



NEWSLETTER



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[2024-25 TAAHC Annual Report available for download](#)

[Click here](#)

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the TAAHC Newsletter!

This is the first in what we intend to be a regular communication, sharing progress, achievements, and opportunities across the TAAHC partnership and the broader northern Queensland health ecosystem.

At the November 2025 Board meeting, Directors noted a period of strong organisational momentum, underpinned by improved governance, financial stability, and a clear focus on impact-driven research translation.

Building on our strong foundations, our Quarterly Newsletter highlights a few of our successes.

TAAHC Board Confirms 2026 Membership

I am pleased to announce key governance updates that will guide the organisation's strategic direction over the coming year.

Sharon Kelly will continue in her role as Chair of the TAAHC Board ensuring ongoing stability and strong leadership for the organisation.

As part of the Board's commitment to streamlined and effective governance, TAAHC bylaws have been adopted to reduce the overall Board size, with each member organisation now represented by one nominated Director.

2026 TAAHC Board Directors:

- Sharon Kelly (Chair)** – Northern Queensland Primary Health Network
- Tony Mooney** – Townsville Hospital and Health Service
- Rex O'Rourke** – Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service
- Monica McHendry** – Mackay Hospital and Health Service
- Eleanor Milligan** – North West Hospital and Health Service
- Leena Singh** – Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service
- Joy Savage** – Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Service
- Jenny Seddon** – James Cook University
- Ben Tooth** – Northern Queensland Primary Health Network

As the Chair is from the NQPHN, this allows NQPHN to appoint an additional director which is Ben Tooth.

These decisions reinforce the Board's commitment to strong, collaborative governance as TAAHC continues to advance research, innovation, and improved health outcomes across northern Queensland.



Acknowledging the Contribution of Professor Kieran Keyes

In November 2025, Professor Kieran Keyes concluded his tenure as a founding Board Director of the TAAHC, marking the end of a significant chapter in the organisation's development and impact across northern Queensland.

From its inception, TAAHC was shaped by a clear and compelling vision: a collaborative, place-based model of health improvement that recognises the challenges and strengths of living and working in the tropics. Professor Keyes was instrumental in championing this vision, ensuring that research supported by TAAHC improves health outcomes for communities across north and north-west Queensland.

As Professor Keyes has reflected, TAAHC's early focus on partnership—bringing together regional health services, James Cook University, and the primary care sector—enabled targeted research and translation efforts in areas such as endocrine, cardiac, and vector-borne diseases. These conditions disproportionately affect people living in northern Australia, particularly First Nations peoples, and addressing them required leadership grounded in regional understanding, cultural respect, and system-level collaboration.

Throughout his time as a Director, Professor Keyes provided steady governance, strategic insight, and an unwavering commitment to research translation—helping embed evidence into practice and strengthen the health and wellbeing landscape of the region. His contribution has left a lasting legacy in TAAHC's collaborative culture, its focus on locally relevant impact, and its optimism for what can be achieved when research and care is aligned.

On behalf of the Board, partners, and broader TAAHC ecosystem, we thank Professor Kieran Keyes for his foundational leadership and service. His pride in what TAAHC has achieved, and his confidence in its future successes, are shared by all who continue this important work across tropical Australia.



Input into the National Health and Medical Research Strategy

As a recognised leader in research and research translation, TAAHC has actively contributed to the development of the National Health and Medical Research Strategy 2026–2036. A significant opportunity to help shape Australia's long-term vision for health and medical research. Led by Rosemary Huxtable, the Strategy will leverage Australia's existing strengths, and will seek to attract leading researchers and investors, and strengthen the capability of the future workforce.

This invitation to contribute, recognises the value of TAAHC's expertise and the important role we play in advancing research that improves health outcomes for regional, rural, and remote communities.

Demonstrating Impact through Case Studies

In our recent mid-accreditation review, the NHMRC highlighted [three TAAHC Impact stories](#). All three highlight our unique context and strength in capability and capacity building.

The published reports include:

- **Cape York Kidney Care**
- **Using place-based health planning in Hughenden**
- **Building Research Capability and Capacity**

Together, these case studies help tell the story of how locally led research, when embedded in practice, and research support can improve health outcomes for communities across northern Australia.

Research Translation Fellow Hits the Ground Running

We're thrilled to announce that Dr Stevie Perks has joined TAAHC as one of our new TAAHC Research Translation Fellows.

Stevie is a clinical pharmacist and researcher with over 20 years of experience in QLD Health, based in Townsville. He's well-known across northern Queensland as a research and research translation educator and coach who is passionate about research leading practice.

His recent work designing and implementing a Venous Thromboembolism dashboard earned international recognition and has directly improved patient outcomes—a testament to his commitment to translating research into real-world impact.

The TAAHC Research Translation Fellows will work across northern Queensland with our partners to embed research translation capabilities within TAAHC Member organisations.

They collaborate with clinicians, researchers, and community stakeholders to co-design and deliver projects that strengthen the integration of evidence into practice, developing quality improvement initiatives that enhance patient outcomes, service efficiency, and workforce capability in regional, rural, and remote settings.

Stevie has hit the ground running, commencing works to develop a unified systems approach to enable a collaborative view of Quality Improvement Activities across the northern HHS's.

Fuelling Regional Research: TAAHC Seed Funding Enables New Research on Advanced Radiotherapy

TAAHC's seed funding continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening the research capacity of northern Queensland, enabling clinicians and emerging researchers to pursue projects that deliver tangible benefits for regional communities.

A recent example is the work of Associate Professor, Daniel Xing, whose publication *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of an Intracranial Stereotactic Radiotherapy Service for Brain Metastasis in a North Queensland Regional Cancer Centre* demonstrates how targeted investment can generate high-value insights for regional and remote health service planning.

By supporting early-stage research, TAAHC helps ensure that locally relevant questions are explored, evidence gaps are addressed, and regional health services are equipped with data that reflects the realities of care delivery in the north.

 **cancers**

Article

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of an Intracranial Stereotactic Radiotherapy Service for Brain Metastasis in a North Queensland Regional Cancer Centre

Qichen Zhang ^{1,2,3} , Lan Gao ^{3,4} , Neha Das ³ , Timothy Squire ^{1,4} , Daniel Stoker ¹, Reshma Shakya ^{1,4}, Deepali Patel ¹, Abhishek Joshi ^{4,5} , and Tao Xing ^{1,4}

1 Department of Radiation Oncology, Townsville University Hospital, 100 Angus Smith Drive Douglas, Townsville, QLD 4814, Australia; qichen.zhang@hsl.qld.gov.au (Q.Z.)
2 Greater Brisbane Clinical School, Faculty of Medicine, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD 4072, Australia
3 Mackay Health, Mackay, Queensland, Australia; 4 Mackay Hospital and Health Service, Mackay, Queensland, Australia; 5 School of Health and Biomedicine, Flinders University, Bedford Park, South Australia 5042, Australia

 **A crucial thank you to TAAHC for the seed funding, which made this important research possible. Your support is helping to drive equity and improve cancer care outcomes for all north Queenslanders.** 

Associate Professor, Daniel Xing

Mackay HHS - Research and Innovation Symposium

TAAHC's Research Education Lead, Rae Thomas, served as Master of Ceremonies at the Mackay Research and Innovation Symposium on the 7th November 2025.

Hosted by the Mackay Institute of Research and Innovation, the 2025 program carried the theme '**Research, Translate, Evolve**', highlighting the essential link between research and real-world outcomes.

From new technology to manage chronic disease, to models of care to support at-risk groups, the symposium featured 16 presentations from researchers from Mackay, local universities and other hospital and health services in Queensland.



Positioning for Future Impact

Major research translation initiatives relevant to northern Australia are progressing, including **AI-enabled interventions, point-of-care testing in aged care, and infectious disease response**.

All TAAHC initiatives will be assessed for potential translation impact through an adapted Framework to Assess the Impact from Translational health research (FAIT). This will ensure a clear focus on real-world outcomes and return on investment for health services and communities.

This first newsletter is an important step in keeping our members and partners informed and connected. I look forward to sharing further updates and achievements as we continue to strengthen TAAHC's role in translating research into better care for regional, rural, and remote communities.

Strengthening Capability and Workforce

During a period of consolidation and growth, TAAHC has refocussed and expanded our core staff. In November Chris Rouen joined the TAAHC team as a Health Economist and strengthens our ability to quantify system and economic benefits of translation activities.

Recruitment of NHMRC-funded Research Translation Fellows is nearing completion, further embedding translation capability within partner health services.

Dr Scott Davis
Executive Director
Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre



Growing profile and national influence

TAAHC continues to build its national profile. LinkedIn engagement has increased significantly over the last quarter, reflecting stronger and more consistent communication.

TAAHC is now represented on the Queensland Clinical Trials Working Group and recently led a national NHMRC workshop session on the role of Research Translation Centres in achieving impact.



First Research Translation Workshop Receives Strong Praise

The success of the 6-month research translation program delivered in 2025 created strong demand for further learning opportunities. In response, a dedicated half-day workshop was developed to support novice research translation implementers in building foundational skills and confidence.

The first session was held in November for 18 staff from Mackay HHS, with participants from both clinical and non-clinical roles. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the value of practical, accessible training that empowers staff to translate evidence into meaningful improvements in care. We look forward to delivering more workshops in 2026.

 **Thoroughly enjoyed it. Would rate as the most engaging and helpful workshop I have done to date.** 

RT Workshop Participant