



# Centre for Rural & Remote Mental Health

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## QUEENSLAND

### NEWSLETTER

***Welcome to the first edition of the Centre's Newsletter***

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*We have pleasure in introducing to you  
the Centre's staff*”

#### **Some Brief Profiles:**

##### ***Dr Jennifer Bowers - CEO***

Jennifer holds an honours degree in Science and a PhD in Social Psychiatry from the Australian National University. Her background is in managing and leading reform in mental health services in Queensland at The Park and state-wide for South Australia. She has managed aged care and dementia programs as well as community care for the Commonwealth Government both nationally in Canberra and at a State level in Queensland. In the private sector, Jennifer has been involved in consulting in the development of healthcare services and distribution of health and rehabilitation equipment in Asia and marketing in tourism.

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##### ***Adjunct Professor Ernest Hunter – Queensland Health and Foundation Fellow of the CRRMHQ***

Ernest is an Australian medical graduate who trained in adult, child and cross-cultural psychiatry in the United States before returning to work in remote northern Australia. He completed a doctorate based on research undertaken over three years in the Kimberley region of Western Australia which was published as *Aboriginal Health and History: Power and prejudice in remote Australia* (Cambridge University Press). In 1992 he inaugurated the position of Regional Psychiatrist with Queensland Health providing clinical services to remote Indigenous communities of Cape York and the Torres Strait. He was the foundation Professor of Public Health (Mental Health) with the North Queensland Clinical School of the University of Queensland based in Cairns which subsequently became the North Queensland Health Equalities Promotion Unit. He returned to clinical practice with Queensland Health in 2001 but retains an adjunct academic position and remains involved in a range of projects including suicide prevention and the use of technology and multimedia approaches for health promotion. Ernest Hunter was instrumental in the development of the CRRMHQ. His initial vision followed by his leadership which drove extensive community consultations has led to the successful establishment and sound business base of the Centre. The Board has recently honoured him with the post of Foundation Fellow.



*Karen Down, Greg Pratt, Ernest Hunter,  
Ann Kreger, Jennifer Bowers and Liz Bulkstra*

### ***Ann Kreger – Manager Statewide Projects***

Ann Kreger now works as the Manager - Statewide Projects for the Centre. Her qualifications include Nursing, and Midwifery, Child Health, Primary Health Care and Mental Health. Ann has spent the past 25 years working in rural, remote and indigenous health in clinical and community service delivery, education, management, nursing research and health services evaluation roles (at national and regional levels). Over the past three years, in collaboration with Ernest Hunter, she was responsible for the feasibility study for the Centre, the 20 month Implementation phase and "A Review of Rural and Remote Mental Health Service Delivery and Policy" for Queensland Health through the University of Queensland. As a result of this work, Ann continues to play an integral role in the development of the activities and vision for the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Queensland.

### ***Greg Pratt – Manager Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Projects***

Greg is a descendant of the Noonucal people of North Stradbroke Island and he grew up in Laura (Far North Queensland) with the Ghughuyalangi people. Greg is a graduate of the University of Southern Queensland, where he attained a Bachelor of Science majoring in Applied Psychology in 1999. Greg also possesses a graduate diploma in Indigenous Mental Health from Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. He has extensive clinical experience in counselling and supporting people with mental illness, having worked in a variety of settings, including Drug & Alcohol, Community Mental Health, Child and Youth Mental Health and in Youth Detention. Greg has worked in both New South Wales and in Queensland, he has managed family wellness programs in Brisbane and was most recently employed as a counsellor at Wuchopperen Health Service in Cairns.

### ***Dr Elizabeth (Liz) Buikstra - Statewide Project Officer***

Liz grew up on a dairy farm on the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland. She completed an undergraduate degree and doctoral studies in Psychology at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba. She is currently studying for a Masters in Project Management. She has worked as a Research Fellow with the Centre for the Rural and Remote Area Health (USQ); as a Project Manager for James Cook University School of Medicine; and as a registered Psychologist with Queensland Health. Her current interests are in research and project work in the area of mental health, in particular resilience. She is looking forward to expanding her project experience into other areas of mental health.

### ***Karen Down - Business Manager***

Karen arrived in Australia with her husband from the UK on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006 and started working for the Centre 10 days later. Over the past 25 years she has worked for various companies in a number of industries in the UK. She has extensive experience in setting up administrative and accounting systems, and has successfully "computerised" a number of businesses. For the last 3 years before leaving the UK she ran her own business which offered accounting and administrative services to a number of small local companies. She is enjoying settling into the house she and her husband recently bought in Cairns and is adjusting to the Aussie way of life.

### ***Venessa Curnow – National Indigenous Liaison Officer "Indigenous People with Dementia"***

Hello readers. My name is Venessa Curnow, I have just started working with the National Office of Alzheimer's Association as the National Indigenous Liaison Officer. I am based in Cairns but have a national focus and work with the National Canberra office. I am co-located with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Queensland. I am a Torres Strait Islander, who has been working as a registered nurse in Indigenous health and aged care for the past ten years in a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland. In November last year, a National Indigenous Forum on Dementia was held in Adelaide. Participants agreed that dementia is an important issue in Indigenous communities and agreed on a National Framework of Action to address dementia. The Framework is contained in a Report on the Workshop called "***Beginning the Conversation – Addressing Dementia in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities***". The report can be accessed on [www.alzheimers.org.au](http://www.alzheimers.org.au). It contains information on some exciting projects including the development of an Indigenous specific cognitive tool (KICA), which has been validated in the Kimberly region, Western Australia and Northern Territory.

Alzheimer's Australia, South Australia, is in the final stages of developing an Indigenous Dementia Learning Resource to cater for the needs of various target groups. These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, elders and families, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals working in areas such as drug and alcohol, aged care, disability and mental health. Trainers, health educators and community educators working within an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context are also potential users of the resource. This resource will soon be available electronically and in limited numbers as a hard copy. I have spent a few days in Canberra developing a work plan that addresses the proposed actions in the Framework. There is a lot to do including arranging a presentation to Parliamentary Friends of Dementia at Parliament House. I can be contacted on phone 0414 930 617 or email: [venessa.curnow@alzheimers.org.au](mailto:venessa.curnow@alzheimers.org.au)



Venessa Curnow



## “ *The Social and Emotional Wellbeing Clinic Evaluation for Wuchopperen Health Service*”

Late last year, the CRRMHQ, James Cook University and Wuchopperen Health Service submitted an application for a scholarship for a post-graduate student to undertake an external evaluation of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Clinic at Wuchopperen Health Service. The clinic has been running for approximately four years. In consultation with Wuchopperen Health Service, the evaluation of the clinic would support capacity building activities of the service and inform broader SEWB and mental health service delivery by the development of the evidence base around models of practice for supporting indigenous people with co-morbid mental health and physical chronic illness. A student has been identified to progress this evaluation and it is anticipated that this project will commence in April.

## “ *Capacity building in drought affected communities of Central and South Western Queensland*”

Following a forum in Toowoomba on 19 January, 2007, the CRRMHQ has been working with Agforce Qld to develop a framework for capacity building in drought affected communities of central and south western Queensland.

There was considerable interest and support from over 40 participants in this forum. The day was most constructive and the group expressed support for AgForce Queensland to take a lead agency role in exploring the feasibility of a network with support from the CRRMHQ; considered that the CRRMHQ should form a strong alliance with the CRRMH NSW and the NSW Network in order to facilitate the transfer of projects and knowledge across borders; that the two lead agencies work together to examine the feasibility of a Queensland Network and in working together they identify key agencies and organisations for further consultations and seek resources to do so.

Participants were keen to have another meeting in three months which will be hosted by the Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation based at Kingaroy. The date for the meeting is Tuesday, 24 April 2007 commencing at 9.00am and finishing at 3.30pm. It will be held at the Auditorium at the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE on the corner of the Bunya Highway and Geritz Road, Kingaroy.

At the next meeting Agforce Qld and the CRRMHQ will give a joint presentation on progress to date around the framework and the proposed strategies. The work undertaken in NSW by the Farmers' Mental Health Network has informed the development of the framework and it is proposed that there will continue to be ongoing collaboration especially in relation to the evaluation of the Queensland specific initiatives. Representatives from the various regions have been invited to present an update of their local initiatives in "community capacity building, public education, cooperation, coordination and continuity planning" which will inform the development and implementation of the strategies.

Several organisations or individuals who have expressed an interest in becoming involved have been invited to the next forum. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact the Centre.



*Jim Petrich (Chairman, CRRMHQ) introducing Alan Brown (Executive Councillor, NSW Farmers Association) to the Toowoomba Forum in January.*

# “ Collaborating with or joining the Centre ”

## **Joining the Centre**

The legal structure for the CRRMHQ has been developed to facilitate additional organisations to participate through bilateral agreements with the Centre or to become a formal participant in the CRRMHQ. Minimum annual participant contributions can be cash or in-kind contributions to the value of \$20,000 in each financial year. CRRMHQ participant entitlements include membership to the Participant Executive Committee (PEC) which meets at least twice a year with voting entitlements based on the annual contribution. The PEC will perform the functions required of it under the CRRMHQ Agreement and provide advice and recommendations to the Board on the major issues relating to the operation of the Centre including:

- use of the resources available for activities for projects taking into account the objectives of the CRRMHQ;
- electing the Directors in accordance with the Agreement;
- receiving the Annual Reports on the operation of the Centre, including the Financial Statements;
- admission of new participants to the CRRMHQ; and
- other activities as may be required of it under the Agreement or requested of it by the Board.

For copies of the CRRMHQ agreement, company constitution or further information about Centre participation please contact the CEO.

## **Collaboration**

The Centre would be delighted to hear from you if you are undertaking research, project management or evaluations in our key areas. We are establishing a register and would be interested to learn about you, your areas of interest relevant to the centre, the organisation you are involved with and contact details.

*The Centre staff look forward to further developing productive working relationships with organisations and individuals interested in enhancing rural and remote mental health promotion, prevention and care, particularly in Indigenous communities.*



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