
North Coast
Allied Health Association



July 2024 - June 2025

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

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Chair
Alira Bayndrian

Deputy Chair
Robyn Fitzroy

Executive Officer
Rob Curry



NCAHA acknowledges and respects the traditional custodians across these lands where we represent Allied Health Professionals.

We acknowledge and respect past and present Elders and all Aboriginal people across these nations.

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



Map Source: Healthy North Coast - www.hnc.org.au

SUMMARY



NCAHA remains unique in the Australian context, being the only independent and incorporated multi-disciplinary association of allied health professionals in regional Australia.

In this model of representation, NCAHA aims to be a voice for allied health service provision in a regional area, raising the quality of allied health services, addressing service gaps, and promoting better integrated healthcare for regional communities. It is the hope of NCAHA that similar associations or entities will eventually be established in other regions around the country as a means of enhancing healthcare in these settings and improving health outcomes for rural and regional Australians.

The key goal for NCAHA in 2024-25 has been to expand and consolidate our support services and activities for the membership. In particular, there has been a focus on providing relevant CPD (Continuing Professional Development) forums in each of the three main regions across the North Coast footprint. In addition, efforts were made to establish an online member portal to facilitate engagement among the membership and support functions, such as communities of practice.

The overarching ambition has been to position NCAHA for significant membership growth, building on the acknowledged contribution of NCAHA to enhancing allied health practice on the North Coast. NCAHA remains committed to advocating for improved allied health services across the region and supporting the broad range of allied health professionals to deliver the best services possible.



Rob Curry

Executive Officer



Alira Bayndrian

Chair



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1. NCAHA DIRECTORS



Alira Bayndrian – Chair (commenced March 2024)–**Deputy Chair** (until March 2024)
Clinical psychologist and practice principal, Coffs Harbour
Committee Member - Australian Psychological Society, Mid North Coast Branch
Healthy North Coast, Clinical Council Member

Robyn Fitzroy – Chair (until March 2024) – **Deputy Chair** (commenced March 2024)
Business owner and Health Planner
Executive Officer SCU Clinical Trial

Sarah Miles – Company Secretary

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

Michael Woods

Director, The Lismore Hub
Exercise Physiologist

Kerry Hardey

Physiotherapist, Ocean Shores
Co-founder, The Intergenerational Project

David Goodwin

Private practice physiotherapist, Hoys Allied Health
Healthy North Coast Clinical Council Member

Nicole Turner

Dietitian
Aboriginal Workforce Engagement Officer at Rural Doctors Network (RDN), NSW
Acting CEO AHMRC (Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council)
Chair, Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA)

Sarah Crook

Occupational Therapist
Clinical Educator, University Centre for Rural Health

Executive Officer - Rob Curry

NCAHA DIRECTORS



NCAHA Directors

Front L to R: Kerry Hardey, Sarah Miles, Alira Bayndrian

Back L to R: Rob Curry (Executive Officer), Robyn Fitzroy, Michael Woods

Below: Nicole Turner, David Goodwin, Sarah Crook



2. KEY ISSUES & ACTIVITIES



2.1 Changes to the Board

At the 2024 AGM Alira Bayndrian, Michael Woods and Sarah Miles were re-elected to the Board. A fourth vacancy was filled by new Director, Sarah Crook. Robyn Fitzroy completed her three-year term as Chair and Alira Bayndrian commenced as Chair in March 2025.

2.2 Financial challenges

The cash position of the Association has remained stable, but limited, with just over \$20 000 in the bank as of June 30, 2025. NCAHA is currently sustained with an annual grant from Healthy North Coast, the grant made on the basis that the work of NCAHA contributes to key goals of HNC to improve the capacity of the primary care workforce to meet needs on the North Coast.

The NCAHA Board, understands the need to both diversify and expand the streams of funding, to increase annual revenue, and build funds available for the work of NCAHA to support allied health professionals in the provision of better quality and more accessible care. Discussions and planning continue to improve the reach to and advocacy of Allied Health Professionals; to increase membership; and the investment in these pursuits.

2.3 Member Engagement

NCAHA keeps in touch with its membership through monthly newsletters and regular on-line messaging highlighting matters of relevance in health care provision and key CPD opportunities available in the region and beyond.

In late 2024, NCAHA established its own on-line member portal as an interactive site for members to engage in a safe, less informal environment for sharing information, raising issues and asking questions. The portal site was located on the Allied Health Academy (TAHA) on-line platform. NCAHA contracted TAHA to develop and maintain the NCAHA portal. Unfortunately, TAHA lost its primary funding in 2025 which forced the untimely closure of NCAHA's on-line platform.

NCAHA remains committed to re-establishing a member virtual meeting place. This is a relevant member service that can promote member networking and engagement as well increasing the identity and value of NCAHA.

2.4 Advocacy

A priority activity for NCAHA is to advocate for AHPs, with a focus on improving allied health service provision in areas where service gaps or deficiencies exist in current services for North Coast residents. The following issues have been a focus in this reporting period:

- **Mental health services for children under 12 years:** NCAHA has highlighted mental health services for children under 12 years as being a key area of deficient health workforce and expertise. This is evidenced by excessive waiting lists for children and their families to see psychologists and counsellors, as well as other allied health professionals and paediatric medical specialists. We are making the case that early intervention for mental health challenges experienced by children is deficient and requires both local (regional) and national policy solutions.
- **Changes to NDIS:** NCAHA has been concerned about the negative impacts of Commonwealth changes to fees chargeable by allied health professionals within the NDIS program. There are concerns that these changes may undermine allied health practices' ability to deliver NDIS services sustainably. NCAHA representatives met with Pat Conaghan, Member for Lyne, in August 2025 to discuss our concerns and support solutions. Additionally, NCAHA has collaborated with local AHP practices to encourage the use of the national NDIS Harm Tracker to monitor the negative impacts of the new fee structure taking effect on July 1, 2025.
- **Northern NSW Parkinson's Nurse program:** A finding from the NCAHA forum on Allied Health Management of Parkinson's Disease in Lismore in April, 2025, was the uncertainty of State funding for the Northern Rivers Parkinson's Nurse position beyond 30 June. Allied health participants at the forum advised that the Parkinson's Nurse played an important role in the district in terms of supporting effective cross-disciplinary referrals and integration of multi-disciplinary health team roles in effectively coordinating care for Parkinson's clients. NCAHA was able to raise this concern of program defunding in correspondence to local members of NSW State Parliament, the Ministry of Health, and the NSW Minister for Health. Subsequently, funding for the Parkinson's Nurse Program was extended with our intervention in this matter contributing to the positive outcome.



- **Commonwealth Aged Care Changes:** NCAHA members have concerns about the impact on allied health businesses from changes for Commonwealth Aged Care Programs – Support-at-Home and Residential Aged Care. Modifications to fees that AHPs can charge are due 1 November 2025. NCAHA has scheduled a Webinar on this issue to support members with information and strategies for protecting businesses, with a presentation to be provided in August by the senior policy officer at Allied Health Professions Australia.
- **SARRAH Conference 2026:** NCAHA collaborated with Charles Sturt University, and was successful in its bid to bring the 2026 SARRAH National Conference to the North Coast. It will be held in Coffs Harbour. The apt theme of a 'sense of place: Embracing Local Knowledge' gives NCAHA an opportunity to connect and promote local practices on a national scale.

2.5 Membership Drive

NCAHA is a member-based organisation and values the connection and commitment of its members. At 1 July 2024, NCAHA had 140 members and at 1 July 2025 there were 180 members. This is a 30% increase. In June 2025, NCAHA launched a dedicated membership campaign to increase membership during the 2025-26 year. The goal is to continually increase membership to at least 20% of the total number of AHPs practising on the North Coast which equates to 400 members. That reach into the allied health domain would demonstrate an even more credible key representative body for AHPs in the region and beyond due to its uniqueness as a representative voice for all allied health professions.

Key strategies for the membership campaign include:

- **Building the value proposition** for membership through CPD offerings, networking events, and provision of information, resources and advocacy for allied health workforce
- **Support from key regional partner organisations** to promote NCAHA membership (HNC, local universities, the LHDs Local Health Districts)
- **Promotion by current members** of the benefits of NCAHA membership.



2.6 Partnerships

NCAHA understands that strong collaboration with partner health organisations is a prerequisite for building influence and capacity to boost allied health workforce and service quality. In its 11 years, the key partner for NCAHA has been and remains Healthy North Coast (the North Coast NSW Primary Health Network). HNC's annual financial agreement enables NCAHA to conduct business. NCAHA and HNC share a memorandum of understanding describing joint activities and commitments to improving allied health workforce and integrated health care in the region.

Additionally, NCAHA receives much in-kind support from other entities to promote and support allied health service access and provision. NCAHA solicits and has received support from regional universities, to collaborate on research projects and particularly on CPD activities. Southern Cross and Charles Sturt Universities, the University Centre for Rural Health and University of Newcastle contributed in many ways like providing training facilities and access to students.

NCAHA has members from the local NSW Local Health Districts and is building closer connections with the goal of better supporting allied health programs and improving integration of healthcare across the sectors.

Allied Health & NDIS for Children Forum - Presenters

Brooke Whitaker: Social Futures, **Stacey Walker:** Private practice Occupational Therapist, **Samantha Poole:** Physiotherapist, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, **Chelsea Luker:** Private practice Psychologist, **Amy Jenkins:** Northcott, Early Childhood



2.7 CPD Program

A survey of members in late 2023 revealed a number of priority areas for CPD events, including: musculo-skeletal topics, mental health care, paediatrics and the NDIS.

In response, NCAHA led and collaborated on CPD:

- **Allied Health and NDIS for Kids**
 - UCRH, Lismore, 14 Nov 2024

- **Allied Health Management of Parkinson's Disease**
 - UCRH, Lismore, 10 April 2025

- **NDIS forum**
 - Coffs Harbour, June 2025
 - cancelled due to insufficient registrations

- **Business Skills for Allied Health Professionals**
 - In collaboration with Healthy North Coast
 - 19 September 2024, Port Macquarie
 - 26 June 2025, Ballina

- **Chronic and Complex Care - 2025 Healthy North Coast Conference**
 - Coffs Harbour, May 2025
 - NCAHA assisted in planning and delivering

NCAHA has scheduled forums on Parkinson's Management and Chronic Pain in the second half of 2025, both in Port Macquarie.

NCAHA will continue to prioritise the delivery of relevant CPD programs across the North Coast for members and their allied health colleagues in the field. We believe these programs offer important information and resources, and provide great opportunities for networking with health practitioners who may otherwise be professionally isolated working in a rural/regional health setting.



3. STRATEGIC DIRECTION



NCAHA's strategic direction remains steady and focussed on achieving fair access to allied health services across all communities. The Board will review and renew the Strategic Plan during the next reporting period.



NORTH COAST ALLIED HEALTH ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2022

Vision: The best possible health and wellbeing for the North Coast Community

Mission: Strive for fair access to allied health services in our community

1

EMBED THE VALUE OF ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- Strategically represent Allied Health
- Build community awareness
- Harness allies/supporters of Allied Health
- Promote evidence for Allied Health interventions
- Working with non-AHPs
- Strategically represent Allied Health

2

ENHANCE ALLIED HEALTH CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

- Promote social structure supports for Allied Health
- Build business support for Allied Health practice
- Advocate for Allied Health quality and integrity
- Promote Allied Health workforce development
- Respond to gaps in Allied Health services
- Provide and promote professional development

3

BUILD A RESILIENT, EFFECTIVE, STRONGER, DYNAMIC AND IMPACTFUL ASSOCIATION.

- Build a value proposition
- Grow the membership
- Build Allied Health leadership
- Source new income streams
- Communication and marketing
- Resourcing association
- Explore a national regional Allied Health network

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4. NCAHA FINANCES



The financial position of the Association has changed very little during the 2024-25 year, with slightly less income for this financial year (\$45,078) compared to 2023-24 (\$51,298).

The Profit and Loss for 2024-25 was plus \$2,389 compared to the previous year's \$12,157.

The Cash-at-Bank at June 30, 2025 was \$24,475, slightly higher than the figure for the previous year.

These figures indicate that the Association's financial position is stable; however, the available resources limit further expansion of activities aimed at enhancing allied health practices on the North Coast. To support continued growth and advance its vision for improved health services in the region, NCAHA will need to secure additional funding sources.

Of note are the comments of the NCAHA's finance officer:

"The business has enough cash to run for 6 months and then it will need a further injection but is solvent as at 30.6.25 and can pay its bills as and when due."



5. ACHIEVEMENTS 2024-2025



NCAHA is pleased to have made effective progress on several key objectives over the 2024-25 financial year.

- **Increased membership:** NCAHA has expanded its membership over the past two years from just under 100 members to around 180 as at June 2025. This is significant growth and it is a key organisational aim to get the membership up over 300 by June 2026. Such numbers would greatly enhance the credibility of NCAHA to represent on allied health issues in the region, and therefore facilitate the Association's mission to achieve fair access to allied health services in our community.
- **Enhanced member support:** Increased membership is clearly a result of enhanced member services, especially with CPD offerings and opportunities for networking between AHPs. NCAHA plans to continue to develop these member services to support and promote a stronger regional allied health sector and more firmly consolidate NCAHA as strong voice for better allied health services for North Coast communities.
- **Growing representation:** NCAHA has consolidated its position as a member entity of the local PHN. NCAHA has also through its advocacy, established a reputation as a strong and clear voice for improved allied health services and better healthcare in the region. In addition, NCAHA is often consulted on issues of health research and has partnered with universities on significant research projects.
- **A stabilised financial position:** NCAHA finished the 2024-25 year with a buffer of cash at the bank and with good prospects for increased funding for 2025-26. This is the strongest financial position the Association has seen, and it augers well for more resources in the future to undertake the task of improving healthcare on the North Coast.



6. FUTURE GOALS



NCAHA has a number of goals for focus over the coming 12 months.

- **Membership Drive:** A membership drive will boost the numbers of allied health professionals and allies actively engaged in improving allied healthcare in the region. The aspiration is to achieve a membership of 300-400 by June 2026, and ultimately for member numbers to exceed 20% of the total number of AHPs living and working on the North Coast.
- **A stronger CPD Program:** In recent years NCAHA has built its professional development offerings in the region to provide at least one allied health workshop in each of the three main regions in the North Coast footprint each year (Northern Rivers, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie). The ambition over the coming year is to build this to at least 2 forums in each region per year, as a meaningful contribution to enhancing allied health practice and connecting health professionals across sectors.
- **Building NCAHA's Funding Base:** In 10 years of operation, it has been a constant challenge to find the adequate financial resources to conduct the necessary business for the achievement of the Association's mission of fair or equitable access to allied health services for all residents of North Coast communities. This challenge remains today, but it is a core focus of the Board of Directors to diversify our sources of funding and increase the overall quantum of funds available to underwrite Association activities. Although NCAHA relies principally on the volunteer efforts of its Directors and members, a certain amount of money is required for the maintenance of incorporation, administration, and to pay for work that needs to be undertaken.



FUTURE GOALS



- **Promoting Better Integrated Care:** The primary care field on the North Coast remains significantly disjointed in terms of the ability of the multi-disciplinary health workforce to wrap around clients with clear and efficient communication between the different health professionals involved with any given client. This can mean suboptimal referral processes and team capacity that may limit necessary access to allied health services in the community.

NCAHA remains committed to improving the capacity for connection between health professionals in the region in the name of better integrated care. In particular, NCAHA will continue to advocate for enhanced engagement of allied health professionals in digital health care systems that link the multi-disciplinary health team.



CPD Event Lismore

Rob Curry, NCAHA Executive Officer and **Leanne Thompson**



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