



North Coast **Allied Health Association**

April 2026

We show respect for the traditional owners across all the nations of the North Coast New South Wales and their custodianship and connection to country. NCAHA acknowledges the important role Aboriginal people have played in the health and well-being of these communities.



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**News Update**

You would think that by 2026 Australia would have an efficient and effective communications system for all health professionals to share information on their mutual clients. Not so unfortunately. However, it is reassuring to know that work is currently proceeding via Allied Health Professions Australia and the National Digital Health Agency to develop workable digital health systems for Australian allied health professionals. Please see the 'From the Field' section of this Newsletter on the **AHPA Digital Health Connection Project** for important information and links on this work.

A reminder about the **SARRAH National Rural Allied Health Conference** coming up in Coffs Harbour in November (See 'SARRAH Update' section). Note that the date for conference abstracts has now been extended to 19 April. Please also be aware of the new round of **Health Workforce Scholarship Program** administered by the Rural Doctors Network of NSW. AHPs and nurses can apply for these scholarships to assist them with travel, accommodation and registration expenses.

Thank you,
Rob Curry – Executive Officer, NCAHA

**[NCAHA CPD Events](#)****The Pain Game: Tackling Chronic Challenges with Clinical Confidence – A forum for AHPs**

An excellent workshop was held in Coffs Harbour on Saturday 28 March, featuring engaging speakers, valuable discussion, and more than 30 participants. The event offered strong opportunities for clinical



learning and professional connection. Building on this momentum, a similar workshop is now being planned for Lismore in August.

Image: Workshopping at the Coffs Pain Forum

Webinar: Supporting Kids & Families - Digital Approaches to Anxiety Disorders in Children This free Webinar will be held on Tuesday 5th May, from 5.00pm – 6.00pm. More info and registrations in the **CPD Alert** section.

For further details on any of the above, call Rob on P: 0429 999 005 or email: NCAHAExecutive@hotmail.com



From the Field

Jackie O’Connor, Digital Health Program Manager at AHPA, speaking about the AHPA Digital Health Connection Project

We spoke to Jackie O’Connor about the Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) Digital Health Connection Project and the opportunities digital health presents for the allied health sector.



Jackie is a prosthetist orthotist with a masters in Health Service Management. Her interest in addressing practice challenges at a systems level led her into policy and advocacy, and ultimately to her current role at AHPA.

Jackie believes solutions to many system challenges lie within digital initiatives and is therefore working to provide the allied health sector with fit-for-purpose digital solutions and education. Jackie notes:

“At the practitioner level, timely access to accurate information is essential to supporting high-quality clinical decision-making and ensuring consumers are directed to the right care as early as possible. Strengthening the way allied health data is captured and utilised will also enhance recognition of the sector’s contribution and build the robust evidence base needed to inform future funding models and guide effective workforce planning.”

AHPA is progressing the **AHPA Digital Health Connection Project** in collaboration with the Australian Digital Health Agency. This national initiative is focused on supporting AHPs and their organisations to strengthen their digital capability and make better use of the digital health tools that underpin safe, connected care. The project aligns with the [National Allied Health Digital Uplift Plan](#), released in December last year, and contributes to a coordinated, whole-of-sector approach to improving digital maturity across allied health.

Through the Connection Project, AHPA is providing practical, allied health-specific support for AHPs to build confidence and guide connection to core elements of the national digital health infrastructure, including:

- Healthcare Identifiers
- My Health Record
- Provider Connect Australia
- Electronic prescribing
- Cyber security awareness
- Selecting fit-for-purpose clinical information systems.

Over the coming months, AHPs can expect access to targeted resources, webinars and practical guidance to help them identify priorities and take achievable next steps in their digital health engagement. AHPA has also been working closely with the Australian Digital Health Agency and its member associations to redevelop the **Allied Health Digital Hub**, ensuring the updated platform is relevant and accessible. Designed to help AHPs understand and adopt digital health products, the refreshed Hub brings together the resources and information you need to navigate Australia's evolving digital health landscape. Explore the [Allied Health Digital Hub](#).

AHPs can begin their digital health journey by acquiring a [Healthcare Provider Identifier - Individual \(HPI-I\) number](#) and connecting it to their organisation's HPI-O. This is a key first step toward accessing and using national digital health tools.

You can also subscribe to the [AHPA Digital Digest](#) for useful digital health updates relevant to the allied health sector, or follow AHPA on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to participate in education opportunities such as sector-wide webinars.



[Karen Hayes, Occupational Therapist & Lecturer, School of Allied Health, Charles Sturt University - Speaking about her PdD research](#)



Karen is an occupational therapy academic who has been working in teaching and research at Charles Sturt University since the Occupational therapy program started on the Port Macquarie campus in 2018. She has a background in both inpatient and outpatient clinical settings in public health across rural and metropolitan areas, and in organisational development and workforce.

Karen's current PhD research project is entitled **Outreach or Out-of-Reach? What OT access really looks like on the North Coast**. In this work she is looking for ways to improve justice and equity in rural healthcare design and delivery. As she explains: *"Living and working on the North Coast, many of us know that access to allied health looks very different once you leave town. Working with colleagues I have set out to quantify this limitation of OT services using national workforce data and real road travel times."*

Karen explains the situation further:

“While regional centres like Port Macquarie show relatively high access to OTs on paper, the data reveal a sharp drop-off in access as you move inland or along the coast into smaller communities. In many areas, people are counted as “having access” only because a therapist could theoretically drive for up to an hour – not because services are local, available, or sustainable.”

Karen argues that on the North Coast, where occupational therapy (and other allied health services) depend heavily on outreach services, travel is essential for effective practice, seeing people in homes, schools, farms, and community settings. Yet current funding models increasingly shift the cost of travel onto providers, threatening the viability of outreach services across our region.

“For North Coast allied health, the message is clear: workforce growth alone is not enough. If outreach is essential, funding and policy must treat it that way.”

Alongside her research report, Karen and team provide an interactive dashboard to allow clinicians, services, and planners to explore access at a local level – including Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Lismore and surrounding communities. It provides a powerful visual tool to support advocacy for place-responsive funding, workforce strategies, and rural training pathways.

Explore the interactive dashboard: *(best done on a computer rather than phone):*

<https://csu-span.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/bef9db9da2dd46b1aaf62dd043307aac>

Read the report: <https://sarrah.org.au/> *(scroll down to find it)*



[SARRAH National Rural & Remote Allied Health Conference \(Coffs Harbour\)](#)

Theme: *A sense of place: Embracing Local Knowledge*

Subthemes: Cultural Responsiveness and Sustainability; Local Wisdom in Action; Improving Access to Care

When: 9 – 11 November, 2026

Where: Pacific Bay Resort, Coffs Harbour

Convenor: SARRAH (Services for Rural & Remote Allied Health)

The SARRAH 2026 Conference Scientific Committee is thrilled to invite submissions of Abstracts for the SARRAH 2026 Conference scheduled for October 2026 in Coffs Harbour.

Abstracts should address the below conference theme and subthemes.

A sense of place: Embracing Local Knowledge marks the 16th National Conference for Rural and Remote Allied Health. The Conference will bring together health leaders with a shared vision of growing a fit-for-purpose rural and remote health workforce committed to caring for rural and remote Australians, so that they have access to the healthcare they need to stay whole, healthy, and fully participating in society.

We encourage you to join in the conversation - be a part of the movement to nurture sustainable and resilient rural and remote communities!

Submit your Abstract by 19 April - download the **Call for Abstracts** document [HERE](#).



[IAHA National Conference: Boorloo \(Perth\): 30 Nov - 2 Dec](#)

The IAHA National Conference recognises the contribution that members, communities and organisations have made to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and First Nations communities internationally, including:

- Building culturally responsive connections, partnerships and relationships;
- Valuing cultures and diversity, respecting cultural ways of knowing, being and doing
- Contributing to the development of culturally safe and responsive practice within an allied health and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context;
- Strengths based solutions led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve access to (allied) health services; and
- Community-led, translational allied health and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.



We are now calling for abstracts for concurrent oral presentations and workshops. [VIEW THE ABSTRACT GUIDELINES](#)

IAHA National Conference scholarships

These scholarships aim to increase participation from IAHA members to attend the 2026 IAHA National Conference. They will also support and encourage national networking with allied health and other related sectors specifically focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. [VIEW SCHOLARSHIP GUIDELINES VIEW T&C'S](#)

For all scholarship and abstract enquiries, please contact Amanda Johnstone, Event Coordinator, at amanda@iaha.com.au or Ph +61 2 6285 1010. [Find out more on the IAHA Conference webpage](#)

IAHA National Excellence in Allied Health Awards

The purpose of the IAHA National Excellence in Allied Health Awards is to recognise the contribution of IAHA members to their profession and/or improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These Excellence Awards showcase the outstanding achievements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health and provides identifiable allied health role models to inspire all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to consider and pursue a career in allied health.

The date for 2026 nominations will be announced soon. For more information please contact amanda@iaha.com.au -- **Nominations open 4 May 2026.**



Health Workforce Scholarship Program

Attention all AHPs working in private practice, the NGO sector or in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. These important scholarships can assist your post-grad training and/or your attendance at relevant conferences and workshops. The upcoming SARRAH and IAHA conferences spring to mind, as well as the Health North Conference at Kingscliff in late May.

The Program is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, administered in New South Wales by Rural Doctors Network (RDN).

A new round for scholarship applications is open from 1/4/2026 – 13/5/2026

Workforce Scholarship Program (HWSP) provides scholarships and bursaries to help health professionals in rural and remote Australia retain and enhance their skills, capacity and scope of practice.

The HWSP is available to medical, nursing, midwifery, allied health, dental and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals providing primary health care in the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services sector, non-government organisations and private practice.

[View the Health Workforce Scholarship Program Fact Sheet 2024 here.](#)

More Scholarship details can be found here: <https://www.ruraldoctors.org/site/hwsp>

Supporting Kids & Families: Digital Approaches to Anxiety Disorders in Children

When: Tuesday, 5th May, 5.00 – 6.00

Where: Webinar

Convenor: NCAHA

Cost: Free

With a focus on allied health approaches, join Prof Jennie Hudson (Black Dog Institute) and Assoc Prof Lisa Olive (Deakin University) for a practical, evidence-based webinar on supporting children struggling with anxiety. Explore early identification, parent-led and telehealth interventions, and the role of lifestyle factors including sleep, nutrition, and physical activity.

Discover real-world programs, including national clinical trials of Courage Quest and CALM-Kids, designed to improve access, outcomes and clinical practice. **More information and registration** [HERE](#)

Northern Rivers Local Pain Collective

Be a part of the conversation on best practice pain education and care

When: Wednesday, 6th May, 6.00 pm

Where: Crystallbrook, Byron Bay

Convenor: Simon Sullivan, Northern Rivers Local Pain Collective

Cost: Free

What are Local Pain Collectives? A LPC is cross discipline group of like-minded health professionals meeting discuss best practice pain education and care. A space to share knowledge, ideas and work together to help those living with persistent pain.

What is Involved? Through regular meetings your local pain collective will build partnerships and learn about Pain Revolution's 4 essential pain facts. [Pain Facts](#) | [Pain Revolution](#).

There will be plenty of opportunity for collaboration and discussion. Find out more www.painrevolution.org or contact simonsullivan@painrevolution.org

Palliative Care Project ECHO

Venue: Webinar
Date/Time: Tue 17 Jun 2025, 01:00 pm - 02:00 pm AEST
Event Organiser: Palliative Care Project ECHO
Contact: University of Queensland Centre for Online Health
Phone: [+61 7 3176 1685](tel:+61731761685) Email: [Click here](#)

Palliative Care ECHO is a series of interactive case based virtual mentoring sessions that address a range of palliative care topics. Discussion of de-identified patient cases and 10 minute lectures aim to increase palliative care knowledge, skills and confidence in primary care health professionals. Currently, **monthly** sessions are held **via Zoom** on the **third Tuesday of every month – 1pm to 2pm (AEST)**. We expect additional sessions will be run in the coming months.

Sessions consist of:

- A Palliative Care Specialist presentation – topic of the month (ten minute talk)
- A deidentified case presentation by a primary care professional ([do you have a case you'd like to share? Click here](#))
- Lots of opportunities for Q&A and discussion

How does it work? Project ECHO (Extension for Community Health Outcomes) is a virtual knowledge-sharing network designed to create a 'learning loop' between health professionals with the aim of increasing knowledge and access to health care in local communities.

What are the benefits?

- A virtual network to share palliative care knowledge & experiences
- An opportunity to connect with a specialist palliative care team
- Improve access to effective palliative care for communities
- Promote choice for people with a life-limiting illness

[RSVP Here](#)

Healthy North Coast Health Through Ages and Stages Conference

This one-day education event bringing together primary health professionals to explore contemporary care across every stage of life.

Date: Saturday 30 May 2026
Time: 8:30am (for a 9:00am start) – 5:00pm
Location: Peppers Salt Resort & Spa, Kingscliff

Conference sessions will be streamed into interest areas, allowing participants the flexibility to tailor their learning experience by choosing from:

- Preventative Care
- Clinical Updates
- Digital Health and AI
- Practical Workshops
- Optional certified CPR Training

Don't miss this opportunity to networking and connect with health professionals in your area and gain 8.5 CPD hours. **Secure your place [here](#).**

**Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social & Emotional Wellbeing Resources
Connection. Strength. Resilience.**

The Strength and Resilience Portal provides a set of resources aimed at supporting resilience and reducing social and emotional harms to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The wellbeing resources and tools are freely available and have been developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support our mob, our communities and our workforce to help keep you safe and well. [See Resource](#)



[Mid and North Coast Health Pathways](#)

HealthPathways is an online portal which aims to guide best-practice assessment, management of common medical conditions and local referral pathways. [Mid and North Coast HealthPathways](#) Username: manchealth - Password: conn3ct3d

[New Pathways](#)

Sexual Dysfunction

[Referral](#)

Non-acute Neurosurgery Assessment

Non-acute Orthopaedic Assessment

[Reviewed and Updated HealthPathways](#)

[Clinical](#)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Assessment (MBS Item 715)

COVID-19 Vaccination

Endometriosis

Delirium

Down Syndrome

Guide to MBS Items

Hyperlipidaemia

Immunisation - Pregnancy

Medications for Osteoporosis

Metabolic Dysfunction-associated Fatty Liver Disease (MAFLD)

Older Person's Annual Health Assessment

Osteoporosis

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

Psoriasis

Urticaria and Angioedema in Adults

Weight Management in Adults

If you want to know more about NCAHA, please contact us at rob.curry1@outlook.com or NCAHAExecutive@hotmail.com



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