



Monthly overview

Later this month Manna members will gather face-to-face for the **Manna Retreat** on the Gold Coast on **March 25-27**, hosted by our friends at SCU.

This retreat will bring together all Manna researchers to continue the development of our research work streams, continuing our grant development, writing and other outputs. Our Manna RUN university HDR scholarship recipients, Lived Experience and First Nations representatives, and foundation partners will all be involved, and we are looking forward to lively and productive discussions as we push forward our important agendas.

All Manna affiliates (including senior researchers and non-Manna scholarship HDR students) are invited to join at their own expense.

Please email: mannainstitute@une.edu.au if you'd like to attend.

This month Manna also launches its mentoring program and delves into the topic of **disability and inclusion** in our March webinar.

You can [register in advance here](#).

Director's Update

Professor Myf Maple

Thanks to all those who tuned in to my update on 21 February. For those who missed it, [here's a recap](#).

2023 was a productive year of growth and achievement (see the incredible timeline on p3) for all of us. To have 75 researchers now actively contributing to Manna's work is a great feat and I am really excited about the collaborations that will undoubtedly propel us even further in 2024. This is no small achievement and we should all be very proud of what we have collectively achieved so far.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the Manna Retreat later this month, and make sure you set aside time for our annual conference in early December.

We have some exciting initiatives in store now that we have bedded down many of our processes, so let's work together to maintain the momentum and enthusiasm for improving the mental health of rural and regional Australians. Manna is a unique collaborative effort and I am confident we will begin to see the fruits of our labours this year as we continue our important work.

Director's Update (continued)

Get involved

Above all else, I encourage Manna members and affiliates to consider how they can get more involved in our valuable work. Please reach out if you're not sure about where best you fit in our ever-expanding ecosystem.

With opportunities to attend our face-to-face events, mentor, tune in to our webinars and contribute to our HDR Community of Practice (CoP), there are many ways to engage and make a difference.

Joining our research streams or bringing your expertise to our emerging tributary areas is a powerful way for you to contribute to Manna's research priorities and growth, so please consider becoming part of our dedicated community.



Webinar series

This year's webinar series is already off to a flying start. Stay tuned for further sessions on topics including:

- The impact of the changing environment;
- The launch of our international statement on mental health research in regional communities; and
- An exploration of regional mental health workforce issues, plus much more.

A big thanks to Associate Professor Sarah Wayland for leading the development of our webinar series over the past year. We are now pleased to introduce new moderator Dr Jasleen Chhabra, who will continue to guide our expert panelists through some thought-provoking presentations and discussions.

[Register for upcoming webinars and view recordings here.](#)

Professional development opportunities

In 2024, we will launch our **mentoring program** and commence our short course program with a workshop on **program evaluation**. I urge you to take this opportunity to further the evidence base and build relationships with industry.

As new expertise begins to emerge within Manna, our research streams are branching into **new tributaries**. We look forward to actively pursuing research on the mental health workforce, addictions, diversity and inclusion, and the changing environment.

If you are interested in or have expertise in these subjects within a RRR context, please email mannainstitute@une.edu.au to help us chart a new course with these tributaries.



New mentoring scheme – EOI now open!

Manna's focus on career development also continues to gather pace as we invest in the trajectories of our researchers. We are committed to doing what we can to support your interest in mental health research and welcome newcomers to our HDR Community of Practice (CoP), as well as senior researchers prepared to provide seminars and workshops for the CoP.

The launch of Manna's mentoring scheme this year will provide vital encouragement, confidence and networks, especially for ECRs and MCRs, so consider how you might become involved as a mentor or mentee.

[Lodge an EOI here.](#)



Manna Timeline – look how far we’ve come!

2022

	Project office staff recruited. First PMG meeting and planning day.		Meeting to finalise leadership and groups to commence workplan development.		Multi-institutional Agreement signed.
February	April	May	June	October	November
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Leadership Group and Project Management Group forms, with UNE's Professor Myf Maple as Lead/Director and Chief Investigators drawn from 7 RUN universities. Terms of reference agreed. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 ECRs and 7 MCRs recruited. First strategic planning days at CQU, Brisbane. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official launch of Manna Institute and strategic planning days at UNE, Armidale. 11 Manna scholarships advertised. 	

2023

	2 First Nations and 3 Lived Experience representatives recruited.		31 senior researchers join Manna Institute. Monthly e-newsletter Trunk Line commences. Manna Institute partners with HMRI Healthy Minds to host inaugural emerging researchers summit, Newcastle. Regional Older Adults Mental health (ROAM) Study commences with UniSC, CSU, Everymind and HMRI.		F11 representatives form First Nations Working Group. Webinar series commences. HDR Community of Practice commences with 8 members.
January	February	May	June	July	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First edition of Manna Institute Prospectus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manna Institute joins the Australian Architects of Mental Health (with UniMelb, SydUni and Deakin Uni) - a national mental health research and translation initiative. Manna researchers invited to evaluate UNELife Healthy Campus initiative with International University Sports Federation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations representatives create Manna Institute Acknowledgement to Country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Higher Degree Research scholarships filled, including 1 targeted First Nations recipient. 8 Manna researchers present at Society for Mental Health Research Conference, Perth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research streams launched: Child, Youth and Family; Health and Wellbeing in Later Life, Disability and Chronic Disease; Physical Health; and Suicide Prevention and Distress. 	

2024

				75 researchers actively contributing to Manna Institute.
September	October	November	December	January
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manna Institute researchers successful in attracting \$900,000 NHMRC grant to address workforce shortage through peer connectors. Manna Institute co-facilitates suicide prevention in regional Australia workshop with the Tasmanian Government and Everymind. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDR Community of Practice expands to 18 researchers regularly joining structured sessions and 'Shut Up and Write' sessions. 27 researchers (15 presenters) attend Rural Mental Health Conference, Albury. 		

Manna Chief Investigators in 2024

Each of our Manna Chief Investigators, from across our seven partner RUN universities, has defined responsibilities that guide their tasks in 2024.



Professor Myf Maple

Director responsible for future sustainability and lead for Manna's Suicide Prevention and Distress research stream.



Professor Sonja March

Lead for Manna's short course development processes and mentor of Child, Youth and Family research stream.



Professor Mathew Summers

Lead across all Manna research streams.



Professor Dixie Statham

Lead for Manna's mentoring program and emerging research streams.



Associate Professor Christian Swann

Lead on Manna's position papers, grant writing review and support coordination; CI support for Physical Health research stream.



Professor Chris Doran

Lead for Manna's Community, Industry and Research Data Asset and Toolkit for communities, researchers and industry organisations.



Professor Russell Roberts

Lead on Manna's international linkages and chair of Manna Conference 2024 committee.



If you are unsure who to contact, please email Liz or Kat at mannainstitute@une.edu.au

Spreading our work

\$500 scholarship opportunity



Manna Institute is building place-based research capacity to improve mental health in regional, rural, and remote Australia. Are you a regional, rural or remote mental health researcher keen to be supported to present your work?

If you are accepted to present a paper or a poster on a topic related to regional mental health at a conference in 2024, you can apply for a **\$500 scholarship** to assist with the cost to attend.

You will need to complete a short application, which is [available on our website](#), and submit it via mannainstitute@une.edu.au

All we ask in return is that you acknowledge that you were partially funded to attend the conference by Manna and include the provided Manna slide at the end of your presentation.



Subscribe today

If you are not already on our mailing list, then you're missing out!

It's a fantastic way to keep abreast of Manna matters and to share in our progress.

[Subscribe to Trunk Line today](#)

Manna Institute's Acknowledgement of Country

Manna Institute respectfully acknowledges the First Nations peoples as the continuing custodians of this continent and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging. The institute honours their rich cultural heritage, beliefs and enduring relationship to the lands and communities in which we all live, learn and work.

Manna conference

Save the date – First week of December!

This event will showcase Manna Institute as THE regional mental health institute, providing all members with the opportunity to present their work.

We will also call for abstracts, to encourage others who are interested in regional mental health to attend.

Are you a Manna ECR or MCR? Please reach out to mannainstitute@une.edu.au if you'd like to be involved in the organising committee for the conference.



Manna Institute response to the Australian Universities Accord Final report

By A/Prof. Sarah Wayland

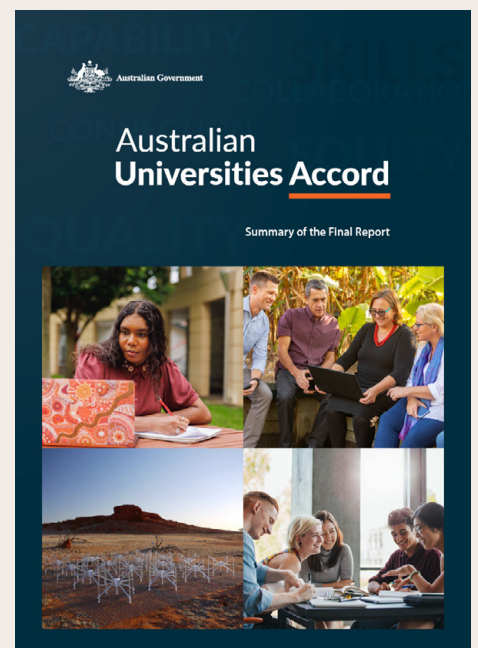
Regionality and mental health feature prominently in the report, echoing the remit of Manna and the need to explore, with intersectionality, the needs of staff and students in the tertiary sector.

We note that addressing student wellbeing and safety, with an emphasis on mental health, extends to the needs of university staff. That we cannot focus on one without the other. Recommendations that identify the key roles of funding, in addition to the distribution of student amenities student fees, can assist by securing delivery of in-house mental health support in universities. This is a first step to enhanced wellbeing.

In addition to centring discussions about wellbeing and safety, the report dedicates a significant proportion to regional engagement, noting that regional universities are particularly important to their local communities. The report provides data about the demographic changes within regional areas of Australia, with many experiencing significant population growth in the past five years. Manna Institute supports the report's recommendations of the importance of students in regional areas being given equal opportunities to access tertiary education. Limiting access to lifelong learning means that individuals and their communities miss out. Future learning should not be dependent on a postcode.

Specifically, the report emphasises the significant skills shortages in regional and remote communities, especially in the health sector. The health sector workforce has a projected employment growth rate, meaning that universities must meet this demand by graduating more skilled professionals. Regional universities play a key role in growing their own workforce. Manna is confident that the recommendations of the report and its focus on culturally centred, trauma-informed, place-based approaches can enhance capacity within Australian universities. This, in turn, will have a direct impact on community needs, especially in regional areas.

[For more information please read here.](#)



Finding the Sun

Micaela Riethmuller, PhD student, Curtin University

Our HDR Community of Practice has members from universities all over Australia. These HDR students are studying a wide variety of issues related to regional mental health. This month's reflection comes from Curtin University PhD student Micaela Riethmuller, who is one of our HDR Community of Practice members.

Micaela grew up in a regional town in Western Australia, where many of her extended family farm the Wheatbelt, so she is interested in the wellbeing of farming communities. This interest is inspired by the unique challenges facing individuals living in rural areas, including limited access to services, geographic isolation and the stigma that can surround mental health, particularly in farming populations.

"When things get too much, or I have a lot of things going on, I find going for a walk with an audiobook really helps me to focus and reduces my anxiety levels.

When I listen to an audiobook, over music, I must focus on the words, or I miss what is happening. This really helps me, as rumination and overthinking is something that I struggle with a lot. For that hour or so in the afternoon, I know that I have time to just walk and think about something else for a while.



Listening to a book also helps me keep up with walking even when I don't feel like it because I want to know what happens next. It is the easiest time to listen and not be distracted by anything else.

I also apply this focus to pilates and yoga and find the same benefit, because I must concentrate fully on something else for the duration of the class. For that hour, everything else that I have going on comes second, and I often walk out feeling a lot better than when I arrived. Yoga has helped me to develop breathing and relaxation techniques that I can use in my day-to-day life to help manage my anxiety."

Virtual Economics of Mental Health Seminar Series (AHES Economics of Mental Health SIG)

The Society for Mental Health Research is running a seminar series to be held on the first Thursday of the month from 12-1pm and is open to non-members.

For further details, [please click here](#)

The inaugural seminar will be presented by Professor Stefanie Schurer, and is entitled:

What explains Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing? Evidence from Northern Territory linked administrative data on Generation Z.

society for
mentalhealthresearch



Webinar Series: Monday 11 March, 1-2pm (AEDT)



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Webinar Series

Our March webinar is a special 'in conversation' on the topic of:

Disability and inclusion

We'd be delighted if you could join us.

[Please register in advance](#)



Moderated by:
Dr Jasleen Chhabra (FED).


Featuring special guests:
Professor Jen Smith-Merry,
Director of the Centre for Disability Research and Policy (USYD); and
Associate Professor Sarah Wayland (UNE).

Missed a great webinar topic? Find all recordings [here](#) or follow Manna's [YouTube](#) channel.


Have your say: Lived experience of suicide national research survey

Your input will help shape new evidence-informed resources for safe communication around lived and living experience of suicide by individuals, media and other public communicators.

bit.ly/LEXP



An EVERYMIND program





One of Manna's foundation partners, Everymind, is conducting research to develop evidence-informed guidelines for safe communication around lived experience of suicide. As part of this research, it is inviting people who have a lived and living experience of suicide, and are 18 years of age and over, to provide feedback via a survey. This survey seeks to understand core considerations for people with lived experience of suicide who are working with the media.

The findings from this research will help Everymind develop resources for people with lived and living experience to share their stories, and for media professionals and public communicators who may be working with these individuals.

Please share within your networks.

[Read more about how you can take part.](#)



An  **EVERYMIND** program



Support

Manna Institute is dedicated to addressing the mental health needs of Australians sensitively and respectfully. We appreciate that times of change can be especially challenging.

For support, contact:

Lifeline

13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue

1300 22 46 36
www.beyondblue.org.au/
get-support

13YARN

13 92 76

Guyaa Dhuwi

www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/
if-you-need-help/



Important dates

March	April	May	June	July	August
<p>11 March Manna webinar: Disability and inclusion</p> <p>25-27 March Manna Retreat, SCU, Gold Coast</p>	<p>15 April Manna webinar (TBC)</p>	<p>20 May Manna webinar (TBC)</p>	<p>HMRI Early Career Researchers Summit – Newcastle (TBC)</p>	<p>July Manna webinar (TBC)</p> <p>15 July Manna Round Table – Save the date</p>	<p>August Manna webinar (TBC)</p>

We want to hear from you!

Please share your news of Manna achievements and opportunities via mannainstitute@une.edu.au.

