



North Coast **Allied Health Association**

May 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.



[Current Issues](#)

- Upcoming conferences

[What's Happening at NCAHA](#)

- CPD Events

[From the Field](#)

- STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture & Trauma Survivors)

[Member Spotlight](#)

- Luke Elias: HNC Clinical Council membership

[SARRAH Update](#)

- Allied Health, the NDIS and Integrity

[News from IAHA](#)

- IAHA National Excellence in Allied Health Awards

[CPD Alert](#)

- Healthy North Coast Health Through Ages and Stages Conference, Kingscliff, 30 May
- SARRAH National Rural & Remote Allied Health Conference – Coffs Harbour, 9 – 11 Nov
- IAHA National Conference: Perth Nov 30 – Dec 2
- Health Workforce Scholarship Program
- National Training – Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) for Mental Health Care
- The Welcome Experience: Meet and Mingle Event, Kingscliff
- Palliative Care NSW Professional Education Day

[Additional Resources](#)

- New Health Pathways



News Update

This month I bring to your attention three important conferences coming up for AHPs over the next 6 months:

- **Healthy North Coast Health Through Ages and Stages Conference:** 30 May, Kingscliff
- **SARRAH National Rural & Remote Allied Health Conference:** 9 -11 Nov, Coffs Harbour
- **IAHA National Conference:** 30 Nov – 2 Dec, Boorloo (Perth):

For more details on each of these events, go to the CPD Alert section.

All these events are worth your serious consideration for attendance. You are encouraged to apply to the **Health Workforce Scholarship Program at the Rural Doctors Network** to seek funding assistance for attendance. However, please note that scholarships cannot be awarded for events that are more than four months away. The current scholarship round closes on 13th May, however we are advised that a new scholarship round will open in early July, opening opportunities for assistance to attend both the SARRAH and IAHA conference events later in the year. We'll keep you posted.

[RDN - Health Workforce Scholarship Program](#)

Thank you,
Rob Curry – Executive Officer, NCAHA



NCAHA CPD Events

NCAHA CPD Events

- **Webinar: Supporting Kids & Families - Digital Approaches to Anxiety Disorders in Children.** This Webinar was held on Tuesday 5th May, with over 30 registrants. Great presentations from Professor Jennie Hudson from the Black Dog Institute and Assoc Professor Lisa Olive from Deakin University. *Presentations and recording available on request.*
- **The Pain Game: Tackling Chronic Challenges with Clinical Confidence – A forum for AHPs When:** Saturday 15th August; Where: UCRH, Lismore; More details to follow

For further details on any of the above, call Rob on P: 0429 999 005 or email:

NCAHAExecutive@hotmail.com



From the Field

STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors). NSW Health is currently seeking Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Dietitians in private practice in the Coffs Harbour region who may be interested in working with refugee and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients. The service offers a **fully funded model where client fees and interpreter costs are covered by STARTTS**, along with access to a local Community of Practice with cultural and trauma-informed training and support.

What STARTTS provides

- Full client fee for approved services
- Interpreter costs fully covered
- Referral coordination and clinical collaboration
- Cultural and Trauma-informed consultation support
- Free Access to STARTTS specialist training modules
- Connection to an established refugee health service

An EOI form can be accessed here: [STARTTS - Expression of Interest – Allied Health Clinicians \(Coffs Harbour\) – Fill in form](#)

If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please don't hesitate to contact STARTTS at STTS-BodyFocusedTeam@health.nsw.gov.au or 0431 041 363.



[Luke Elias, physiotherapist: Speaking on the HNC Clinical Advisory Council](#)



Luke Elias commenced his career as a physiotherapist and has over 25 years' experience across clinical practice, health management and leadership roles in both public and private health sectors. He has held senior management and executive positions across metro and regional services in NSW, with a strong focus on improving access and integration within primary and community-based care. Luke remains closely connected to the allied health workforce and understands the challenges and opportunities of delivering care across diverse and often under-served regional communities. In his current role as Director, Primary Health Programs & Partnerships with Healthy North Coast, Luke leads delivery of Primary Health Network programs across the region. He is passionate about strengthening primary care, supporting allied health to play a central role, and improving outcomes for vulnerable and priority populations across the NSW North Coast.

As an executive leader at Healthy North Coast, Luke plays a key role in supporting the **HNC Clinical Advisory Council** and is keen to see stronger allied health representation. He sees membership of this Council as a key opportunity for clinicians across the NSW North Coast to help shape the future of primary health care in our region. The Council was established as a formal advisory group to the HNC Board, and brings together a diverse group of clinicians to provide practical, on-the-ground insight into local health needs and system challenges. Around five years ago, the structure was streamlined, bringing together the region's three existing clinical councils (Northern NSW, Coffs Coast and Hastings Macleay) into a single, diverse and skills-based group providing strategic advice on health policies, programs and services.

At its core, the Council brings frontline clinical insight directly into planning, program design and service delivery. Members draw on their day-to-day experience to highlight what's working, where the pressure points are, and where gaps exist in services and workforce. This helps ensure Board decisions are grounded in real practice and reflect the needs of local communities.

For allied health professionals, the Council offers a practical way to have your voice heard, influence regional priorities and connect with peers across disciplines. The strong focus on multidisciplinary representation recognises the central role allied health plays in delivering accessible, person-centred care across the North Coast. As Luke explains:

"Allied health professionals bring a vital perspective to how care is delivered. Ensuring these voices are heard is essential to improving patient outcomes, strengthening access to care, and making a real difference in our communities,"

If you are interested in contributing your perspective or learning more about the Clinical Advisory Council, please contact Luke at lelias@hnc.org.au



Allied Health, the NDIS and Integrity

Presented below is a slightly abbreviated version of a recent article from SARRAH CEO Cath Maloney.

Integrity Shouldn't Cost Rural Communities Their Care: When we talk about the "integrity" of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, most people think of fraud, dodgy providers, or sharp practices that exploit participants. SARRAH supports strong action against all of these. Scheme integrity matters – for trust, for participant safety, and for the long-term future of the NDIS.



But integrity can't be pursued in a vacuum. And right now, the way integrity and pricing reforms are being applied is putting rural and remote Australians at risk of losing access to the very services the NDIS exists to provide. Recent changes to NDIS allied health pricing and compliance arrangements are being justified in the name of integrity and sustainability. In practice, they are disproportionately undermining service provision in rural and remote communities. Thin markets are becoming thinner. Ethical, locally based providers are being squeezed out. And participants are left with fewer –

sometimes no – real choices.

Let's be clear: there is little evidence that small and medium rural and remote allied health providers are driving fraud or sharp practices in the NDIS. Rural allied health professionals typically work in highly visible community settings. They have long-standing, personal relationships with clients and families. Their reputations matter. Their accountability is immediate and tangible – professional, cultural, and social. Yet increasingly, everyday realities of rural practice are being misread as potential non-compliance.

Higher costs driven by travel, accommodation, and low population density. Flexible scheduling to deal with weather, distance, and workforce shortages. Providing multiple supports in a single visit so participants don't have to travel repeatedly or miss out altogether.

These are not sharp practices. They are *necessary adaptations* to deliver ethical, participant-centred care outside metropolitan Australia. Without contextual understanding, legitimate rural service models risk being swept up in compliance frameworks designed for city markets.

We are deeply concerned that current integrity and pricing settings are not protecting rural NDIS participants – they are actively harming them. The [2023 Independent Review of the NDIS](#) found that around one-third of participants in small rural communities are not accessing therapy supports, even when those supports are included in their plans. Limited availability of services was identified as a key barrier. Despite this well-documented evidence, pricing changes that disproportionately impact rural providers have pressed ahead.

Over recent weeks, we've heard directly from providers across rural and remote Australia who are struggling with the consequences: clinicians distressed at having to tell long-term clients they can no longer provide services because travel is no longer viable; growing mental health strain on professionals who are trying to prioritise client needs while their businesses become unsustainable; families facing longer wait times, forced provider changes, or losing access to therapy altogether.

NDIS pricing policy cannot be separated from scheme integrity. Under-pricing essential services doesn't remove inefficiency – it creates risk. It drives burnout. It pushes ethical providers out of the market. And it favours large metropolitan-based corporate providers that can absorb losses at scale, even if their models are less responsive to local communities.

SARRAH supports genuine reform to strengthen the integrity of the NDIS. But integrity must be about more than compliance processes and price controls:

- It must recognise pricing as an integrity lever
- It must distinguish unethical behaviour from necessary rural adaptation
- It must value continuity of care and local expertise as assets, not inefficiencies
- And it must invest in the future – developing the rural and remote allied health workforce, protecting supervision, student placements, and service development that build sustainable rural workforces.

What can SARRAH do?

SARRAH's voice is strongest when it is backed by the lived experience and expertise of our members. If you are seeing the impacts of NDIS pricing and integrity settings in your workplace or community, we encourage you to take action. Tell us how recent NDIS pricing or compliance changes are affecting your clients, your workforce, or your service viability. Real-world examples from rural and remote communities are critical to influencing decision-makers.



[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.**



[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 access 8.5 CPD hours - **Secure your place [here](#)**.

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!

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>

IAHA National Conference: Boorloo (Perth): 30 Nov – 2 December



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](#)

National Training – Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) for Mental Health Care

Venue: Webinar

Date/Time: May -& Jun 2026 Workshop Schedule, starting Tue 12 May 2026, 12:00pm-02:00 pm AEST

Event Organiser: CESPHN

Email: [Click here](#)

The IAR Guidance (IAR) and Decision Support Tool ([IAR-DST](#)) is designed to establish a national, standardised approach to conducting initial mental health assessments, and support general practitioners and other health professionals to recommend the most appropriate level of care for a person seeking mental health support.

The IAR and the IAR-DST are an Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Aging initiative bringing together information from various sources, including Australian and international evidence and advice from various leading experts.

There are two options to complete the training:

1. Online live workshop

The first component of the workshop will focus on:

- An introduction to the IAR

- Orientation to the domains, levels of care, and decision support tool.

The second component of the workshop is an interactive practical activity, which includes:

- Application of the IAR-DST using a consumer scenario.
- Clinical judgement and supported decision-making.

This is an RACGP and ACRRM approved event and a certificate of attendance will be issued to self-report your CPD hours. The workshop will be facilitated by an experienced IAR Training and Support Officer (TSO) from the National TSO Network. The session teaches you how to use the IAR-DST, not how to conduct an assessment. The IAR-DST is not an assessment tool; it is a decision aid. Once you have completed a session you are able to use all adaptations of the IAR-DST.

By registering for an event, registration details will be transferred to ZOOM Webinar. Click on the links below to register:

- [Tuesday 12 May 2026, 12-2pm AEST](#)
- [Wed 20 May 2026, 1:00pm-3:00pm AEST](#)
- [Thurs 28 May, 10:00am-12:00pm AEST](#)
- [Thurs 11 June, 10:30am- 12:30pm AEST](#)

2. e-Learning Module

A self-paced [eLearning module](#) has been designed for health professionals who are suitably qualified and experienced in mental health assessment and/or treatment. This flexible online format enables health professionals and intake interviewers/care navigators, including non-clinical staff, to complete training at a time and place that suits their operational needs. For more information on this format, please refer to this [video](#). For more information about either training option, contact: iar.dst@cesphn.com.au. [RSVP Here](#)

The Welcome Experience: Meet and Mingle Event, Kingscliff

Are you an Essential Worker who has recently relocated to the Northern Rivers?

Join The Welcome Experience for a social night out. Partners and family members are warmly welcome.

When: Friday 22 May 2026, 5:30pm - 7:30pm

Where: Kingscliff Beach Bowls Club, 131 Marine Pde

- Welcome soft drink on arrival
- Lucky door prizes
- Goodie bags
- Nibbles provided

Parking available and event is close to public transport. RSVP by Friday 15 May 2026. **To attend, register at:**

[The Welcome Experience Social Event Kingscliff - May 2026](#)

Palliative Care NSW Professional Education Day

Venue: Online

Date/Time: Fri 15 May 2026, 09:00 am - 03:00 pm AEST

Event Organiser: Palliative Care NSW

Each year Palliative Care NSW (PCNSW) holds their Professional Education Day on the Friday of National Palliative Care Week. This is a great opportunity to hear about advances in palliative care, to learn from case studies, to reconnect with peers, make new connections, and to expand your clinical knowledge to support you to do the work you do.

This year the Sydney event will be live streamed to nine regional locations across NSW, including **Kyogle and Grafton**. This professional education event is for those working in palliative care, primary care or aged care. It is not suitable for the community. Sessions include trauma Informed and culturally safe care, advances in

models of care, palliative care in aged care, and pain and symptom management.

Regional Hubs: Kyogle & Grafton

A full day program featuring 10+ speakers

FREE registration with thanks to PCNSW, Northern NSW LHD and the NSW Ministry of Health

Numbers are limited so register quick to secure your spot.

Find out more here: <https://palliativecarenewsw.org.au/event/2026-professional-education-day/>

Register for Kyogle or Grafton here: <https://events.humanitix.com/northern-nsw-lhd-regional-hubs-palliative-care-nsw-professional-education-day-2026>

[RSVP Here](#)



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



Copyright © 2026 North Coast Allied Health Association, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.

