

CRRMH - Post-hearing responses - Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales

Questions on notice – expansion on Prof Perkins response

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Professor Perkins, one last question. I understand you lost a contract; is that correct? Ms Lourey referred to that, that the services being provided by yourselves have actually been contracted out to another organisation.

1. Our last substantive contract to run the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH), including the RAMHP program, a research program and a physical Centre based at Bloomfield Hospital grounds in Orange, ran from 2016-2020 ending December.
2. Throughout 2020 we were assured of continued CRRMH funding. We engaged in extensive planning but were unable to garner clear guidance from the NSW Mental Health Branch (MHB). A comprehensive business case was submitted in July 2020 to run the CRRMH and the RAMHP program, including its 19.5 FTE RAMHP Coordinators. The CRRMH and MHB met in August. At this meeting, the MHB noted that the proposal was over budget, and the six drought-funded RAMHP Coordinators funded from temporary funds were not to be included in this contract.
We recognise there were challenges with the pandemic and a severely delayed NSW budget in November for the MHB.
3. December 2020 - the CRRMH contract was extended six months to June 30, 2021, to align with NSW Health's preference for financial year contracts and to allow the negotiation of refunding. At this time, the MHB extended the contracts of RAMHP Coordinators for five years, directly from their respective Local Health Districts.
4. February 2021 – the CRRMH submitted a 5-year funding report and impact assessment (see infographic summary p2). We were notified that the contract would go out to open tender by the end of March.
5. March 2021 - the tender opening date was delayed to July and a 3-month extension to the CRRMH contract was given to 30th September, to allow the process to occur.
6. July 2021 – two tenders were released – a rural mental health research partnership and the management of RAMHP. The released tenders did not include the continuation of a physical centre (30% budget reduction on 2016 rates for research and a revised framing). The four-week tender window was challenging to produce two high quality tender submissions, particularly with two senior RAMHP-facing staff away (one on maternity leave and one away due to serious illness).
7. 3rd September 2021 – The University of Newcastle was invited to second round (interview) for the Rural Mental Health Research Partnership.
8. 6th October - we received notification that we were unsuccessful in both tenders.
9. We ensured professional handover to the successful tenderers by 30th November – Grand Pacific Health for RAMHP (relevant materials, documentation, websites and numerous meetings) and the Peregrine Centre for research (one meeting). We note preparation for RAMHP transitions began in February with considerable communication to the Mental Health Branch regarding risks for program function and continuity – particularly pertaining to vehicles (with delays on new vehicles due to pandemic), travel and how collaborative management and IT tools could be retained. We had no feedback as the Mental Health Branch indicated it could not communicate with us due to probity issues around the tenders.
10. The extended period of funding uncertainty led to increasing uncertainty for staff and the leadership team and substantial staff losses over the period and demanding workloads for those who remained and oversaw the continued work of the CRRMH and RAMHP program.
11. December 2021 – the physical CRRMH building closed after 20 years, with library closure, resource and document sorting, shredding and archiving.
12. The CRRMH has a small team of seven working from home to finishing externally funded research projects by July 2022. Without ongoing core funding such as previously provided by the NSW Health Mental Health Branch, it is unlikely that the CRRMH will continue beyond this window. This rurally-based research capability will likely be dispersed and expertise lost from the field of rural and remote mental health.



Research

66 conference presentations

48 projects externally funded across

- Research (\$1.1M)
- Evaluation (\$165K)
- Consultancy (\$533K)
- Services (\$3M)

Policy impact

- **1** senate presentation
- **3** position papers
- **7** policy submissions

Orange Declaration on Rural Mental Health: **36** endorsements from **19** organisations



Impact: h-index = 10, 289 citations
Collaboration: 58 institutions (15 international, 28 NSW)
Web of Science 5 year

\$4.8M leveraged external funding across

- Rural mental health service improvement (\$2.3M)
- Rural suicide prevention (\$1.5M)
- Rural adversity (\$567K)
- Rural wellbeing (\$377K)



Programs & Services

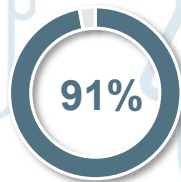
Delivered mental health literacy training to **41,991** participants

11,499 people linked to mental health services

2,231 community events attended

129,554 Glove Box Guides distributed

85% of partner organisations agreed RAMHP linking fills a service gap



Of participants reported that the training had been **useful** for their role or job

Of participants reported that the training had **increased** their awareness of available mental health services and resources



Community & Engagement

250,000 How Are You Going posters distributed

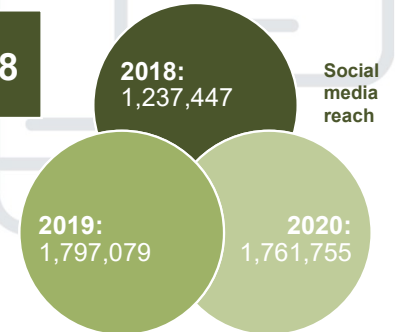
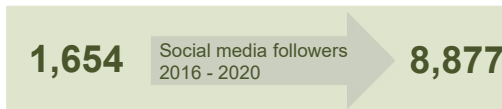
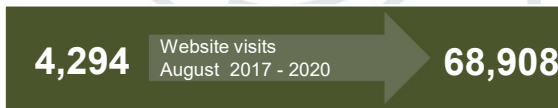
Mentioned in **1,987** media articles

15,234 listens to Let's Talk podcast

15,354 resource downloads

13,023 hits on blog articles

6,265 visits to You Got This Mate website (launched April 2020)



Operational Excellence

8,728 external users of CRRMH conference rooms

↑ **132%** increase in resource distribution

Provided maintenance and support for **25** fleet cars

3,834 travel payments for RAMHP and CRRMH trips

IT Improvements

- Re-imaged **26** computers
- All files securely moved and stored on OwnCloud then SharePoint
- Updated records management

Library Services

939 literature searches