2026 PROGRAM

Western Alliance Annual Symposium

Day One

Monday 16 November, 9:30 am to 5:00 pm
The Mantra Hotel, Lorne

8:45 – 9:30 am — Registration and arrival tea/coffee

SESSION ONE: **Deakin Rural Health Research Impact Showcase**

How do we move from a good research question to meaningful change?
This interactive morning will explore how research contributes to change in knowledge, practice, policy, services and communities, and what makes those pathways more likely. Through a keynote, case study, panel discussion and practical workshop, we'll look at the role of purpose, people, partnerships, context and planning in creating research impact.

Heritage ballroom

9:30 am — Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country
A/Prof Kevin McNamara
Deputy Director, Research Deakin Rural Health

9:40 am — KEYNOTE: From Local Questions to Lasting Change: Achieving Research Impact in Rural and Regional Health
Ken Knight
Research Impact and Involvement Specialist; Honorary Senior Fellow, University of Melbourne

10:10 am — Case study presentation:
From Evidence to Expansion: The Partnered Pharmacist Medication Charting (PPMC) Journey
Gail Edwards
Lead Pharmacist, General Medicine, Alfred Health

10:30 am — Morning tea
Ballroom laneway — Catering by The Mantra Hotel

10:50 am

Panel session: Research Impact Unscripted: Pathways, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Facilitator: A/Prof Kevin McNamara, Deputy Director, Research Deakin Rural Health

Panelists:

- Bianca Kavanagh (PhD), Research Fellow Deakin Rural Health, Brophy Research and Evaluation Lead
- Cara Hill, Speech Pathologist at Barwon Health; PhD Candidate at Deakin University; Research at Grampians Health
- Ken Knight, Research Impact and Involvement Specialist; Honorary Senior Fellow, University of Melbourne
- Gail Edwards, Lead Pharmacist, General Medicine, Alfred Health

11:30 am

Purpose → People → Pathway Workshop: Bring a project. Build its impact pathway

Facilitator: Ken Knight
Research Impact and Involvement Specialist; Honorary Senior Fellow, University of Melbourne

This workshop will provide an opportunity to apply the ideas explored during the morning sessions to a current research project, emerging idea or service problem.

12.30 pm
Larder restaurant

Lunch

Catering by The Mantra Hotel

SESSION TWO: Spotlight on large regional projects supported by Western Alliance

Heritage ballroom

1:00 pm

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

Mr. Drew Aras
Executive Director, Western Alliance

1:05 pm

SESSION A

Facilitator: Mr. Drew Aras, Executive Director, Western Alliance

1. I-HEART: Implementation of HEART failure guidelines in Regional AusTralia
Deakin Distinguished Professor Andrea Driscoll
Chair of Nursing, Deakin University

2. SMART (Self-Management And Remote Technologies): a smart home system to support people living with heart failure
Dr Paul Jansons,
Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), Deakin University

3. Randomized E-hypnotherapy for Chronic Pelvic Pain Syndrome Trial (REST)
Professor Antonina Mikocka-Walus
Deputy Head of School, Psychology at Deakin University

4. Establishing Pathways to Improved Care for Cancer-related Sarcopenia (EPICCS)
Professor Nicole Kiss
Professor of Dietetics, Deakin University & Rebecca Nunes, Manager of Dietetics, Grampians Health

Ms. Rebecca Nunes
Manager of Dietetics, Grampians Health

5. Equitable Cancer Outcomes across Rural and Remote Australia (ECORRA)
Professor Anna Ugalde
Lead, ECORRA, Institute of Health Transformation, Deakin University

1:55 pm Panel Discussion

Facilitator: Mr. Drew Aras, Executive Director, Western Alliance

Panelists:
- Andrea Driscoll
- Paul Jansons
- Antonina Mikocka-Walus
- Nicole Kiss
- Rebecca Nunes
- Anna Ugalde

2:05 pm SESSION B

Facilitator: Mr. Drew Aras, Executive Director, Western Alliance

1. Pregnancy Research and Translation Ecosystem: The Farm PRT-E trial
Dr Sammy Dawson
Senior Research Fellow, Deakin University

Professor Peter Vuillermin
Chair in Medicine and Director of Research, Deakin University and Clinical Director of Research at Barwon Health

2. **The Safer Spaces Project: Co-designing Inclusive Primary Healthcare for LGBTQIA+ Young People in Rural Western Victoria**
Professor Alison Kennedy
Director, National Centre for Farmer Health

Associate Professor James Lucas
Honorary Fellow, Deakin University

3. **Co-designing and Scaling AgriSafe 2.0: A Multi-State Approach to Improving Farmer Health, Wellbeing and Safety**
Professor Alison Kennedy
Director, National Centre for Farmer Health

4. **The Healthy Regions Intervention (THRIVE) program**
Distinguished Professor Shane Thomas
Specialist Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor, Health, Federation University

5. **Enhancing work participation after stroke: Supporting regional and rural Australians (The RESET Trial)**
Associate Professor Alyna Turner
Theme Leader, IMPACT Clinical Trials and Interventions, Deakin University

3:00pm **Panel Discussion**

Facilitator: Mr. Drew Aras, Executive Director, Western Alliance

Panelists:
- Sammy Dawson
- Peter Vuillermin
- Alison Kennedy
- James Lucas
- Shane Thomas
- Alyna Turner

3:10 pm **Afternoon tea**
Ballroom laneway Catering by The Mantra Hotel

SESSION THREE: DELIVER: enhancing healthcare closer to home for older people in rural and regional areas

Heritage ballroom

3:30 pm

Presentation
Associate Professor Kate Huggins
DELIVER Program Manager

SESSION FOUR: STaRR Emerging Researcher Showcase

Heritage ballroom

4:00 pm

Welcome and introduction
Dr. Olivia King
Manager Research Capability Building, Western Alliance

1. Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip in a Regional Physiotherapy-Led Screening Service: Risk Factors, Bracing Outcomes and Practice Change
Alison Griffiths, Senior Physiotherapist, Grampians Health
STaRR seed grant recipient, 2025

2. Effectiveness of Prescribed Bladder Training on Quality of Life in Adults with Urinary Urge Incontinence: A Pre-Post Intervention Study
Sharon Homberg, Continence Team Leader, Western District Health Service
STaRR assessment pathway participant, 2025

3. Reviewing the Education and Self-Management Support in a Regional Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program – A pre-post quantitative pilot protocol
Kidman Ng, Physiotherapist, Grampians Health
STaRR assessment pathway participant, 2025 and STaRR seed grant recipient, 2026

4. Farmers' preferences and experience in accessing health, wellbeing and safety promotion
Lucinda Star, Research Assistant, National Centre for Farmer Health
STaRR assessment pathway participant, 2025

5. Balancing convenience and care in Gestational Diabetes management: A retrospective evaluation of a three-part evolving model of care using remote patient monitoring in the Geelong region
Kate van Berkel, Dietitian, Barwon Health
STaRR seed grant recipient, 2025

6.	The Influence of a Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing Program on Graduate Nurse Transition Experiences at South West Healthcare Anne Wakim, Clinical Support Nurse, South West Healthcare STaRR seed grant recipient, 2024
5:00 pm	Closing remarks Alison Buccheri STaRR Program Coordinator, Colac Area Heath

CLOSE OF DAY ONE

2026 Western Alliance Annual Symposium

Networking cocktail event and entertainment

MC - Mr. Drew Aras, Executive Director, Western Alliance

Monday 16 November, 6:00 pm

Lorne Hotel Rooftop, Lorne



Gabby Steel

Gabby is known for her powerhouse vocals, she is a talented musician with a gift for crafting memorable covers from 60s classics through to modern hits.

Having shared the stage with artists such as Kate Ceberano, Tex Perkins, and Christine Anu, Gabby has cemented her reputation as a rising star in the Australian music scene and is not one to be missed. Utilising a stomp box, tambourine and a percussive style of acoustic guitar, the "Geelong's Best Busker" winner is sure to have you tapping your feet.

2026 PROGRAM

Western Alliance Annual Symposium

Day Two

Regional and Rural Research Showcase

Tuesday 17 November, 8:45 am to 3:10 pm

The Mantra Hotel, Lorne

8:15 – 8:45 am	Registration and arrival tea/coffee
Outside lawn	
8:45 am	Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony Ms. Ebony Hickey, a Gulidjan woman
Heritage ballroom	
9:10 am	Opening address and announcement of 2026 Rapid Research Translation Grant recipients Mr. Drew Aras Executive Director, Western Alliance
9:20 am	KEYNOTE: From Commitment to Contribution, Necessary Conditions for First Peoples Research Excellence Ms. Fiona Cornforth Director, Yardhura Walani, The Australian National University
9:50 am	KEYNOTE: Clinical priorities, research partnerships and shared solutions: Implementing and sustaining change in developmental assessment services Dr. Kelsie Boulton Senior Research Fellow, Clinic for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Research at the Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney
10:10 am	Building the Western Alliance CCI Hub Ms. Jessica Franks Lead, Co-design and Engagement, Western Alliance/ Health Voices Victoria Ms. Stephanie Thow Manager, First Nations Engagement, Western Alliance/ Health Voices Victoria

10:30 am Morning tea

Ballroom laneway Catering by The Mantra Hotel

11:00 am Regional and Rural Research Showcase – concurrent morning oral presentations

	Session One Health service improvement	Session Two Population & community health	Session Three Farmer health	Session Four Healthy ageing
Room	Heritage ballroom	Heritage room 1	Heritage room 2	Heritage room 3
Session Chair	Dr. Ella Ottrey Deakin University	Dr. Olivia King Grampians Health	Dr. Jessie Adams Western District Health Service	Dr. Sammy Russell Grampians Health
	Laura Guest & Karina Demasson Grampians Health *CSED: Creating Culturally Safe care pathways for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in a regional Emergency Department* **10m**	**Lochie Timms-McLean** Federation University *Interventions to reduce gambling harm in ADHD & autistic adults* **10m**	**Susan Brumby** Western District Health Service *From Just a Little Prick to the Operating Room: Improving Recognition and Management of Farmer Needlestick Injuries in a Rural Health Service* **10m**	**April Elliott** Barwon Health *HELP (Hospital Elder Life Program) at the frontline: Contextual factors shaping implementation* **10m**
	Megan Battersby Barwon Health *At Home care and symptom monitoring: evaluating access, impact, costs and experiences* **10m**	**Debbie Chia** Western Victoria Primary Health Network *Identifying mental health service gaps through population health and service analysis* **10m**	**Anna Greene** Western District Health Service *Back on Track – Findings from a feasibility trial of peer-led mental health support in farming communities* **10m**	**Tam Phillips** Western District Health Service *Co-designing a Community Outreach Health Promotion and Preventive Care Model to Support Healthy Ageing in Rural Settings* **10m**
	Fiona Lynch & Cheryl Parkin Barwon Health *Integrating Student-Led*	**Bree Wright** Western Victoria Primary Health Network *Understanding*	**Tracey Hatherall** Western District Health Service *A Decade of Farmer Health*	**Mary-Rose Angeles** Deakin University *Hospital-in-the-Home (HITH) for*

	Psychology into a Continence Service to Address Unmet Psychological Need 10m	*vaccination gaps for older people in regional Australia: a mixed-methods and co-design investigation leveraging an embedded research approach* 10 mins	*Checks: Insights from Rural Victoria* 10m	*Older Adults: A Systematic Review of Costs, Resource use and Cost-Effectiveness* 10m
	Gemma Siemensma Grampians Health *Removing Barriers, Expanding Impact: The First Year of the Victorian Health Library Consortium's Open Access Agreements* 5m	Laura Hemming & Jacinta Read LaTrobe University *Can we fix it? Yes we can! Integrating Community Paramedicine into Victorian rural and regional community health* 10m	Anna Greene Western District Health Service *AgriSafe: adapting and implementing a farmer health, wellbeing and safety assessment program through co-design* 10m	Kerry de Vent Federation University *Hospital in the Home: Health Service Delivery for Older Patients in Regional Victoria* 10m
	Tamara Holmes, Kimo Ong & Phoebe McDonald Deakin Rural Health *Partnerships Matter in the Region - exploring the next steps for understanding themes of Scoping Review.* 5m	Sajal Kuma Saha Deakin University *Bringing Rapid Group A Streptococcus Testing to Primary Care: A Victorian Feasibility Study* 10m	Lucinda Star Western District Health Service *Designing a preventive health service for farming communities: a discrete choice experiment for AgriSafe* 10m	Alison Buccheri & Kaitlyn McKenna Colac Area Health *Exploring how older adults access information about health services in rural Victoria: A DELIVER study* 5m
	Kate van Berkel Barwon Health *Balancing convenience and care in Gestational Diabetes management: A retrospective evaluation of a three-part evolving model of care using remote patient monitoring in the Geelong region.* 5m	Liam Thomas Federation University *Prevalence of Internet Gaming Disorder with Comorbid Mental Health Disorders: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Population Surveys.* 5m	Iksheta Verma Deakin University *Exploring Treatment Barriers for Chronic Pain among Australian Farming Communities.* 10m	Eilidh Campbell & Anna Oesten-Creasey Great Ocean Road Health *ForALL: The effect of structured exercise on falls prevention in a regional residential aged care setting.* 5m

	Geethanjali Piyatissa Grampians Health *Timing of Cardiovascular Readmission Following Heart Failure Hospitalisation: A Retrospective Cohort Study from a Rural Victorian Hospital* 5m	**Cindy Holzer & Sara Thomas** Western Victoria Primary Health Network *Strengthening regional opioid pharmacotherapy services through innovative place-based commissioning in Barwon South West.* 5m		**Laura Kavanagh** Barwon Health *Implementing Aged Care On-site Pharmacists: Barriers and Enablers in the Barwon South West Region* 5m
	Brendan Cutts Barwon Health *The Barwon Vestibular Assessment Service (BVAS) - a multidisciplinary allied health specialist clinic* 5m	**Virginia Dickson-Smith** Violet Vines Marshman Centre for Rural Health Research *Advocacy in action: Improving oral health outcomes for rural communities in Victoria* 5m		**Temam Raru** Deakin University *Vitamin D and Complementary Medicine Use and the Risk of Serious Falls and Fractures in Older Adults: A Propensity Score-Weighted Cohort Study* 5m
	Amanda Wade Barwon South West Public Health Unit *Implementation of hepatitis B community of practice in Barwon South West, Victoria* 10m	**Rachael Krepp & Natalie Haugh** Western Victoria Primary Health Network *Meeting Consumers Where They Are: Improving Health Outcomes Through Co-Located Multidisciplinary Care for People Experiencing Homelessness* 5m		**Jake Romein** East Grampians Health Service *Developing and evaluating a toolkit to support the scaling of modified sport programs for older adults in rural areas* 5m
	Alycia Jacob Australia Catholic University *The Shared Role of Higher Education and Clinical Placement Providers in*			

	Protecting Healthcare Students on rural healthcare placements **5m**			

12:30 pm — **Lunch**
Larder restaurant — Catering by The Mantra Hotel

1:00 pm — **Regional and Rural Research Showcase – afternoon concurrent oral presentations**

	Session One Health service improvement	Session Two Consumer and community voices	Session Three Clinical Care	Session Four Workforce capability and wellbeing
Room	Heritage ballroom	Heritage room 1	Heritage room 2	Heritage room 3
Session Chair	Ms. Ashleigh Clarke Grampians Health	Ms. Jessica Franks Health Voices Victoria	Dr. Priscilla Prestes East Grampians Health Service	Ms. Alison Buccheri Colac Area Health
	Heidi Gaulke Safer Care Victoria/Austin Health *What happens when you ask the sector? Lessons from Victoria's Strategic Ethics Reform Project* **10m**	**Nina Mulvey** Health Complaints Commissioner *Health complaint handling through a consumer experience lens: A qualitative study* **10m**	**Naomi Clarke & Sarah Howard** Barwon Health *"I wouldn't wish it on anyone": patient experiences with Buruli ulcer* **10m**	**Sammy Russell** Grampians Health *Clinical Confidence Scale* **10m**
	Rachel Kerr & John Hand Grampians Health *The Victorian Bridging Research and Quality in Healthcare initiative: aligning proportionate ethics and governance processes to enable Learning Health Systems.* **10m**	**Olivia King** Grampians Health *Implementing Kitchen Table Conversations to enhance consumer voice in health service planning in western Victoria: A qualitative study of consumer and health service staff experiences* **10m**	**Alesha Sayner** Grampians Health *Equity in physiotherapy service delivery during prostate cancer treatment: A rural, regional and metropolitan contrast* **10m**	**Romy Renzow** Barwon Health *Adapting and implementing a trauma-, neurodiversity-, and shame-aware workforce educational intervention in a regional hospital* **10m**

	Bridgett Parry & Monica Murnane Western Victoria Primary Health Network *Designing multidisciplinary models of care for chronic conditions and mental health in Western Victoria* 5m	**Laura Hemming** La Trobe University *Peer Support for People Living with Rare Cancer in Rural Australia: Findings from a Mixed-Methods Co-Design Study* 10m	**Alison Griffiths** Australian Catholic University *Selective newborn screening alone does not prevent late bracing of developmental dysplasia of the hip in regional Australia: a retrospective cohort study* 10m	**Linda Sweet & Georgie Waters** Deakin University *"We don't want this" ... "We don't trust this" … "We need to keep this": Neonatal Postnatal Support Nurses Enhancing Postnatal Care and Midwifery Workforce Wellbeing* 10m
	Jamie Swann Western Victoria Primary Health Network *From Evidence to Impact: Understanding how research capability can be embedded within PHNs* 10m	**Maddison Frith** Deakin University *Community based interventions for the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease in women living in rural, regional and remote areas: a scoping review* 5m	**Karina Demasson & Mary Malakellis** Grampians Health/Deakin University *PIVC SMART: Peripheral IntraVenous Catheter Systematic Management Assessment and Removal Trial* 5m	**Vidanka Vasilevski** Deakin University *Midwives' views of support from neonatal postnatal support nurses. A three-centre Victorian pilot program* 10m
	Ella Ottrey Deakin University *Competency frameworks for health practitioner researchers: A systematic scoping review* 5m	**Sarah Riddell & Johannah Menzies** Deakin University *The Lived Experience of Individuals Attending a Fatigue Management Group in a Community Setting* 5m	**Alicia Boyd & Nathalie Davis-Lameloise** St John of God Hospital /South West Healthcare *Underutilisation of Oncology Rehabilitation in Regional Victoria: A Retrospective Analysis of Rehabilitation Uptake* 5m	**Hayley Keane** South West Healthcare *The day I became a Laundry Hand: discontinuities of learning, digital skills and safety practice in health services* 5m

FINAL PLENARY SESSION

Heritage ballroom

2:00 pm	**KEYNOTE: Beyond AI scribes: Leveraging AI for data-based decision making** Professor Karin Verspoor Dean of the School of Computing Technologies, RMIT
2:30 pm	**KEYNOTE: The Power of Connections: Building Networks to Improve Parkinson's Care and Research in Rural and Regional Australia** Professor Michelle Callisaya Professor of Physiotherapy at the Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania
3:00 pm	**Closing address** Mr. Drew Aras Executive Director, Western Alliance