

Menzies' CRESTRA part of newly funded national consortium to improve primary healthcare

13 March 2025

The Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies)-led National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) [Centre of Research Excellence for Strengthening Health Systems in Remote Australia](#) (CRESTRA) has been nationally recognised for its leadership in remote multidisciplinary primary healthcare.

CRESTRA has been named a key partner in the newly funded [National Multidisciplinary Primary Care Research, Policy and Advocacy Consortium](#) (the Consortium), led by UNSW. It is one of five existing research centres across Australia who will host a dedicated researcher for the Consortium over the next 5 years.

This major national resource will support primary care reform, strengthen the evidence base and accelerate improvements in primary care services. It looks to meaningfully address significant challenges facing the Australian health care system, including accessibility, equity, safety, efficiency, acceptability, affordability, scalability and sustainability.

The Consortium brings together 100 investigators, many of whom are leading primary care clinical researchers. It is the first to nationally unite primary care researchers and their programs of work, with consumers, primary care peak organisations, and policy makers, to facilitate positive change.

Ten CRESTRA researchers are involved in the Consortium, including Professor Alan Cass, Associate Professor Deborah Russell, Associate Professor Alexandra Edelman, Professor Sean Taylor, Dr Winnie Chen and Dr Prabhakar Veginadu from Menzies; and Associate Professor John Boffa, Dr Sam Heard and Dr Abdolvahab Baghbanian from Central Australian Aboriginal Congress.

Residents of remote areas of Australia experience some of the poorest health and have the greatest healthcare needs. CRESTRA works to solve issues affecting remote primary healthcare services, such as inequitable funding, skills and workforce shortages, and a lack of access to services.

Working on the national stage with other primary care leaders as part of this Consortium is key to drive vital improvements in primary healthcare services that are targeted to diverse communities across Australia.

Quote attributable to Menzies School of Health Research Director, [Professor Alan Cass AO](#):

"A key focus in CRESTRA is to strengthen primary care in remote Australia, which is essential to address persistent health disparities. The Consortium will provide a powerful platform for CRESTRA researchers to work collaboratively with colleagues nation-wide to jointly advocate for improving remote health.

“This leverages Menzies’ longstanding commitment to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and working in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in the Northern Territory and across remote Australia.”

Quote attributable to Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Chief Executive Officer, Ms Donna Ah Chee:

“Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, the Northern Territory’s largest and oldest Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service, has a long history of research partnership and advocacy to improve Aboriginal health in areas of high unmet health need. Collaborating with Menzies researchers through CRESTRA, Congress will bring the experiences and needs of Aboriginal patients, their families and communities to conversations among Consortium partners about how to strengthen and sustain high quality and culturally safe primary health care.”

Quote from Menzies School of Health Research Principal Research Fellow, Associate Professor Deborah Russell:

“The Remote Health Systems and Climate Change Centre in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and CRESTRA welcome the opportunity to recruit a postdoctoral primary care clinician researcher made possible by the funding success of the Consortium. This will enable research to be undertaken with Central Australian Aboriginal Congress to codesign, implement and evaluate new models of multi-disciplinary care across Central Australia and translate findings nationally.

“The new models of care, featuring Aboriginal Allied Health Assistants, expanded Allied Health Professional telehealth consultations across Central Australia, and integrated team care coordination, are expected to improve health system integration and health outcomes in geographically remote and very remote Aboriginal communities, where health needs are high.”

ENDS

Media contact

Phone: (08) 8946 8680 | Email: media@menzies.edu.au

About Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies is at the forefront of health and medical research dedicated to improving the lives of peoples across the Northern Territory, Asia Pacific and beyond. By joining scientific knowledge with community wisdom, Menzies strives to Close the Gap, and shape a healthier, more equitable future where communities can thrive.