2026-27
Q1 Edition

Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre
NEWSLETTER



Professor Scott Davis TAAHC Executive Director, presenting at the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Alice Springs

Highlights

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Celebrating Our 2026 Research Translation Course Graduates

Congratulations to the five teams who completed our **2026 Research Translation Course** in September. This hands-on program helps clinical teams turn frontline workplace challenges into practical, evidence-based health solutions.

- **Cairns and Hinterland HHS:** Dysphagia screening tool in regional, rural sites
- **Mackay HHS:** Sonographer-Led Transthoracic Reporting
- **Mackay HHS:** Allied Health student-led model of care in rural Queensland
- **Torres and Cape HHS:** Video Directly Observed Therapy for Tuberculosis and Hansen's disease in remote communities
- **Torres and Cape HHS:** Screening and management of infections in high-risk pregnancies

Throughout the course, teams worked intensely to develop robust research translation protocols ready for ethics, funding submission, and implementation. By bridging the gap between research and real-world care, their hard work will directly improve healthcare delivery and patient outcomes across our regional, rural, and remote communities. Thank you to all participants and facilitators.

A Major Milestone: TAAHC Launches the Research Development and Impact Committee

The Board of the Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre (TAAHC) has officially appointed our new **Research Development and Impact Committee (RDIC)**. The committee meets for the first time on 12 October 2026.

We are delighted to welcome **Professor Tammy Hoffmann** OAM, FAHMS, FOTARA, PhD, as the Independent Chair. Professor Hoffmann brings deep expertise in health and medical research, evidence translation, and implementation science, and will provide invaluable and independent leadership for the committee's work.



Professor Tammy Hoffmann, Independant Chair: TAAHC Research Development and Impact Committee

As the Board's principal advisory committee, it will help shape how we set research priorities, build capacity and capability, and it will monitor impact from our research and translation activities.

Using our skills matrix, we have brought together a well-balanced team of leaders from all eight of our member organisations. Thank you to our new committee members:

- **Dr Anthony Bell**, Executive Director Medical Services, North West HHS
- **Professor Edward Strivens**, Director of Research, Cairns and Hinterland HHS
- **Gillian Yearsley**, Executive Director Health Services Commissioning, NQPHN
- **Dr Pieter Nel**, Director Medical Services, Research and Innovation, Mackay HHS
- **Reece Griffin**, Executive Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Torres and Cape HHS
- **Professor Sarah Larkins**, Dean, CMD and Professor Health Systems Strengthening, James Cook University
- **Toni Sisson**, Director Health Planning and Performance, NATSIHA/QAIHC
- **Dr Yoga Kandasamy**, Eminent Staff Specialist, Department of Neonatology, Townsville HHS

The establishment of this committee is a pivotal step in delivering our Strategic Plan 2025–2030 and our ongoing accreditation as a Research Translation Centre. Its members will help us work across organisations to improve health outcomes and services for rural, regional and remote communities across northern Queensland.

DNAC26: Culture, Community, and Health Resilience



Our Executive Director, Professor Scott Davis, gave a keynote address at the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Alice Springs, putting the strengths of regional, rural and remote health care in the spotlight.

Professor Davis made the case for shifting the conversation on health inequity from what the system lacks to the resilience already found in local culture, leadership and community-driven innovation. The key to lasting reform, he said, is alignment: governments, health services, community-controlled organisations and universities working together to turn research into real change.

He pointed to place-based work already making a difference, including programs strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, strategies to keep clinicians in remote areas, and telehealth innovations such as Project ECHO and Tele DFD for diabetic foot disease.

The message was clear. When research and translation is built into everyday health care and led by local partnerships grounded in cultural authority, communities see the benefit.

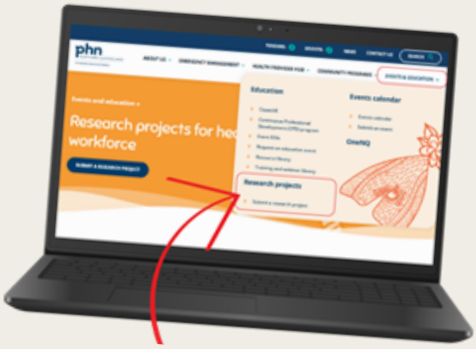
Read more: **DNAC26 Presentation Overview**

New NQPHN website feature: Research Project Listings and Submissions

Have you seen NQPHNs new, highly requested feature on their website – **Research Project listings and submissions**. This new feature provides a simple and streamlined way to share health-related research opportunities.

The page works similarly to their existing Events and Health jobs pages. Stakeholders can submit details of their research project through an online form, which will then be reviewed and published on the website.

The Research Projects page will make it easier for researchers to connect with the northern Queensland health workforce. To be eligible for listing, research projects must be health-related and relevant to the northern Queensland primary care or broader health workforce.



Welcoming Christopher Rouen to TAAHC



Christopher Rouen has recently joined the team as a Health Economist. Christopher brings experience working across health services, academia, government, and cross-sector health initiatives, with expertise in health economics, economic evaluation, monitoring and evaluation, implementation, and research translation.

He currently works across a range of initiatives aimed at improving health and wellbeing outcomes in regional, rural, and remote communities, while also undertaking doctoral research focused on the application of health economic methods to inform the development of a regional community rehabilitation model of care.

In his role with us, Christopher will support researchers, clinicians, and partner organisations to better understand, measure, and communicate the value and impact of research, innovation, and service improvement activities. With TAAHC, Christopher will support our members to develop health economic evaluation skills through course work and help project teams identify and measure costs, outcomes, value and impact. Skills that will inform decision-making across the health system. His work will contribute to strengthening health economics capability across northern Queensland and supporting the translation of evidence into policy and practice.

Alignment with the NHMRC Research Translation Strategy 2026-2030

We welcome the National Health and Medical Research Council's Research Translation Strategy 2026–2030. It reinforces our commitment to turning health and medical research into better clinical outcomes, policy and practice.

In northern Queensland, research translation is essential to tackling distance, workforce shortages and long-standing health inequities. As the region's accredited Research Translation Centre, we bring together our eight members to accelerate the adoption of evidence-based healthcare solutions: the five Hospital and Health Services in northern Queensland, Cairns and Hinterland, Mackay, North West, Torres and Cape and Townsville, the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network, the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and James Cook University, including the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine.

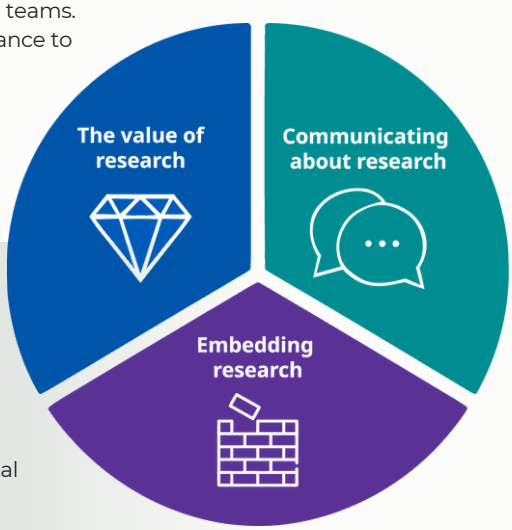
We strongly support the Strategy's focus on collaboration, workforce capability and measurable research impact. Lasting change also needs continued national investment in Research Translation Centres and flexible, place-based approaches, so that regional, rural, remote and First Nations communities can take part in, and benefit from, the national research agenda.



Empowering Health Leaders: Queensland Health Launches EnableR Toolkit

Queensland Health staff can now access the **Leaders Enable Research (EnableR) Toolkit**, a practical digital resource designed to help health managers build research capacity within their clinical teams. Co-designed directly with healthcare leaders, the toolkit provides immediate, actionable guidance to standardise research support and integrate research into everyday health service delivery.

Navigating the complexities of clinical research can be challenging for busy managers. The EnableR Toolkit simplifies this process by providing a central hub of video tutorials, expert advice, and downloadable checklists and templates. The resource library is structured to support leaders through every stage of team development and research oversight.



Key resources available in the toolkit include:

- Governance and Approvals: Step-by-step guidance on navigating local ethics pathways and site specific approvals.
- Performance Integration: Practical tools to seamlessly incorporate research goals into staff annual performance and development discussions.
- Project Evaluation: Structured frameworks to help managers assess project feasibility, timelines, and resource requirements before granting support.
- Executive Advocacy: Strategic advice and communication tips for demonstrating the clinical and economic value of research to executive boards.

By embedding these tools into daily operations, health leaders across northern Queensland can better support their staff to undertake meaningful research activities that directly improve patient outcomes.

Explore the **EnableR Resource Library** to get started.



Better together at the Link-Up

In August, TAAHC Board Chair Sharon Kelly and Research Translation Fellow Stevie Perks attended the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network's final Link-Up event in Townsville.

The Link-Up events held across northern Queensland have given organisations a chance to connect, share ideas, strengthen relationships and celebrate what they achieve together.

Whether it is improving access to care in rural and remote communities, responding to workforce pressures, strengthening mental health services, or planning for the region's future health needs, the best results come from working together.

ISHCA26

26-27 November 2026 | Brisbane

Implementation Science Health Conference Australia

2026 THEME

Innovate
Implement
Impact

We are proud to co-present ISHCA26 with Health Translation Queensland at the Translational Research Institute in Brisbane on 26 and 27 November 2026.

As **Australia's premier implementation science conference** for the health sector, ISHCA is dedicated to embedding high-quality evidence into clinical practice.

The event will unite researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and health leaders to explore the latest advances in evidence synthesis and knowledge translation. Attendees will gain expert insights through engaging case studies and real-world results.

Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre | Health Translation Queensland | TRI Translational Research Institute Australia

For more information: www.ishca.au



Pictured left to right: Helen Griffiths, Michael Crowe, Maria Edmondstone, Christopher Rouen and Stevie Perks



Pictured left to right: Belinda Boyce, Rhondda Jones, Chrissie Timbs, Rae Thomas and Kylie Fischer

Welcoming Tammi Vuong to the Research Translation Team



Tammi Vuong is our newest Research Translation Fellow, representing North West HHS.

Tammi is a podiatrist with experience in hospitals and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations across rural, regional, and urban settings in Australia and Singapore.

Driven by a passion for system-level change, she moved into clinical governance, working as a risk manager and is now leading reviews into healthcare variation. Her projects span digital and service development, most recently scoping and implementing a model of care that enables rural generalist dietitians to support gastroenterology patients. She enjoys bringing together diverse stakeholders, bridging gaps between varied processes, perspectives, and priorities, and turning barriers into opportunities to progress change.

Joining Stevie Perks, Chrissie Timbs, and Kylie Fischer, TAAHC Research Translation Fellows work collaboratively with our partners to embed research translation capabilities within our member organisations.

Strengthening Health Economics Capability

As we continue to advance our strategic vision of improving health outcomes through research translation, collaboration, and innovation, health economics has an increasingly important role to play.

Health economics provides tools and approaches that help researchers, clinicians, health services, and policymakers understand not only whether an intervention works, but also the value it delivers for patients, communities, and the health system. This information is critical for informing decisions about investment, implementation, sustainability, and scale.

Through our investment in dedicated health economics expertise, we aim to strengthen capacity and capability across the northern Queensland research ecosystem. This includes supporting economic evaluation, impact assessment, research translation activities, grant development, and the communication of value to funders, decision-makers, and communities.

By building local expertise in this growing field, we are investing in the skills needed to support evidence-informed decision-making and maximise the impact of research and innovation across northern Queensland.

Team Planning Day

In September, our entire team gathered in Townsville for a comprehensive planning day.

The day was structured to balance strategic foresight with practical team building. The agenda focused on several key pillars essential to our mission:

- **Strategic alignment** - organisational objectives and targets
- **Collaborative workstreams** - shared understanding and opportunities for collaboration
- **Innovation and project mapping** - exploring new initiatives and their potential impact
- **Team culture and values** - reflections and team building
- **Systems and processes** - defining the principles that guide our collaborations and partnerships

Coming together in Townsville allowed us to step back from the daily operations and focus as a collective group on the 'big picture'—ensuring every piece of work we support directly benefits our partner organisations and the communities they serve.

Our Members

The Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre helps our partners turn health research into better care for northern Queensland communities. We facilitate collaboration between the five Hospital and Health Services in northern Queensland, Cairns and Hinterland, Mackay, North West, Torres and Cape and Townsville, the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network, the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and James Cook University, including the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine.

TAAHC Research Resources

Interested in research but not sure where to start?
Or looking for some guidance to help progress your research?
Browse our curated list of resources!

Browse our curated list of resources

YouTube www.youtube.com/@taahc

What's Ahead

As we move into Quarter Two, here is what is coming up:

- Townsville HHS Research Symposium, 2 November
- Mackay HHS Research and Innovation Symposium, 6 November
- Cairns and Hinterland HHS Research and Innovation Symposium, 13 November
- Half day research translation workshops
- ISHCA26 in Brisbane, 26 and 27 November
- Building capacity in health economics, with Christopher Rouen on board
- Early work from our new Research Development and Impact Committee