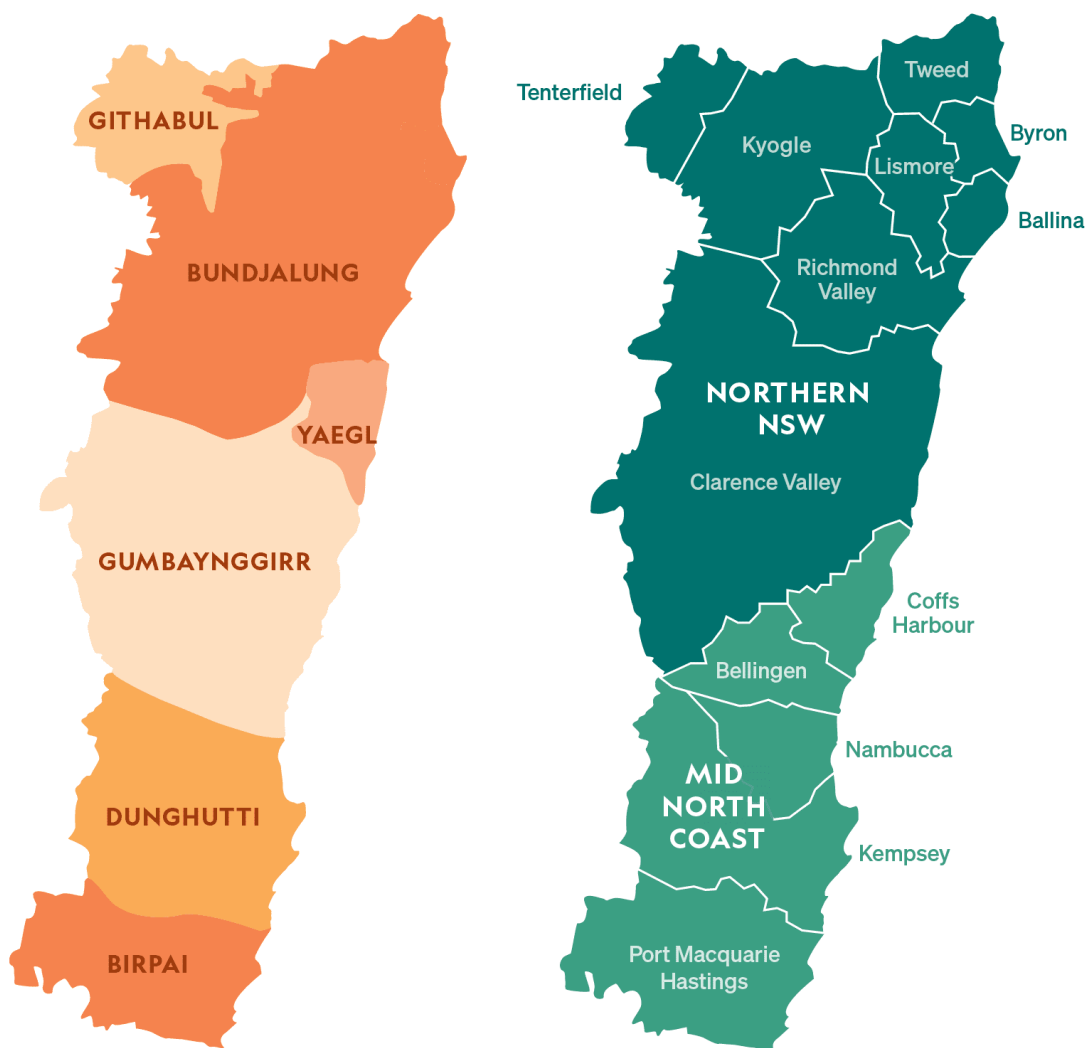
www.ncaha.org.au
ncahaexecutive@hotmail.com

Rob Curry
Executive Officer
Jacqui Yowell
Chair

The NCAHA acknowledges and shows respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which we work together.

We represent Allied Health Professionals across these nations and want to show respect to past, present and emerging Elders and all Aboriginal people.

We recognise that this land always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.



MAP Source: Healthy North Coast -<https://hnc.org.au/>

SUMMARY

The persistence of the COVID pandemic has ensured this past 12-month period has been like no other. The virus has created special challenges for most organisations in the health sector, including the NCAHA. For much of 2020-21 the NCAHA Board has been unable to meet face-to-face to undertake important planning processes, and several Directors have been burdened with the need to re-structure their workplace businesses and/or programs to meet the new challenges of social distancing and safe practice. Yet despite this, the NCAHA has undertaken significant change and is positioning itself to play stronger roles in advocating for improved health services for North Coast residents and supporting allied health professionals to provide high quality and safe services.



CONTENTS



1. NCAHA Directors

2. Key Current Issues

2.1 Changes to Board

2.2 Financial challenge

2.3 COVID

2.4 HNC membership issues

2.5 Rural Allied Health Consortia

2.6 Aged Care

2.7 Mental health

2.8 Disability

3. Achievements 2020-21

4. NCAHA Planning

5. Finances

6. Future Goals

1. NCAHA DIRECTORS



The NCAHA Directors during this reporting period:

Jacqui Yoxall – NCAHA Chair

- Chair of Allied Health & Midwifery and Clinical Services Director and Acting Clinic Manager - Southern Cross University
- Registered Psychologist

Sarah Miles – NCAHA Company Secretary

- Clinical Educator, Occupational Therapy - University Centre for Rural Health
- Occupational Therapist

Alira Bayndrian – NCAHA Communications

- Clinical psychologist and business owner
- Australian Psychological Society, Mid North Coast Branch, Acting Chair
- Clinical Council Member NCPHN

Michael Woods

- Director, The Lismore Hub
- Exercise Physiologist

Craig Gilmore

- Director, Cirrus Health
- Physiotherapist and business owner

Robyn Fitzroy

- Director, Multidisciplinary Health, University of Sydney

Recognition of resigned Directors

NCAHA thanks the resigning Directors, Susan Nancarrow and Rob Curry for their dedication and commitment. Susan is still a strong supporter and offers expertise as required and Rob is driving the Association with vigour as the new Executive Officer.

2. KEY CURRENT ISSUES



2.1 Changes to the Board:

At the 2020 AGM, both Susan Nancarrow and Rob Curry resigned their directorships, whilst Sarah Miles, Michael Woods and Alira Bandryian were elected to a further 12-month term. Jacqui Yoxall remains Chairperson, and in February 2021 Robyn Fitzroy joined the Board as an appointed director. Robyn's former role as NCAHA Executive Officer has now been taken up by Rob Curry on a part-time basis (0.3 FTE). Further change to the composition of the Board is expected by taking the opportunity to appoint an additional director to expand the skills and capacity of the Board.

2.2 Financial challenge:

The NCAHA has limited funds with which to prosecute its goals and strategies to improve health care on the North Coast. There is no core funding source to replenish and grow the budget from year to year, and the organisation continues to rely on and appreciate funding support from HNC for its existence.

The coming period will need to see re-doubled efforts to expand the funding base to ensure firm financial footings. This would both improve capacity to bring about meaningful improvement to allied health services on the North Coast, but also build the confidence of allied health professionals to join the Association and make their contributions.

2.3 COVID:

As noted, the restrictions brought about by the COVID pandemic have impeded progress at the Association and caused some planned actions to be abandoned. This includes efforts to provide cultural responsiveness training on the North Coast in partnership with Indigenous Allied Health Australia, and plans to engage the NSW Rural Workforce Agency to develop strategies to boost supports for early careers AHPs in the region. It is hoped we will be freed up soon to allow for some of these plans to be realised.

2.4 Healthy North Coast membership:

NCAHA is one of five HNC (formerly North Coast Primary Health Network) member entities. During the latter half of 2020, the members indicated their desire for stronger engagement and a Members' Liaison Committee was established to ensure increased member input for Board consideration. This included some modification of the nominations process for directors and from NCAHA perspective, to ensure greater primary care representation, particularly that of allied health. The NCAHA views this development as an important milestone in the effective growth and influence of HNC on the North Coast.

2.5 Rural Allied Health Consortia:

A key recommendation of the former National Rural Health Commissioner, Professor Paul Worley, was for the establishment of Rural Allied Health Service and Learning Consortia in rural regions around Australia where AHPs are chronically in short supply. The NCAHA played a role in the conceptualisation of this recommendation, having met with Professor Worley during 2019. Since the Worley report on rural allied health in 2019, UCRH brought interested parties together during 2020 to discuss the need for and possibility of establishing such a consortia for the North Coast – considerable enthusiasm was expressed. Unfortunately, since then events have been overtaken somewhat by COVID. The Federal Government's May 2020 budget was deferred, and the May 2021 budget had no specific allocation for trialling the recommended consortia model. However, the concept remains alive with a national meeting held in Tasmania to progress ideas. NCAHA will remain actively engaged in furthering the concept, and hopefully in contributing to the eventual development of such a consortia on the North Coast.



Image: Grafton NSW

2.6 Aged care:

The issues of aged care in Australia have been highlighted over the last couple of years as a consequence of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. The Royal Commission has been damning of the current state of services for the elderly, and has made recommendations for fundamental reform of the Commonwealth Aged Care Program. Like all other regions around the country, the North Coast will be part of these reforms to aged care and will need to prepare for changes to ensure the most benefit for our elderly residents.

The Commissioners made many recommendations relating to the services of AHPs, and two recommendations focused specifically on guaranteeing access to allied health services either for people living at home or residents in aged care facilities. These recommendations were in acknowledgement that many elderly people are currently unable to access allied health expertise in their efforts to maintain or restore their independent functioning.

Disappointingly, the May 2021 budget made very limited reference to allied health services in its massive expansion program announcements for aged care. It is difficult to know what the Commonwealth reasoning is here, given that the Royal Commission was so clear in the requirement for expanding access to allied health services as a core resource to support independent living. The NCAHA will work closely with HNC in this region to ensure the elderly gain access to the services they need.

In addition, NCAHA will seek to make significant contribution to the North Coast Collective initiative to develop a Healthy Living and Ageing Strategy for the North Coast.

2.7 Mental health:

The mental health of Australians is a nationwide concern. Here on the North Coast, NCAHA is concerned that access to psychology services is problematic with long waiting lists for children and young adults to see psychologists, either in the private or public sectors. This situation is predisposing to avoidable stress for clients and their families and may lead to poor health outcomes. Again, NCAHA will seek to engage HNC, private practitioners and other stakeholders to resolve the current service gaps and hardships being experienced.

2.8 Disability:

The NDIS is a steadily evolving national program seeking to support and improve the lives of people with disabilities. In rural regions like the North Coast there have been significant challenges to access the allied health workforce required to meet disability sector needs under the new arrangements. There are also concerns about the attainment and maintenance of quality allied health service provision in the disability sector and under the NDIS. The NCAHA will seek to support AHPs taking up roles under NDIS through the provision of supportive networking and professional development opportunities and pay particular attention to early career AHP's

3.ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21



In the past year, NCAHA has achieved important outcomes in a number of key areas -

MoU with HNC (Healthy North Coast formerly NCPHN): In late 2020, NCAHA and HNC recommitted to the Memorandum of Understanding with the aim to improve health care on the North Coast. A 2020-21 Action Plan had two key areas of collaborative focus: aged care; and better understanding and articulation of the allied health workforce on the North Coast to support planning of services. It is envisaged that these actions will keep our two organisations well engaged in working together for a better health system.

Monthly NCAHA News: Since September 2020, monthly NCAHA Newsletters have been re-instituted to keep the membership informed of developments in the health sector at both national and local levels. The Newsletter includes regular profiles of directors and members, updates from SARRAH in Canberra and professional development alerts for relevant multi-disciplinary or allied health professional development opportunities accessible to North Coast practitioners.

Monthly Zoom PD Events: Since September 2020, monthly Zoom PD events have been run for members and interested AHPs on topics of relevance to practice on the North Coast. To date, themes have included NDIS, strengthening private practice, local allied health research and working with psychologically distressed clients. These events have been well attended with positive and constructive feedback. These events will continue bi-monthly to ensure sustainability.

4. NCAHA PLANNING



The NCAHA Strategic Plan has expired and the Association is in need of a new plan to address changing needs and circumstances on the North Coast. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic has rendered the necessary planning forums of the Board and membership impossible over the past 15 months. In lieu of a new strategic plan, the Board has produced an Operational Plan for 2021 which currently directs its activity.

The 2021 Operational Plan priority areas are:

1. Build a stronger organisation
2. Grow the member base
3. Support allied health recruitment and professional development
4. Improve access to AHP services by addressing gaps and limitations in services
5. Advocate for effective integrated care to meet community needs
6. Build stakeholder engagement and partnerships for better allied health care



5. FINANCES



NCAHA retained approximately \$57,000 cash at bank as at 31 March, 2021, and cash at bank at 30th June, 2021 was \$45,982. Income for the year was \$20,000 from Healthy North Coast

Major ongoing expenses are:

- Salary for part time Executive Officer at \$2,600 per month
- Payments to Sourdough Business Solutions for support with Zoom PD events at approx. \$800 per month
- Insurances at \$2,000 for the year

Additional expenses anticipated for 2021-22 will include the cost of delivering face-to-face forums on the theme of Aged Care in the second half of 2021.

Image: Ballina NSW



6. FUTURE GOALS



The following are NCAHA priority goals for the upcoming period:-

- Developing a new Strategic Plan with a three-year outlook
- Expanding the funding base for a viable Association
- Effective advocacy in areas of aged care, disability and mental health to improve access to allied health services
- Specific engagement on aged care reform with HNC and other stakeholders in light of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the new Federal Government budget expansion program
- Collaborative contribution with all stakeholders to improve health service integration for patient-centred healthcare
- Provision of workshops and networking opportunities for the membership inline with relevant COVID requirements



www.ncaha.org.au

ncahaexecutive@hotmail.com
rob.curry1@outlook.com

