

# 2024 Annual Report



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In the spirit of respect, Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) acknowledges the people and Elders of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations who are the Traditional Owners of the land and seas of Australia.

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*Our vision* To find enduring solutions to health problems that matter.

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*Our purpose* To improve the health and well-being of people in our region through genuine partnerships, and excellence in research, translation and education.

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*Our values*

- Quality:** we strive for excellence and rigour in everything we do.
- Integrity:** we are open, honest and transparent, and maintain the highest standards of governance, accountability and ethics.
- Relevance:** we concentrate on solving problems that matter. Our work is informed by the health needs and shared priorities of the people and communities with whom we work.
- Partnerships:** we seek to partner with communities, health and other service providers, policy-makers and other researchers.
- Innovation:** we embrace new approaches and technologies.
- Communication:** we maintain an ongoing dialogue with partners, stakeholders and the local and national community during the research process, from conception through to completion and translation of results.
- Accountability:** we take responsibility for our actions and results.

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Find out more at [menzies.edu.au](https://menzies.edu.au)



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*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain the names and images of people who have passed away.*

# Our new brand identity

## An evolution guided by community.

Following more than a year of consultation with staff from Darwin, Alice Springs, Timor-Leste, and key stakeholders, Menzies' brand has evolved.

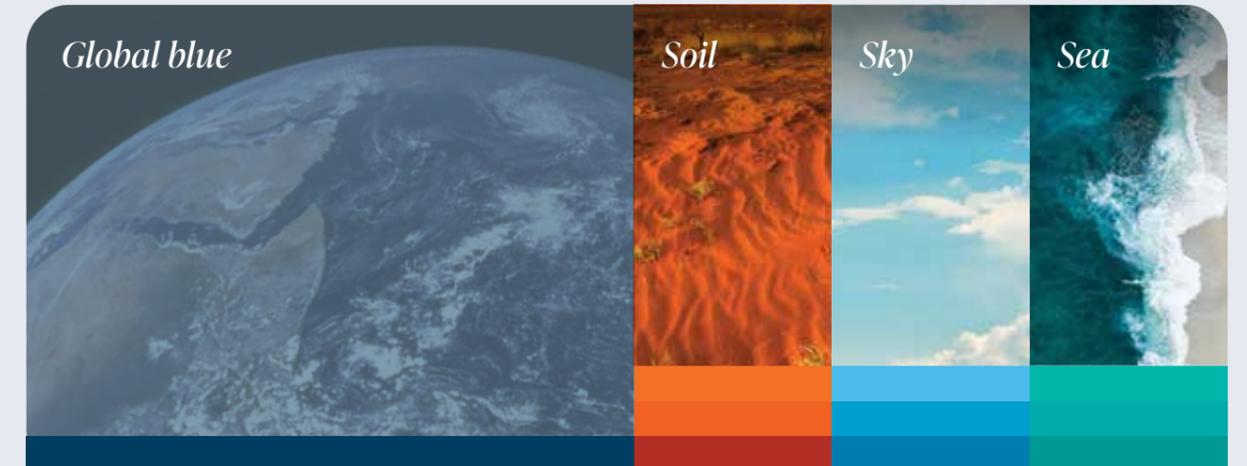
This has resulted in the development of a contemporary identity that reflects Menzies' community-centred research approach.

It honours the organisation's 40-year legacy and reaffirms its commitment to health equity through meaningful partnerships.



## New colours *inspired* by our surrounds

Menzies' brand colours are inspired by the lands it calls home. Soil, Sky, and Sea capture the beauty of the NT and our connection to Timor-Leste. Anchoring it all is a deep, dark blue, a connection to the world.



## Transforming *together*

Menzies' new icon is made up of five key elements, that embodies the work of the organisation.

### Our community



Our community is at the core of what we do, represented by the circle in the centre of our logo.

### Our impact



The lines represent how every action, big or small, ripples outward to create positive change. They show how connections multiply impact, flowing across communities and transforming lives.

### Our connections



The intersecting lines show how Menzies connects across different places and communities, weaving together diverse perspectives and knowledge. Their unique patterns reflect how each partnership enriches Menzies research.

### Our strength



The central hexagon symbolises Menzies foundation of knowledge, relationships and connections, with community-centred research at its heart. With our communities, we create an enduring foundation that amplifies the impact and reach of our work.

### Our excellence



Excellence flows from listening to community needs and fostering genuine partnerships. Menzies logo represents genuine and shared reciprocity, an interconnected spirit where community wisdom and research expertise flow together naturally.

## Knowledge *meets* impact

Through respectful engagement with communities, we share knowledge and grow together. We meet as equals, fostering partnerships that bridge diverse perspectives and experiences. This collaborative approach creates a meaningful, measurable impact that improves health outcomes and drives positive change for future generations.

## Menzies' Commitment to Reconciliation

Menzies deeply values our relationship with First Nations communities and are committed to ensuring their voices and knowledge guide how we approach representation and health research.

Our engagement with Menzies' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Brand Advisory Group has been instrumental in shaping our new brand identity. During key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Days of Significance, we are proud to feature a special brand overlay created by respected local artist Jayde Hopkins.

This approach reflects our ongoing commitment to meaningful engagement with First Nations communities while respecting cultural ownership and authenticity.



Jayde Hopkins with her artwork 'Temporal Currents'



Scan the QR code to learn more about our new brand

# Who we are

For four decades, Menzies has been at the forefront of health research in the Northern Territory and our region, expanding from Darwin to establish offices in Alice Springs, and Dili, Timor-Leste.

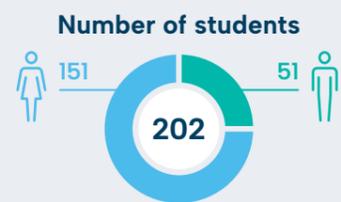
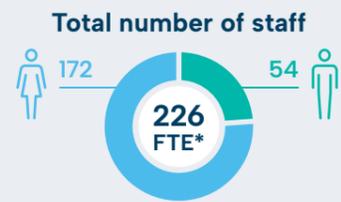
We solve health challenges through leading high-quality research. By providing education and capacity strengthening, we empower health professionals, policymakers, and communities to drive life-changing solutions. While founded in the Northern Territory, our impact is felt far beyond. We lead global efforts to fight life-threatening illnesses in the Asia-Pacific and across the world and train the experts of tomorrow – today.

We believe everyone should have access to high-quality healthcare – especially those who need it most. By joining scientific knowledge with shared wisdom, we help to close the gap, creating healthier communities for all. But our results are only half the story. A true measure of what we do lies in building strong collaborations and creating meaningful employment opportunities for people affected by our work. After all, it takes local insights combined with scientific knowledge to create lasting change.

Our mission is simple – to shape a healthier, more equitable future where every community can thrive.



Kim Piera in the laboratory.



# Where we work

Our headquarters are in Darwin, with offices in Alice Springs, and Dili, Timor-Leste. Our work spans central and northern Australia and countries within our global neighbourhood.



# 2024 Highlights

## FEBRUARY

Menzies volunteers and staff supported Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation to implement a Healthy Skin Week program in Maningrida.

[Read more on page 60](#)



The Healthy Skin Week team preparing to visit community members.

## MARCH

Menzies and Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory (AHNT) partnered through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to improve remote housing quality and support Aboriginal self-determination in housing systems. The MoU aligns with a new ten-year government funding initiative. This partnership builds on past successes and aims to drive culturally appropriate, evidence-based solutions to enhance health and well-being in remote Aboriginal communities.

[Read more on page 27](#)



Menzies and AHNT at MoU negotiations.

Professor Amanda Leach AM received over \$2.9 million in funding to improve ear health for First Nations children in the Northern Territory. This support was based on her research, which found that the PCV13 vaccine (13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine) is more effective than PHiD-CV10 (10-valent pneumococcal Haemophilus influenzae protein D conjugate vaccine) in reducing hearing loss caused by chronic ear infections.

[Read more on page 30](#)

## APRIL

Menzies premiered the 'What is MECSH?' animation. The video informs pregnant women, families, and communities about the Maternal and Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH) program in the Northern Territory. The animation was developed collaboratively with Miwatj Health, Katherine West Health Board, and Sunrise Health Service. Versions were developed for each organisation tailored for their region, with a local program name and translated into Yolngu Matha and East Side Kriol.

[Read more on page 55](#)



What is MECSH? animation premiere.

## MAY

Menzies was proud to launch its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) during National Reconciliation Week. Running until 2026, this RAP will be a key resource for the organisation, guiding activities that advance reconciliation within our research, policy work, and communities.

[Read more on page 12](#)



Mark Mayo launches the Menzies 2024-2026 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

## JUNE

Our Diabetes in Pregnancy Team in Central Australia partnered with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress' Social Emotional Wellbeing Team to deliver a weekly women's group, the Arelhe Apurte-irreme Women Together Group. The team has designed and facilitated interactive sessions related to diabetes, pregnancy and nutrition. The sessions include cultural activities and family days to engage partners and families in community health events.

[Read more on page 25](#)



The Arelhe Apurte-irreme Women Together Group.

The Katherine Youth Diabetes Team was established to provide peer support and education for young people with type 2 diabetes in the Big Rivers region. In June, the first peer-led diabetes education session, developed through a co-design process, was held.

[Read more on page 26](#)

Territory Kidney Care (TKC), an innovative clinical information system, was highlighted in the 2023-24 Digital Territory Action Plan by the Northern Territory Government. It was praised for assisting with early identification and management of kidney disease, enhancing customer experience, and leveraging innovative technology and services. TKC was also recognised in the Commonwealth Government's National Digital Health Strategy 2023-2028.

The strategy aims to achieve four key outcomes: digitally enabled, person-centric, inclusive, and data-driven. TKC aligns with all four of these desired outcomes, specifically mentioning its capacity to deliver high-quality, integrated information about an individual's health.



Territory Kidney Care is featured in local and national digital health strategies.

The Cardiovascular Risk in Indigenous People (CRISP) study held a community engagement day at Wurrumiyanga. Elizabeth Heenan, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group member, played a crucial role in the event's success.

The engagement day featured a barbecue lunch with bush foods, and approximately 75 community members attended. The Diabetes Partnership Team also shared research findings on the day. The event was an excellent opportunity for Menzies to connect with community members and health professionals about our work.

[Read more on page 55](#)



CRISP community engagement day in Wurrumiyanga.

## JULY

A saltwater ceremony led by Larrakia Elders Dr Richard Fejo and Lynette Fejo was held at Casuarina Beach to honour the Menzies-Ramaciotti Centre with the Larrakia name 'Dawudlirra' (pronounced Da-wud-lirra), meaning sea turtle.

The Centre's logo, designed by Mark Mayo and Zoe Fitzpatrick, symbolises this name, featuring a turtle on a journey.

[Read more on page 38](#)



Dr Richard Fejo led the Menzies team in a saltwater ceremony.

Menzies launched the Paediatric Bronchiectasis Action Management Plan (BAMP) to help families and caregivers monitor and manage their child's bronchiectasis symptoms. The plan provides guidance on handling flare-ups and knowing when to seek further help.

The BAMP was developed and used in a randomised control trial – in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia – to determine the effectiveness of the BAMP for the management of bronchiectasis exacerbations.

[Read more on page 31](#)

## AUGUST

The DIABETES across the LIFECOURSE: Northern Australia Partnership held its Annual Educational Symposium in Darwin with satellite sites in Alice Springs and Cairns. The symposium featured presentations by international keynote speakers Professor Kristen Nadeau (USA) and Professor Helen Murphy (UK). The presentations were followed by case-study panel discussions on the appropriate management of youth type 2 diabetes and diabetes in pregnancy. The afternoon workshop focused on practical sessions for diabetes stakeholders to explore effective ways to implement programs and apply research findings in sustainable practices.



Darwin participants of the Diabetes Partnership's Annual Educational Symposium.

The Stay Strong program launched a new hip-hop video to empower young people in their mental health journey. The video features Alice Springs hip-hop artist Tristrum Watkins and students from St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre, who powerfully share what keeps them strong through the art of hip-hop. In 11 workshops with Tristrum, the male students explored well-being and learnt the art of hip-hop, showcasing their resilience, strength, and creativity. The video was launched at a youth community event in Alice Springs and has become an integral part of Menzies' Aboriginal and Islander Mental Health Initiative for Youth (AIMhi-Y).

with the research team, Associate Professor Alex Edelman and Dr Vishnu Khanal led work to co-develop themes and a framework for future policy action.



The Menzies and Ngaanyatjarra Health Service teams working together on the study.

Menzies proudly supported the first Cultura de Timor-Leste Festival, held in Darwin. The festival showcased Timorese culture, food, art, traditions, history, and dance.

[Read more on page 60](#)



Menzies TL team at the festival stall.

## SEPTEMBER

Menzies Remote Health Systems and Climate Change Centre collaborated with Ngaanyatjarra Health Service to facilitate final outputs from the Tjilku Walykumunu Ngaanyatjarra Lands Child Health Study. The study, conducted between 2020 and 2023, used mixed methods to describe *yarnangu's* understanding of child health, explore clinical indicators and map social, cultural and environmental determinants of health. Working

Healthcare providers work hard to communicate well, but patients can still have poor communication experiences in hospitals. To understand how health systems can improve, the Communicate Study Partnership interviewed First Nations patients at Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) in Yolngu, Bininj, Yammirr, Torres Strait Islander and other languages. Multilingual researchers provided meaning-based interpretation for English-speaking researchers. This interpretation enabled culturally safe and authentic knowledge-sharing practices. The study revealed miscommunication as a driver of unsafe care and informed key recommendations, including anti-racism and intercultural communication training, respectful consent processes, trust-building information delivery, and safe mechanisms for reporting concerns.

[Read more on page 29](#)

## OCTOBER

The Alice Springs-based Climate Change Research team, including Associate Professor Supriya Mathew, Dr Rishu Thakur and Dr Manoj Bhatta travelled to

East Arnhem to kickstart a citizen science project. The team met with Miwatj Health Research Manager Dr Bronwyn Rossingh, Nhulunbuy-based Menzies researcher Amy Le Compte and other Yolngu researchers employed by Miwatj Health.

[Read more on page 57](#)



Air in East Arnhem workshop.

The Menzies Tuberculosis (TB) Research Program procured a portable x-ray machine through philanthropic funding. The purchase allows people living in remote communities to be screened for TB in their homes rather than travelling to Katherine or Darwin. The x-ray was funded by the Baer Family – in memory of Doris Patricia Baer, OBE, to be used as part of the REMote Aboriginal Communities ending Tuberculosis (REACT) study in collaboration with the Territory's Centre for Disease Control (CDC), Mala'la Health Service and Sunrise Health Service.

[Read more on page 57](#)

2024 marked the 25th anniversary of the Timika International Malaria and Tuberculosis Research Collaboration, the longest of all Menzies collaborations in the Asia-Pacific. The Papuan Health and Community Development, led by former Menzies PhD student Dr Rini Poespoprodjo, coordinates community-based malaria and TB studies. The studies are in collaboration with Menzies and Indonesian partners including the District Health Authority, hospitals, Gadjah Mada University, CDC and Malaria Control Program.

The collaborative research over the past 25 years has improved malaria treatment and prevention policies worldwide. In Timika, malaria morbidity and mortality have reduced.

[Read more on page 61](#)

Menzies hosted the 10th World Melioidosis Congress in Darwin where more than 180 delegates from more than 20 countries attended. With the theme of 'Unity in Diversity: Global Partnerships in Melioidosis', experts and researchers participated in a dynamic program filled with inspiring stories from across the globe. The program covered the finding of new foci of melioidosis, prevention programs, new diagnostics and therapies, and the exciting work towards a melioidosis vaccine. Delegates departed with new ideas, knowledge, and an appreciation for the cultural richness of the Territory, enhancing Menzies' reputation as a leader in advanced research and global health collaboration.

[Read more on page 63](#)



Menzies team at the 10th World Melioidosis Congress in Darwin.

## NOVEMBER

Menzies Principal Research Fellow, Associate Professor Kamala Thriemer led a symposium at the 2024 annual meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) in New Orleans. The symposium culminated over four years of work on a large multicentre trial – the EFFORT study. The trial

compared the effectiveness, safety, cost-effectiveness and feasibility of novel radical cure options for treating vivax malaria. The symposium featured Menzies collaborators Dr Lek Dysoley (Cambodia), Assistant Professor Najia Ghanchi (Pakistan), Dr Tamiru Degaga (Ethiopia) and Professor Ayodhia Pitaloka Pasaribu (Indonesia).

[Read more on page 28](#)



EFFORT investigators and symposium speakers.

The Preterm Birth Prevention 'See, Stop, Scan' campaign was launched by Menzies at the 2024 Australian College of Midwives NT Conference. Led by Dr Kiarna Brown – Menzies Senior Research Fellow and co-lead of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance – the team worked with local women to create relatable and accessible information on how to have healthy pregnancies. The campaign aims to educate, empower and improve pregnancy outcomes for First Nations mothers.

[Read more on page 30](#)



Launch of the 'See, Stop, Scan' campaign.

## DECEMBER

The Menzies Child and Maternal Health Division discovered a new bacterial species in ear pus from a child with a severe middle ear infection. Importantly, this new species is resistant to the first-line treatment, an antibiotic called ciprofloxacin. The team is now studying whether this new species causes infection alone or if it aids other bacteria in evading antibiotic treatment by creating bacterial biofilm. If the latter is confirmed, different treatment options can be tested, which will lead to better outcomes for children with middle ear disease and reduce preventable hearing loss.

[Read more on page 31](#)

# Launch of Menzies' 2024-2026 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

During National Reconciliation Week, Menzies was proud to launch our 2024-2026 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The celebration included a Welcome to Country by Larrakia woman Mary Williams, a smoking ceremony by Joe Raymond with a didgeridoo performance by William Hewitt, and a dance performance by the Kenbi Dancers.

Menzies Director Professor Alan Cass and Menzies Deputy Director First Nations Leadership Mark Mayo presented the RAP to staff both in person and online.

This document serves as a key resource for Menzies, guiding activities that promote reconciliation as an integral part of the organisation's daily work in research and within the communities it serves. The Innovate RAP focuses on strengthening Menzies' relationships with key community stakeholders, fostering genuine partnerships, and working in a culturally safe manner to achieve sustainable reconciliation outcomes.

The Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) also joined the launch event. TEABBA hosts Brendon and John spoke to teams across Menzies to share more about their work and why reconciliation is important.



Menzies Reconciliation Implementation Group at the RAP launch.

Throughout 2024, Menzies has achieved:



of RAP deliverables completed



\$1,158,093

spent with First Nations Businesses



33

staff members participated in Cultural awareness training



Kenbi Dancers, William Hewitt (Didgeridoo performance) and Joe Raymond (led the smoking ceremony) with Menzies Deputy Director First Nations Leadership, Mark Mayo and Biyamarr ma Project Officer, Jo Campbell.



Menzies team members participate in a smoking ceremony.



Menzies Deputy Director First Nations Leadership, Mark Mayo speaks about the importance of reconciliation.

# Director and Chair's Message

**We are proud to lead an organisation that is dedicated to advancing medical research that is both locally relevant and globally impactful. Menzies is at the forefront of research into Aboriginal health, where we focus on addressing health disparities and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We are committed to ensuring that our research is community-driven, and we are privileged to collaborate closely with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) across the region to ensure our work reflects the needs and priorities of these communities.**

Our continued strong engagement with both the Federal and Northern Territory governments plays a pivotal role in the success of our research, enabling us to work collaboratively towards policies and initiatives that improve public health. We are grateful for these enduring relationships, which provide us with the support needed to undertake our critical work. This year we were honoured to welcome both Territory and Federal Ministers to Menzies to hear first-hand from our staff about their amazing work.

One of the highlights of 2024 has been the expansion of our maternal health program, which continues to grow in both scope and impact. This program is dedicated to improving maternal and child health outcomes for Aboriginal women and families, and we are proud of the strides we have made in developing culturally appropriate, evidence-based solutions.

Furthermore, as a leader in education and training, we are committed to developing

the next generation of health professionals and researchers. Through our education offerings – from traineeships to PhDs – and our leadership in major events such as this year's World Melioidosis Congress Conference, we are equipping people with the knowledge and skills needed to address the unique health challenges of our region, ensuring a sustainable and skilled workforce for the future.

Another highlight of 2024 was the continued growth of our research program exploring the environmental determinants of health and well-being. This collaborative initiative brings together experts from Menzies and Charles Darwin University to address pressing issues that matter deeply to the Northern Territory and our broader region.

We are deeply proud of the work we do, and we are excited for the continued progress we will make in our mission to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal communities and contribute to global health advancements.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all members of the Board and its sub-committees for their exceptional guidance and unwavering support throughout the year. This year, we are pleased to welcome Cindy Penrose as a new board member, whose insight and experience will undoubtedly strengthen our efforts moving forward. At the same time, we thank Leanne Liddle, our departing Deputy Chair, and Nigel Browne for their outstanding contributions to the Board over the years.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who supported and worked with us in 2024. We look forward to continuing these great partnerships in our 40th year and beyond.



Menzies Director  
Professor Alan Cass AO

Menzies Board Chair  
The Honourable Trevor Riley AO KC

# Our Board



**The Hon Trevor Riley AO KC**  
Board Chair

Prior to retirement in 2016, Trevor was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the NT.

He served on the Supreme Court for 18 years. During his tenure as Chief Justice, he was outspoken about cuts to legal aid, high imprisonment rates and addressing alcohol abuse.

Trevor was appointed as Queen’s Counsel in 1989, sworn in as a judge in 1999 and was the president of the NT Bar Association between 1993 and 1997.

His other roles include being a long-term Director of St John Ambulance (NT) and Chair of the AFLNT Appeals Board.



**Prof Alan Cass AO**  
Director

Alan has been the Director of Menzies since 2012.

Alan is a Board Director for the Top End and Central Australia Health Research Translation Centres, has been Deputy Chair and Chair of the NT Clinical Senate, and has had governance roles for the ANZ Dialysis and Transplant Registry, Australian Kidney Trials Network, ACTA, ANZ Society of Nephrology and Top End Area Health Services.

He is a kidney specialist with a particular interest in preventing and managing chronic disease and First Nations health.

His research has focused on developing, implementing and evaluating strategies to improve health outcomes.

Alan has been instrumental in leading national and international clinical trials and conducting research to improve access to services and the provision of care to patients with low health literacy, who speak a different language and have different understandings of health and illness from their healthcare providers.



**Ms Leanne Liddle**  
Deputy Chair

Leanne is an Arrernte woman born and raised in Alice Springs. She is the Executive Director – Community Resilience and Engagement Command, Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

She was the first Aboriginal policewoman in South Australia (SA) where she worked for 11 years as a senior constable in remote and Adelaide police stations.

Leanne has held several senior public service roles, including the manager of Food Security for Aboriginal communities in SA, and the manager of the APY and West Coast regions of SA within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

She has also worked on the international circuit for the United Nations with stints in Geneva, New York and Paris with UNESCO and as a director for Bush Heritage Australia.

Leanne was the 2022 NT Australian of the Year recipient.

Leanne completed her term on the Menzies Board on 18 December 2024.



**Mr Rowan Johnston**  
Board Treasurer

Rowan is a Sydney-based corporate advisor and managing director of C42 Consulting, a private advisory firm.

He spent almost 30 years as an investment banker and corporate advisor with Greenhill & Co. Australia (formerly Caliburn) and Deutsche Bank in Australia and Hong Kong.

Rowan continues to advise a range of private and public sector clients on corporate and financial issues, including equity capital markets and has advised a range of Australian and overseas governments and their agencies on strategic, infrastructure and financial matters.



**Mr Ken Davies PSM**  
Board Member

Ken is CEO of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet and a member of the Charles Darwin University Council, bringing strategic leadership to both government and higher education.

He has previously held CEO roles with departments in the NT, including Territory Families, Education; Lands, Planning and Environment; Housing, Local Government and Regional Services.

Ken is a former chair of the NT Board of Studies and former NT Principals’ Association President. He has also held appointments to the boards of the Australian Children’s Television Foundation, Waterfront Development Corporation and the Land Development Corporation.



**Prof Scott Bowman AO**  
Board Member

Scott is the Vice-Chancellor and President of CDU. He joined CDU in 2021 with considerable university leadership experience as Vice-Chancellor and President of Central Queensland University (CQU). For over a decade, his vision and leadership helped transform CQU into one of Australia's largest and most engaged regional universities. He joined Western Sydney University following his retirement as Vice-Chancellor and President of CQ University in 2019. Previous leadership positions include Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University; Deputy Vice-Chancellor (University Services) and Registrar at James Cook University; Foundation Head of the School of Clinical Sciences at Charles Sturt University; and Foundation Dean of the Faculty of Health Science and Community at University College of St Martin (Lancaster University) Lancaster, UK.



**Ms Patricia Angus PSM**  
Board Member

Trish is a Jawoyn woman from Katherine, Northern Territory; residing in Darwin for the past 30 years. Before retiring in 2012, Trish worked as a registered nurse at public hospitals, an Aboriginal community-controlled health service, community health clinics, and the Royal Australian Air Force. Trish has held senior positions within the NT departments of Health; Housing, Local Government, Regional Services, Aboriginal Affairs and Community Services. For her service to public sector policy and Aboriginal programs and services, Trish was awarded the Public Service Medal at the 2013 Australia Day Awards and has served on several committees, boards, advisory councils, and panels.



**Mr Nigel Browne**  
Board Member

Nigel is a descendent of the Larrakia and Wulna peoples. He is the CEO of the Larrakia Development Corporation and has held senior roles at the corporation since 2006. Nigel is also a Director with The Healing Foundation and the Aboriginal Area Protection Authority (NT). Previous professional roles include Crown Prosecutor (ODPPNT), Aboriginal Lands (SFNT), and Policy Adviser (Chief Minister's Office). Nigel has held board and committee positions including with the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), Law Society (NT), the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group (NIAA), Darwin Harbor Advisory Committee, Aboriginal Tourism Committee (Tourism NT), Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity and the Northern Australia Advisory Council. In August 2011, Nigel was announced as the National Indigenous Legal Professional of the Year. He is also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Nigel completed his term on the Menzies Board on 15 November 2024.



**Prof Louise Baur AM FAHMS**  
Board Member

Louise is Chair of Child and Adolescent Health at the University of Sydney, holds a conjoint appointment as Professor in the Sydney School of Public Health and is an NHMRC Leadership Fellow (2022–2026). She is also a consultant paediatrician at The Children's Hospital at Westmead (Sydney) and former Head of Weight Management Services. Louise is President of the World Obesity Federation (2022–2024). Her previous roles include Director on the Governing Board of the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, Director of World Vision Australia and Founding Fellow and member of the Council of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences (FAHMS). In 2010, Louise was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to medicine and the community.



**Ms Cindy Penrose**  
Board Member

Cindy is the CEO of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, the first formal truth-telling process into injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria. Previously, Cindy was the Chief Operating Officer of the Paul Ramsay Foundation, where she led the creation of 'Yirranma Place', and \$100m+ investments in justice reform. She was the first female CEO of the Australian Bar Association and the Assistant Director of the Australian Defence Force's Defence Abuse Response Taskforce. Cindy also serves on the Boards of Streetwork and Down The Track, as well as the NSW Government's Anti-slavery Advisory Panel. Cindy commenced her term on the Menzies Board on 2 September 2024.

# Statement on Behalf of the Board of Governors

The following persons were members of the Menzies Board of Governors, Finance Committee and Risk and Audit Committee for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Board Member	Position
The Hon Trevor Riley AO KC	Chairperson
Ms Leanne Liddle (Concluded 18 December 2024)	Deputy Chair
Mr Rowan Johnston	Treasurer
Professor Alan Cass AO	Director/Board Member
Mr Kenneth Davies PSM	Board Member
Professor Scott Bowman AO	Board Member
Ms Patrica Angus PSM	Board Member
Mr Nigel Browne (Concluded 15 November 2024)	Board Member
Professor Louise Baur AM FAHMS	Board Member
Ms Cindy Penrose (Commenced 2 September 2024)	Board Member

## 2024 Sub-committee meetings

Committee Members	Finance Committee	Risk & Audit Committee
Mr Rowan Johnston (Treasurer/Chair)	✓	
Professor Louise Baur AM FAHMS	✓	
Professor Alan Cass AO	✓	✓
Mr Amin Islam OAM (Independent Chair)		✓
The Hon Trevor Riley AO KC		✓
Mr Kenneth Davies PSM		✓
Ms Catherine Weber PSM		✓
Mr Greg Shanahan		✓
Mr Brendon Douglas		✓

There were no significant changes to the activities of Menzies during the 2024 year.

During the year, the principal continuing activities of Menzies consisted of:

- Promoting a broad understanding of health that reflects underlying socioeconomic, cultural and biomedical causes of patterns of health and disease;
- Conducting high quality multidisciplinary research, research training, and public health education with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, remote and tropical health;
- Advancing the local, national and international application of research findings to improve health;
- Advocating for research that will contribute to better health for people of the region; and
- Building strong partnerships with community groups, service providers, policymakers and other academic organisations.

Menzies acknowledges Mr Amin Islam OAM, Chair of the Risk and Audit Committee, and Mr Rowan Johnston, Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee, for their valued leadership of these committees. We are truly grateful for their continued support and guidance.

We also thank all Board and Committee members for their voluntary contributions of time, expertise, and commitment to Menzies.

# Our research *impact*



## MECSH – gathering evidence to support First Nations families in remote areas

Menzies completed a five-year funded project for the Territory Government to evaluate the implementation of a program that provides nurse home visits through Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) as part of the government’s effort to improve early childhood outcomes.

From 2019 to 2025, three ACCHS in the East Arnhem and Big Rivers regions have been implementing the program. It involves a trained nurse who visits families during pregnancy and early childhood. A social worker works with the nurse to provide additional mental health and social support. The program:

- offers flexible guidance based on each family’s needs
- provides child development education
- helps parents connect with services

Most evidence supporting the program comes from studies in disadvantaged urban areas in Australia and internationally, including the UK, USA, and South Korea. Menzies’ evaluation is important because it looks at how this model of care can be adapted to very remote areas to benefit First Nations families.

The evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative data collected over four years.

With consent, Menzies researchers interviewed 185 parents from 16 remote communities and 47 health practitioners. ACCHS provided de-identified health data for eligible women and children. Despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread flooding, the ACCHS made significant progress in establishing the program. In the three regions, 45% of eligible women were offered the program and of these 90% accepted. MECOSH nurses made almost 9,500 visits, and MECOSH social workers delivered 877 visits. More than half of the women who joined the program received at least the minimum recommended level of services.

The program was innovative in providing access to a dedicated MECOSH social worker who provided social care in addition to the regular visits from their nurse.

A MECOSH participant commented, *‘I’m really happy that I’ve got them, and they’re supporting me when I’m feeling down and I’m worried. I got them, they got my back... I can ask them anything.’* In the Territory, the program has helped mothers feel more confident and capable, improved family relationships, and reduced barriers to accessing health and social services.

The emerging MECOSH model of care was highly valued by parents in the NT.



Supporting strong connections between parents and children is a core element of MECOSH.

## Guiding policy and awareness on intimate partner violence

Research by Menzies Centre for Child Development and Education (CCDE) revealed high rates of violence, including intimate partner violence (IPV), affecting Aboriginal adolescent girls. In 2023, practitioners with expertise in youth violence programs shared insights on implementing effective primary prevention strategies to reduce IPV among Aboriginal teens in the Territory. These professionals identified three main themes: factors that help (internal and external enablers), obstacles (barriers), and key priorities that are important to address when designing and carrying out prevention programs to respond to IPV among Aboriginal adolescents. The study provides valuable evidence to inform policy, service delivery and raise awareness of the impact of IPV on vulnerable children and young Territorians, especially Aboriginal adolescent girls. The research highlights specific factors that policymakers and agencies in the NT can address to improve domestic violence services for youth. ‘The findings provide an excellent opportunity for increased community awareness of this issue,’ advised Dr Hoang Phan.

## Diabetes in Pregnancy Co-design Project

The Diabetes in Pregnancy Co-Design Project is part of the Diabetes across the LIFECOURSE: Northern Australia Partnership. This work is focused on reducing diabetes-related risks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women before, during and after pregnancy. The initiative follows an iterative approach, with each stage building upon the previous one. Part A focused on gathering formative data on women’s experiences with diabetes and pregnancy. Part B involves collaborating with community members and health professionals to co-design interventions based on the priorities identified in Part A. The final stage, Part C, will focus on evaluating the implementation of the co-designed interventions. The project spans three regions: the Top End, Central Australia, and Far North Queensland (FNQ).

This work strongly emphasizes fostering meaningful collaboration with the women, their communities, and a diverse range of health professionals. By adopting this collaborative approach, the team aims to develop tailored solutions that address the women’s unique needs and concerns throughout their pregnancy journey in each region.

The FNQ team engages with local agencies and health services. They have attended community events, organised community diabetes education sessions, and continue to recruit study participants. The Top End team collaborates with stakeholders to implement activities promoting healthier lifestyles based on feedback from interviews and workshops. The activities include water exercise and health education sessions. In Central Australia, a recurring theme identified by stakeholders was the need to create a “safe space” for women throughout their pregnancy journey. Participants proposed establishing a women’s group to foster peer support, increase confidence in accessing health services, and enhance knowledge and skills for maintaining healthy lifestyles. Our Central Australian team have been working with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Social Emotional Wellbeing Team to deliver a weekly women’s group known as the Arelhe Apurte-irreme, Women Together Group. The team have designed and facilitated interactive sessions (pictured below) related to diabetes, pregnancy, and nutrition. The sessions include cultural activities and family days to engage the community in health events.



The Arelhe Apurte-irreme Women Together Group.

## Understanding the impact of maternal mental health on families in the Territory

Maternal mental health is key to a healthy pregnancy and birth. In the NT, a high number of mothers experience pregnancy and childbirth complications, which can affect their children’s development. However, the link between mental health-related hospitalisations before or during pregnancy and these outcomes has not been fully explored.

In 2024, Menzies CCDE researchers investigated this connection. They analysed NT birth data from 1999 to 2017 and linked it with hospital records for women aged 15 to 44. The study compared women with mental health-related hospitalisations before or during pregnancy to those without, tracking both groups throughout pregnancy and monitoring their children’s development until age five.

The study found that mothers with mental health hospitalisations were more likely to experience complications such as low birth weight, preterm birth, and stillbirth. Their children were also at higher risk of developmental delays and involvement in child protection services. These findings highlight the importance of developing preconception mental healthcare, particularly in the Territory, and the need for culturally appropriate care to address health disparities, especially between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. ‘This research calls for action to strengthen mental health support for women before and during pregnancy to build healthier families and communities across the NT,’ said Dr Abel Dadi.

## Empowering youth and building connections

The “Doing it Together” project aims to co-design and test peer-led diabetes education and support for youth with type 2 diabetes in the Big Rivers region. This partnership project includes Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service, Katherine West Health Board, and NT Health.

Three peer facilitators from Katherine commenced in February 2024. The youth started with an exciting week in Darwin, where they received comprehensive training to prepare them for their roles as peer facilitators and provide input into the program design. The facilitators have been leading diabetes education sessions in Kriol and English for other young people at Wurli-Wurlinjang Health

Service since June 2024. The peer facilitators have also taken on a broader role, helping to de-stigmatise diabetes in young people by sharing their stories and experiences. They have also been travelling across the Big Rivers region, working with young people, communities, and health professionals to educate them about type 2 diabetes and improve support for young people living with the condition.

The peer facilitators, Edwina Murphy, Waylon Murphy, and Samyia Shark presented at the 2024 Preventive Health Conference in Darwin and the AMSANT CQI Collaborative, where Edwina Murphy was awarded ‘Best First Time Presenter.’ They also participated

in a public hearing for the Commonwealth Government Parliamentary Inquiry into Diabetes, which was featured on ABC News.



“Doing it Together” – Peer facilitators from Katherine present at the PHAA Preventive Health Conference in Darwin.

## Optimising digital solutions to improve access to primary health care in remote regions

Associate Professor Deb Russell, Dr Vishnu Khanal, Ms Kureisha Wilson, Ms Hilda Bert and Mr Frank Napier-Dixon are developing and implementing digital health solutions to enhance primary health care in a small, remote Aboriginal community in Central Australia. The digital project is a partnership between Menzies, the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, the Northern Territory Department of Health, Northern Territory Primary Health Network, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliances Northern Territory, Healthdirect, the Australian Digital Health Agency, Digital Health CRC and The University of Sydney.

Initial community consultations revealed that elderly adults using council aged care services relied on occasional allied health outreach from Mparntwe (Alice Springs). At most, services were provided twice a year for a particular discipline. Staff at

the remote aged care facility were concerned that the client’s needs could change rapidly, and there was an unmet need for allied health assessments and management between outreach visits. Additionally, family members may not be present during the allied health outreach visits, which limited decision-making. A possible solution included telehealth consultations between allied health professionals and clients at the aged care service, with the option to include relatives, which could complement in-person visits.

The Menzies team collaborated with community members, NT Health’s Allied Health team, and MacDonnell Regional Council’s Aged Care Services to co-design, trial, and launch telehealth services for the remote clients. The trials were successful, thanks to support from the aged care staff, council and NT Health’s



Aboriginal aged care staff attended a telehealth call from the NT Health Allied Health team.

willingness to provide telehealth services. This led to a hybrid model combining outreach visits with telehealth. Local staff continue to receive training to support these consultations.

This hybrid model is a first in Central Australia and will be evaluated in 2025. The digital project plans to expand by offering telehealth exercise sessions for older adults via the council’s aged care services. It reflects the research approach of Menzies Remote Health Systems and Climate Change Centre, focusing on partnering with local services to co-design, implement, and evaluate models of care to meet local needs.

## Strengthening health systems through capacity building and collaboration in remote Australia



Dr Leisa McCarthy and Sian Graham facilitate the CRESTRA Research Capacity Building Workshop in Alice Springs in March.

In March, a Research Capacity Building and Knowledge Translation Workshop was held in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). The CRESTRA event was introduced by Arrernte Elder Kumalie (Rosalie) Riley and led by Menzies Director, Professor Alan Cass. The workshop brought together over 60 clinicians, policymakers, and researchers. It focused on local training, career pathways for First Nations researchers, partnerships with local service

providers and the importance of culturally respectful, locally driven research. Dr Leisa McCarthy and Sian Graham also assisted with facilitating the event. Menzies researchers Associate Professor Alexandra Edelman and Sam Moore from the Remote Health Systems and Climate Change Centre led the development of an action plan to strengthen sustainable research networks, locally led research and evaluation in remote Australia.

## Territory Kidney Care: demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of clinical decision support

Territory Kidney Care (TKC) is an integrated clinical information system designed by clinicians for clinicians. Menzies developed TKC in partnership with NT Health and the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector. The system aims to improve the early identification and management of chronic kidney disease. As TKC consolidates information from multiple disparate and disconnected health systems across the Territory, it provides the closest representation of “one patient, one record” in Australia.

The information system also offers time efficiencies for clinicians by collating, summarising and diagnosing conditions based on coded and uncoded data. It also improves the timeliness, quality and safety of care delivered. The alerts in TKC’s clinical decision support system help identify events early and assists in clinical decision-making. The longitudinal information in TKC also provides critical opportunities to understand the impact of interventions, including cost-effective approaches.

A recent study modelled the cost-effectiveness of clinical decision support versus usual care based on six years of data in TKC. The study found that TKC was highly cost-effective when used to support decision-making. Investing in systems like TKC, particularly in settings like the Territory – where there is a high burden of chronic disease and a hard-to-reach population – demonstrates a sound return on investment.

## MoU signed showing housing is a critical health priority

Menzies and Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory (AHNT) signed an MoU to collaborate on improving remote housing quality in the Territory, aligning with a new ten-year government funding initiative. The partnership focuses on promoting Aboriginal self-determination in housing systems and finding culturally appropriate solutions to enhance health and well-being in remote

communities. Building on a history of successful collaborations – including research on governance models for Aboriginal-controlled housing – the MoU aims to expand research capacity and drive evidence-based interventions. Both organisations emphasise the critical role of adequate housing in supporting early childhood development, reducing infections, and preventing chronic illnesses, highlighting their shared commitment to improve housing and health outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.



Dr Liam Grealy, Menzies Senior Research Fellow, and Skye Thompson, AHNT Chief Executive Officer leading the MoU negotiations.

### Kurunpa Kana: keeping the spirit alive

Purple House and Menzies' Stay Strong Mental Health team collaborated to create more culturally appropriate mental health resources for the desert regions in Central Australia. The project aims to improve well-being and provide tools for service providers to engage in respectful care planning conversations by weaving cultural concepts and language into care planning. At the heart of the project is co-design. The Purple House working group ensures cultural knowledge and community voices are central to the resources. Menzies and Purple House have created a dynamic partnership by sharing expertise and learning from each other. This collaboration has led to prioritising

and adapting resources, starting with a culturally inspired version of the Stay Strong Care Plan.

The care plan incorporates elements of the Maku story – a traditional narrative about the witchetty grub's transformation into a moth – symbolising growth and resilience. Strong Spirit well-being cards are also being developed to support training sessions that blend cultural connections and inspire open discussions about well-being. The Kurunpa Kana initiative is funded by the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) through the Central Australian Aboriginal Health Science Network. The project emphasises capacity

building with First Nations and non-Indigenous researchers working together in a two-way approach. A key milestone has been the re-establishment of the Purple House Language Group, which ensures First Nations languages are incorporated into the resources, deepening their cultural authenticity.

Kurunpa Kana – meaning “keeping the spirit alive” – is a journey of walking side by side. Through this collaboration, mental health resources are adapted to align with Central Australian communities' values, stories, and languages, ensuring they resonate deeply and support lasting well-being.

### EFFORT study

The Menzies malaria team led a multicentre trial to compare the effectiveness, safety, cost-effectiveness and feasibility of novel radical cure options for treating vivax malaria.

Led by Menzies' Principal Research Fellow, Associate Professor Kamala Thriemer, the study recruited more than 950 patients at field sites in Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Ethiopia. The trial randomised patients to three different treatment arms:

- a high-dose short course primaquine
- the novel single-dose tafenoquine
- a low-dose treatment with primaquine as the control arm

The study provides reassuring evidence of the safety of the high-dose treatment even though effectiveness is reduced when treatment is unsupervised. Importantly, the trial showed better than anticipated efficacy of tafenoquine, including in combination with artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs).

These therapies are used to treat the blood stages of the parasite and have previously been thought to result in reduced efficacy of tafenoquine when given together.

The results of this global collaboration were presented at the 2024 annual meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) in New Orleans. The symposium featured Menzies collaborators Dr Lek Dysoley (National Malaria Control Program, Cambodia),

Assistant Professor Najia Ghanchi (Aga Khan University, Pakistan), Dr Tamiru Degaga (Arba Minch University, Ethiopia) and Professor Ayodhia Pitaloka Pasaribu (Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia). Menzies staff member Associate Professor Angela Devine and PhD student Sarah Cassidy-Seyoum also participated.

The trial results are expected to directly influence global treatment guidelines.



EFFORT investigators and symposium speakers.

### Improving communication with First Nations patients: insights and solutions from an intercultural approach

Healthcare providers work hard to communicate well, but patients can still have poor communication experiences in hospitals. This is magnified when different languages and cultures have vastly different communication rules and standards. To understand how health systems can improve, the Communicate Study Partnership interviewed First Nations patients at Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) in Yolngu, Bininj, Yammirr, Torres Strait Islander

and other languages. Multilingual researchers provided meaning-based interpretations for English-speaking researchers, enabling culturally safe and authentic knowledge sharing. The study found that miscommunication often affected the quality of care. Participants also recommended anti-racism and intercultural communication training for staff, respectful consent processes and accessible mechanisms for reporting concerns.

Reflecting on her own experiences and the research, Yolngu Elder Dorothy shared:

*“If they help us, we can help them. Create the solutions together. But they have to do the work first, and open pathways for us because that place [the hospital] is full of complicated foreign things and a lot of different systems.”*

### The National Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey of Timor-Leste

Menzies supported the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health's National TB Program to complete their first national TB prevalence survey. The survey results confirmed the country's high TB burden. They also offered insights to help the government, donors, and partners improve strategies to tackle this public health challenge.

In November, Menzies supported the National TB Program Manager and team members from Timor-Leste to attend and present their survey results at the World Conference on Lung Health in Indonesia.



Project Coordinator – BEN Study, Dr Lesy Atok presenting findings from the National TB Prevalence Survey at the World Conference on Lung Health in Indonesia.

### VASINA-TL – data for decision making

The Vaccine Preventable Disease Seroprevalence in a Nationwide Assessment of Timor-Leste (VASINA-TL) study was conducted by the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health and Menzies. It involved a population-representative seroprevalence survey, providing crucial information on the epidemiology of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) in Timor-Leste. Diseases such as measles, rubella, COVID-19 and hepatitis B. The results have been shared with the Ministry of Health and submitted for publication. They have already led to changes in immunisation policy, prompting a measles catch-up vaccination campaign for young children at the highest risk of severe measles. VASINA-TL has also laid the foundation for further serosurveillance research in Timor-Leste. This will provide valuable information to guide public health responses to VPDs, neglected tropical diseases, and vector-borne diseases like dengue, chikungunya, zika virus and malaria.

### Closing the Gap: pioneering research in ear health for First Nations children

Professor Amanda Leach AM received over \$2.9 million from NHMRC to evaluate vaccines to improve ear and hearing health for First Nations children in the Territory. Her third paper from this study – published in ‘PLOS Medicine’ – compared the booster dose of two pneumococcal conjugate vaccines, PCV13 and PHiD-CV10 to see which is more effective in reducing hearing loss from chronic ear infections (otitis media).

The results showed that children who received PCV13 had better hearing outcomes than those who received PHiD-CV10, with 20% fewer children with disabling hearing loss (21% compared to 41%) and 20% more having normal hearing. However, the small sample size means the difference could range from 1% to 37%. PHiD-CV10 was expected to be more effective due to the HiD component, suggesting that a vaccine switch might be needed. This research shows First Nations children in the NT receive the best vaccine for preventing hearing loss, and there is no need for the First Nations childhood vaccine schedule to include to the PhiD-CV10 vaccine.

First Nations children have the highest reported rates of otitis media in the world. More recent research is evaluating a health workforce enhancement model of training and employing resident Ear Health Facilitators in remote communities, the Hearing for Learning Initiative.

Professor Leach has dedicated her career to tackling otitis media. In 2024, she was recognised as one of NHMRC’s ‘10 of the Best’ for her vaccine research.

### Healthy beginnings: tackling preterm birth risks in the Northern Territory

Dr Kiarna Brown is a Menzies Senior Research Fellow, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist. She also leads the NT chapter of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance (APBPA). Dr. Brown focuses on the difficulties First Nations women face in areas with limited access to culturally appropriate health and pregnancy education. In her article, ‘What Women Want to Know’, she discusses a groundbreaking program at Menzies aimed at preventing preterm births and improving pregnancy outcomes for First Nations women and their children.

The Every Week Counts National Preterm Birth Prevention Collaborative has created opportunities for important discussions about preventing preterm birth across Australia.

In the Territory, this initiative allows the research team to understand community knowledge about preterm birth and what information women seek regarding pregnancy.

The NT research team’s analysis revealed that, until recently, there was little data on preterm birth trends and risk factors in the Top End. Between 2007 and 2017, nearly 10% of all live births were preterm. It also highlighted that 1 in 6 live births for First Nations women were preterm.

Barriers include varying health literacy and limited access to relevant education. Women also want relatable and accessible information on how to have healthy pregnancies. In response, the team developed a local Preterm Birth Prevention ‘See, Stop, Scan’ campaign. Launched at the 2024 Australian College of Midwives NT Conference, the campaign aims to educate and empower First Nations mothers by promoting engagement between healthcare providers and pregnant Territorians.



Dr Kiarna Brown and Marisa Smiler-Cairns launch the ‘See, Stop, Scan’ Preterm birth prevention campaign.

### The PBB Breath Study: progress towards a new generation of respiratory diagnostic tests

The NHMRC-funded PBB Breath Study is a multicentre collaborative project involving researchers based in Darwin, Brisbane and Vancouver. It aims to develop new ways of determining the types of bacteria causing chronic chest infections in young children. The team works on finding solutions to overcome the challenges of current diagnostics, which often need samples taken under general anaesthesia in young children. One component of this project is exploring if breath biomarkers could be used to detect bacteria and help doctors determine the correct treatment

for each child. A suitable test for infants requires modified breath sampling methods, as many children with chronic bronchitis and bronchiectasis are under four years old. In 2024, the PBB Breath Study team tested different equipment to collect breath samples from young children. They found that methods previously recommended for older children can also be used confidently in children as young as two. This is a key step in developing breath-based diagnostic tests for young children that could be used in real-world settings.



### Breathing easier: a new guide for families managing children’s bronchiectasis

In April 2024, the Paediatric Bronchiectasis Action Management Plan (BAMP) was launched to help families and caregivers manage their child’s bronchiectasis symptoms. This chronic lung condition damages the airways, causing coughing, mucus buildup, and frequent infections, which makes breathing difficult.

The plan was created by the Paediatric Respiratory team at Menzies and endorsed by the Lung Foundation Australia.

The BAMP was primarily funded by the Queensland Children’s Hospital Foundation and a small NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence small project grant.

### Australian First Nations Reference Group for Child and Maternal Health

The Australian First Nations Reference Group for Child and Maternal Health has been offering strategic advice and advocacy on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, social, and cultural research since 2008. It works closely with Menzies’ Child and Maternal Health Division. Led by Dr Aunty Bilawara Lee OAM, the group advises on conducting research in a culturally appropriate way throughout the Territory.

The group’s priority is to grow research in child, adolescent, and

maternal health. This will help improve the treatment of common childhood illnesses and pregnancy-related complications that affect infants, children, and mothers.

With over 40 years of community relationships underpinning all research activities, including translating research findings to First Nations participants, communities, and stakeholders, the reference group plays a key role in addressing health challenges in the Territory.

### Discovery of a new bacterial species in severe middle ear infection

Chronic suppurative otitis media (CSOM), a severe middle ear infection, is a leading cause of hearing loss in children, particularly in low-income and remote First Nations communities. Successful treatment can be complicated by the complex multi-bacterial and fungal environment in the middle ear after long-term infections. Some infections do not resolve despite treatment.

Through a combination of bacterial DNA sequencing and targeted microbiologic culture, Menzies discovered a new bacterial species – Oligella otitidis – in ear discharge from a child with CSOM.

This new species is resistant to ciprofloxacin, the first-line antibiotic treatment for CSOM. Our team is now researching

whether this new species can cause infection on its own or if it helps other bacteria form biofilms that protect them from antibiotics.

This research aims to determine if treatments specifically targeting this new species are needed, which could improve outcomes and reduce preventable hearing loss in children with middle ear disease.

## RESEARCHER PROFILE

## Professor Anne Chang

**Breathe Easy: transforming paediatric cough management through innovative research**



Professor Anne Chang

Research by Professor Anne Chang AM over the past three decades has redefined paediatric respiratory illnesses in terms of diagnosis, management guidelines, patient education, approaches to medicines in children and developed resources to enhance health outcomes for children.

Chronic cough is a common health issue in children, impacting their quality of life, parents, and the healthcare system. Research funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and led by Professor Chang identified Protracted Bacterial Bronchitis (PBB) as the most frequent cause of chronic cough. This research has improved our understanding of PBB and has enhanced children's health in urban and First Nations communities.

The discovery of PBB has transformed how chronic cough in children is managed worldwide. It has led to updates in major medical guidelines and care manuals and the creation of patient educational resources. Chronic cough is now recognised as a distinct medical condition. This has changed how chronic wet cough is treated and the medications used in children.

Professor Chang has also conducted cohort studies and randomised controlled trials. This research has refined the criteria for diagnosing bronchiectasis and its exacerbations. Her findings show that Azithromycin can reduce exacerbation rates by half, and antibiotics are effective for treating acute exacerbations.

In her research on asthma in children, Professor Chang found cough is not a reliable indicator of asthma. She developed lung function reference equations and emphasised the importance of measuring fractional exhaled nitric oxide, which tests nitric oxide levels in breath and is used for asthma diagnosis and management. High nitric oxide levels when breathing out can indicate inflamed airways and may suggest asthma. Professor Chang also collaborates with First Nations Health Practitioners to improve asthma education.

Professor Chang's research explores early and recurring lung infections, persistent infections, inflammation, and various respiratory conditions.

Professor Chang's research has contributed to:

- updated guidelines (locally, nationally and internationally)
- point-of-care resources
- informative websites
- partnerships with lung health organisations
- global workshops and webinars
- the inclusion of paediatric lung health in Australian and European medical curricula
- the development of diagnostic tools and policy changes

Professor Chang is a leading global expert in paediatric respiratory health, with over 33,900 citations to her work and at least 93 of her publications each referenced extensively by other researchers—placing her among the most widely cited scientists in her field. (Google Scholar).

Her work has shaped key clinical guidelines, improving outcomes for Indigenous and underserved children. She continues to lead major research initiatives and mentor the next generation, driving national and international impact.

**A testimonial from one of Professor Chang's study participants:**

*"My daughter was diagnosed with asthma at age three due to frequent coughing at night and shortness of breath. Over the years, she had a persistent wet cough, struggled with physical activity, and could not participate in sports or physical education. At 11, after further evaluation, she was diagnosed with bronchiectasis and treated for a severe pseudomonas infection, which was picked up by the Menzies respiratory team working at the Royal Darwin Hospital. This included two weeks of inpatient care, followed by months of nebulized and oral antibiotics. Today, at 13, she thrives in acrobatic and contemporary dance, enjoys sports like touch rugby, and has regained confidence. She can run and jump without shortness of breath and only uses her inhaler as needed. The right diagnosis and treatment have transformed her life. Thank you to Professor Anne Chang and Mrs Lesley Versteegh who were involved in her care – your dedication has made all the difference to my child's life."*

# Our people



## Organisational structure

SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM			
<b>Professor Alan Cass AO</b> Director			
<b>Mark Mayo</b> Deputy Director First Nations Leadership	<b>Professor Anna Ralph</b> Deputy Director Research	<b>Tegan Ryan</b> Chief Operating Officer	<b>Esther Miller</b> Associate Deputy Director Strategy
<b>Dr Leisa McCarthy</b> Deputy Director First Nations Engagement and Research Strategy	<b>Professor Louise Maple-Brown</b> Deputy Director Research	<b>Chris Pearce</b> Chief Operating Officer	

RESEARCH			
<b>Global and Tropical Health</b> Dr Tina Noutsos	<b>Child and Maternal Health</b> Professor Anne Chang AM	<b>Centre for Child Development and Education</b> Professor Gary Robinson	<b>Wellbeing and Preventable Chronic Diseases</b> Associate Prof Gillian Gorham
Malaria, TB and Other Regional Endemic Diseases	Respiratory Health	Preventing Suicide and Self-Harm	Mental Health and Wellbeing
Regional Health System Strengthening	Maternal Health	Evaluation of Child and Family Health and Social Services	Tobacco Control and Housing
Global Women's and Children's Health	Immunisation	The Child and Youth Development Research Partnership	Nutrition
Tropical and Emerging Infectious Diseases	Ear Health	Strong Parents and Children	Diabetes
Viral Hepatitis	Childhood Anaemia	Resilient Youth	Cancer Epidemiology
Rheumatic Heart Disease	Life Course	Population Health and Wellbeing	Renal
Tobacco	Polymicrobial Research		Rural and Remote Health Services
Alcohol and Other Drugs	International Child Health		
	Child Health Laboratory		
	Housing and Hygiene		
	Indigenous Medicinal Plants		

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND PATHWAYS		
<b>Higher Degrees by Research</b> Professor Heidi Smith-Vaughan	<b>Postgraduate Studies</b> Dr Sharon Chirgwin	<b>The Ramaciotti Regional and Remote Health Sciences Training Centre</b>
Master by Research	Postgraduate Coursework Programs	HealthLAB
Doctor of Philosophy		
Honours Program		

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES			
Executive Support	Development	Research Office	Data Management
Finance	Biyamarr ma	Communications, Media and Marketing	Research Quality
Human Resources	Work Health and Safety	Information Technology	Ethics Office
Legal Services	Facilities and Operations	Governance and Risk	Laboratory Science
			Biostatistics



Anjana Rai in the laboratory.

## Biyamarr ma Traineeship Program

In 2024, Menzies celebrated Kiriz Oliver and Shiani Ah-Wong, who completed their Certificate III in Laboratory Skills. As part of their traineeship, they undertook work placement in the Menzies Laboratory. This marks the conclusion of the Biyamarr ma Traineeship Program, which has provided valuable opportunities for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to gain qualifications within the workplace. Menzies remains committed to engaging young Territorians and supporting their skill development through the Menzies-Ramaciotti Centre and our other programs.



Trainees Shiani and Kiriz with Menzies staff at graduation morning tea.

## Menzies–Ramaciotti Centre

In July, during a saltwater ceremony held at Casuarina Beach, the Menzies–Ramaciotti Centre was honoured with the Larrakia name ‘Dawudlirra’ (pronounced Da-wud-lirra), meaning sea turtle. The ceremony was led by Larrakia Elders Dr Richard Fejo and Lynette Fejo.

The Centre’s logo – featuring a turtle on a journey – was designed by Mark Mayo and Zoe Fitzpatrick when the Centre was established in 2020, and reflects the significance of the name.

Since 2020, the Centre has supported over 200 youth to train, study and find jobs in health-related careers. Its long-term goal is to develop a local, sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce in the Territory. In 2024, the centre engaged with over 2,400 students and community members through schools, CDU events, health promotion activities, and community organisations. The Menzies–Ramaciotti Centre

also supported 64 young people through study and work placements, 70% of whom were First Nations students, helping them pursue further education, training, or employment in the health sector. Our undergraduate students excelled academically and demonstrated outstanding leadership and professional engagement through various opportunities, including:

- Employment with our REACT study, travelling to remote communities to work with TB diagnosis and treatment.
- Undertaking work placements with the RHD team and Territory Government.
- Speaking on a panel about youth mental health during the Mental Health Week Seminar.
- Acting as Master of Ceremonies (MC) for the Mental Health Week Seminar.
- Presenting a team project at the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) conference in Perth.

- Serving as members of the Indigenous Reference Group for the Aboriginal and Islander Mental Health Initiative (AIMhi) project, which met in Adelaide this year.
- Volunteering at the 10th World Melioidosis Congress.
- Attended the Australian Association of Adolescent Health Conference in Brisbane.
- Participating in point-of-care testing with our diabetes team.

These experiences highlight the students’ commitment to academic excellence and meaningful contributions to the NT’s health field.

The Centre looks forward to another fantastic year in 2025, fostering a future where local and First Nations youth lead the way in the Territory’s health sector.



Menzies–Ramaciotti Centre team celebrate NAIDOC Week, (L–R): Michael Johnston, Jayde Hopkins, Mark Mayo, Royce Ramsamy, Nicole Boyd, Professor Heidi Smith–Vaughan and Charlotte Valle



Dr Richard Fejo lead the Menzies team in a saltwater ceremony for at Casuarina Beach, to recognise the gifting of Larrakia name ‘Dawudlirra’ to the Centre.

## Fellowships and Awards

The Menzies Fellowships Initiative was established to support the next generation of Menzies researchers in developing and progressing their careers. This commitment aligns with our strategic priority of fostering talented and committed staff.

Following a peer review process, the following four Menzies researchers were awarded a fellowship for 2025:

**Dr Kiarna Brown**  
Research vision: To apply my clinical and academic knowledge to ensure effective, sustainable and community-led advancements are achieved in the delivery of safe maternal care.

**Dr Jemima Beissbarth**  
Research vision: To build a program of evidenced-based clinical trial research with a complementary framework of laboratory-based microbe and host studies to improve treatment outcomes for children with chronic suppurative otitis media, and establish best-practice preventative treatments for chronic middle ear disease.

### The Maple–Brown Family Foundation Fellowship

The Maple–Brown Family Foundation Fellowship supports the highest-ranked applicant under the Menzies Fellowships Initiative whose work contributes to the well-being of the Australian community, with a particular focus on supporting disadvantaged populations, rural and remote areas, health, and environmental issues. This was awarded to:

**Dr Ella Meumann**  
Research vision: To harness microbial genomics for infectious disease surveillance in the Northern Territory.

### John and Barbara Hargrave Fellowship

The John and Barbara Hargrave Fellowship aims to support the study of Aboriginal Health in the Territory. This was awarded to:

**Dr Matthew Hare**  
Research vision: Working in meaningful partnerships to reduce health inequity through the prevention of diabetes and diabetes-related complications among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

### Long Service Awards

Our Long Service Awards provide the opportunity to reflect on the contributions of those who have been instrumental to Menzies’ development, growth and success.

Recognised in 2024 for their long-standing contributions were:

- 35 Years**
  - Professor Amanda Leach AM
  - Professor Bart Currie
- 25 Years**
  - Melita McKinnon
- 20 Years**
  - Professor Peter Morris AM
- 15 years**
  - Alison Simmonds
  - Beth Temple
  - Paula Binks
  - Sara Noonan

Menzies was also delighted to celebrate our five and 10 years of service award recipients, based at our Darwin, Alice Springs and Dili offices, as well as those who work remotely.



Menzies Board Chair, The Hon Trevor Riley AO KC and Menzies Director Professor Alan Cass AO with Professor Amanda Leach AM (middle) celebrating 35 years.



Celebrating 25 years of service: Melita McKinnon (middle) with Menzies Board Chair, The Hon Trevor Riley AO KC and Menzies Director Professor Alan Cass AO.



Celebrating 35 years: Professor Bart Currie (middle) with Menzies Board Chair, The Hon Trevor Riley AO KC and Menzies Director Professor Alan Cass AO.



Celebrating some of our Darwin-based five years of service award recipients.

## Research Excellence

**Menzies recognises that our people are our greatest asset. We strive to encourage and promote excellence in research and build capacity to help our people excel in their chosen fields.**

### Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) Rising Star 2024 – Finalist

Dr Matthew Hare was named a finalist for this award for his diabetes research. With four finalists from across Australia, this award celebrates and supports outstanding early career medical researchers whose work seeks to deliver great impact to health and the community.



AAMRI Rising Star finalists for 2024 (L-R): Dr Tuba Nur Gide, Dr Matthew Hare (Menzies Senior Research Fellow), Associate Professor Amanda Gwee, and Dr Kefyalew Alene.

### Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology (ANZSN) 2024 Rural Science Award

Dr Sandawana William Majoni was awarded this accolade at the 59th ANZSN Annual Scientific Meeting. Dr Majoni was recognised for his work as part of the *Iron Infusion in Haemodialysis Study: Intravenous Iron Polymaltose for Indigenous Patients with High Ferritin Levels on Haemodialysis (INFERR Study)*.

### International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Outstanding Special Issue Award (1st Prize) for 2021-2023

Co-authors, Professor Joan Cunningham, Dr Abbey Diaz, Associate Professor Kalinda Griffiths and Associate Professor Lisa Whop were recognised for their special issue titled *The Health and Wellbeing of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples around the Globe*. Their work collating this issue was highlighted for obtaining exceptional papers, demonstrating a significant impact within the academic community.

### 2024 Dr Lena Elizabeth McEwan and Dame Joyce Daws Church Fellowship

Dr Edith Waugh was awarded this specific category of Churchill Fellowship in Australia for her project *To explore culturally safe and sustainable perioperative care models for NT's First Nations peoples*.



Dr Edith Waugh.

### 2024 Churchill Fellowship

Dr Beau Cubillo was awarded this prestigious grant for his project *Investigating how Indigenous Peoples can self-determine their food systems for health*.



Dr Beau Cubillo.

### 2024 Australian and New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion's Blood Management Award

Dr Tina Noutsos received this accolade for the best abstract on patient blood management which was presented at the ANZSBT's Annual Scientific Meeting.

### 2024 Fulbright Scholarship (Northern Territory)

Dr Victoria Cox was recognised for her work on how common skin conditions like scabies affect remote Aboriginal communities in the Territory. Under this scholarship, she will continue her skin health research at Massachusetts General Hospital. It is the premier teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School in Boston. Dr Cox will collaborate with Associate Professor Esther Freeman, the hospital's Director of Global Health Dermatology.



Associate Professor Esther Freeman and Dr Victoria Cox at the World Health Organization's First Global Meeting on Skin Neglected Tropical Diseases in Geneva in 2023.

### National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 10 of the Best – Fifteenth Edition

Professor Amanda Leach AM was named NHMRC's '10 of the Best' for her decades of work, which have changed our understanding of ear disease and hearing loss and ways to prevent it. Her latest project, funded by the NHMRC, tested new vaccination schedules to find ways to lower infections and reduce ear and hearing loss in First Nations children.



NHMRC 10 of the Best – 15th Edition; Professor Amanda Leach AM is second from left.

### 2024 CDU VC Excellence Awards – Higher Degree by Research Supervision Award

Professor Louise Maple-Brown received this award for being an exceptional and prolific mentor and supervisor. She fosters academic excellence and collaboration, enabling her cohort to significantly advance diabetes research.



Professor Louise Maple-Brown receives her award from CDU VC Professor Scott Bowman.

### 2024 CDU VC Excellence Awards – Innovative Research Partnerships and Industry Engagement Award

Associate Professor Angela Devine received this award for her research that made a new antimalarial accessible to the 175 million people at risk of malaria in Brazil. The research was conducted through partnerships with industry and stakeholders.

### Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Dr Aunty Bilawara Lee OAM: for her ongoing service to the Indigenous community of the NT.

### Member of the Order of Australia (AM)

Professor Kelvin Kong: for his significant service to medicine as an Otolaryngologist, and to Indigenous health.

## Internal Awards

### 2024 Ryan Family Prize

The Ryan Family Prize is an annual award that recognises outstanding contributions from individuals or groups to Menzies. The prize is awarded to staff who go above and beyond in their role to help make Menzies a great place to work. Nominees demonstrate that they have:

- contributed to furthering the goals of Menzies
- shown commitment and dedication to the core values of Menzies
- fostered an environment of collaboration, teamwork, respect and communication (internally and externally)
- displayed energy, motivation and enthusiasm

Thanks to the generosity of the Ryan family, the winner receives a \$5,000 prize for professional development and a perpetual trophy.

Jane Nelson, Menzies Operational Research Support Manager, was the 2024 Ryan Family Prize winner. For more than 15 years, Jane has quietly and consistently worked to advance Menzies' goals and create a positive, collaborative work environment. She ensures that all projects meet the highest standards and results. Jane also consistently goes above and beyond to support staff and students in their research journey.



Jane Nelson receives the 2024 Ryan Family Prize.

### 2024 Menzies Medallion

The Menzies Board awards the Menzies Medallion to individuals or groups that have contributed considerably to health in the Northern Territory.

In 2024, the CEO of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Dr Donna Ah Chee, was awarded the Menzies Medallion.

This was in recognition of Dr Ah Chee's outstanding health advocacy, leadership, and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of all Territorians.



2024 Menzies Medallion Recipient, Dr Donna Ah Chee.

### 2024 Companion of Menzies

The Companion of Menzies Award, established in 2018, recognises people who have made exceptional contributions to the continued development and success of Menzies.

In 2024, three recipients received this award:

- Mr Amin Islam OAM
- Dr Aunty Bilawara Lee OAM
- Mr Peter Plummer AM



Menzies Director, Professor Alan Cass AO with 2024 Menzies Medallion Recipient, Dr Donna Ah Chee and 2024 Companion of Menzies award recipients Mr Amin Islam OAM and Dr Aunty Bilawara Lee OAM.

### Menzies Mentorship Award

Menzies is committed to building a strong, resilient organisation by fostering a talented and dedicated workforce.

As part of this, Menzies recognises the importance of effective mentorship – both formal and informal – for academic and professional staff in achieving our goal.

In recognition of this, in 2022, Menzies developed the Mentorship Award. This award recognises staff who provide excellence in mentorship.

Recipients are acknowledged for their outstanding contributions as mentors, including providing support, sharing knowledge, and demonstrating respect for colleagues' development.

In 2024, Menzies was delighted to have three recipients of this award:

- Associate Professor Kamala Thriemer
- Lekshmi Sobhana
- Tessa Oakley

Each mentor was regarded for their generosity of time, insightful guidance and ability to support and grow the professional skills of the individuals and teams they guide.



Lekshmi Sobhana and Associate Professor Kamala Thriemer receive their Mentorship awards.

### Val Asche Memorial Prize for Academic Excellence

The Val Asche Memorial Prize for Academic Excellence is awarded annually at the end of each academic year.

The late Dr Valerie Asche was the head of the microbiology research unit at Menzies from 1986 to 1994 under its founding Director Professor John Mathews. Dr Asche supported this award for 19 years before sadly passing away in 2019. Dr Asche's family maintains an interest in education and continues to support academic excellence among Menzies students.

The 2024 winners of the annual Val Asche Memorial Prize for Academic Excellence:

**Master of Public Health**  
Michael Riceman

**Master of Health Research**  
Isobel Walker  
Natalie Merida  
Corrine Butler

**Graduate Diploma of Public Health**  
Amy Le Compte

### 2024 Harry Christian Giese Research Impact Prize

The Harry Christian Giese Research Impact Prize was established in recognition of the significant and formative role that the late Harry Giese AM MBE played in establishing Menzies.



Dr Steven Kho.

This award acknowledges and remembers his important legacy. Both Harry and his wife Nancy "Nan" Giese were resolute in their commitment to providing educational opportunities for Territorians and in their support of Menzies.

Dr Steven Kho was the 2024 recipient for his groundbreaking discoveries in malaria research.

During his PhD, Dr Kho discovered a large hidden malaria parasite reservoir in the human spleen and a new lifecycle for 2 major parasite species causing malaria (*P. falciparum* and *P. vivax*). These findings are considered among the most significant malaria discoveries in the past 50 years. Led by Dr Kho in Indonesia, the research challenged a century-old belief that the spleen is solely responsible for removing malaria parasites.

This prize has been made possible through the generous support of the Giese family. It is designed to recognise an early or mid-career researcher at Menzies whose research has led to measurable improvements, better health policies, expanded programs, or established collaborative partnerships.

This new prize succeeds the Harry Christian Giese Research into Action Award, which has supported talented Menzies researchers since 2013.

### 2024 Fakhru Islam Scholarship

The Fakhru Islam Scholarship is an annual award for Menzies students undertaking their PhD or Masters in renal disease or diabetes. The scholarship recipient receives \$5,000 to help support them in their studies. This may be used for training courses, attending conferences, internships, opportunities to network, or supplementing their living stipend.

This scholarship is possible thanks to the generosity of the Islam Family.

In 2024, the inaugural recipient of this scholarship was Victoria Thanasos.

Victoria is currently studying a Master by Research with Menzies. Her thesis explores the translation of Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) and well-being indicators for First Nations haemodialysis patients.

Building on a previous study, she aims to explore patient and healthcare provider experiences with the What Matters 2 Adults (WM2A) Wellbeing Measure Tool. It investigates the appropriateness of PROMs for First Nations renal patients, their practical application, and their impact on patient care and service delivery.



2024 Fakhru Islam Scholarship recipient, Victoria Thanasos with Menzies Board Chair The Hon Trevor Riley AO KC, Mr Amin Islam OAM and Menzies Director, Professor Alan Cass AO.

# Education *and* Training



Our valued partnership with Charles Darwin University (CDU) continues to create meaningful real-world experiences for students—enabling them to learn from leading researchers and public health professionals at Menzies. This unique collaboration ensures students gain practical insights and hands-on skills that translate directly into impact-driven careers in public health and health research.

In 2024, the Master of Public Health/Master of Health Research (MPH/MHR) double degree program continued to gain momentum with increased student numbers, and Menzies-led units across other CDU programs also saw steady growth.

Cross-program enrolments have expanded in areas such as public policy, humanitarian response, emergency and disaster management, and allied health. Research, policy, and health promotion units remain particularly popular, reflecting a growing focus on evidence-based practice and effective public health communication.

Menzies programs continue to attract global interest. In 2024, 16 international students enrolled in our postgraduate awards, including students from

Central and South America for the first time in the double MPH/MHR. Altogether, students came from 23 countries—highlighting the international relevance of a Menzies education.

This year also saw 44 students graduate with a Menzies postgraduate public health qualification, including the first cohort of MPH/MHR graduates. These achievements demonstrate the power of research-informed learning and the role our programs play in preparing students to meet today's health challenges with confidence and creativity.

*“This financial support is not just a scholarship. It is a positive step for my personal and professional growth. With gratitude and determination, I am ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead as I transition into a career in public health, fuelled by the continuous support of Menzies.”*

– Antonio Salles de Sousa



Antonio Salles de Sousa, scholarship recipient.

**Master of Public Health Graduates completing with a research thesis:**

**Alice McCarthy**  
Exploring the opportunities of health literacy practices to improve health communication and increasing health equity.

**Alison Conquest**  
PLASMA: A national qualitative study to understand Promoters and Limitations to AntiSeizure Medication Adherence from the healthcare provider's perspective.

**Nicola Coalter**  
The role marketing plays in gambling beliefs and behaviour of young male sports bettors living in Darwin.

**Robyn Hopkins**  
Smokefree NT prisons: Supporting incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to be smokefree. (No Smoking Good Story).

**Clara Mills**  
How is the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people influenced when children and young people's connection to culture is impacted through interaction with child protection systems – a scoping review.

**Kerryn Gijsbers**  
Who is getting treated for Chronic Hepatitis C infection in Victoria?

**Master of Health Research Graduates completing with a research thesis:**

**Natalie Bacus Merida**  
Understanding how monitoring technologies influence the delivery of clinical and parental care in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

**Corrine Butler**  
Feeling seen and heard: an evaluation of a social media campaign co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people living with type 2 diabetes.

**Isobel Walker**  
Exploring Incontinence and Toileting Among Children with Additional Needs.

**Double Master of Public Health/Master of Health Research Graduates completing with a research thesis:**

**Aditi**  
Mental health needs and available support for parents of children with autism spectrum disorder in Australia: a scoping review.

**Yuhui Xiao**  
Exploring the Therapeutic Potential and the Role of Acupuncture in Preventing and Managing Chronic Diseases: A Scoping Review.

## Higher Degree by Research Graduates

**Menzies Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students continue to conduct worldwide health research with world-class outcomes.**

Their research covers various topics, from malaria, melioidosis, tuberculosis, diabetes, renal disease, respiratory disease, and even brucellosis.

In 2024, 76 students were enrolled in PhD and Master by Research programs at Menzies, including 16 new commencements. During the year, Menzies were honoured to have five students graduate, and another five students completed their candidatures to graduate in 2025.

### HDR Graduates 2024

- **Wicharn (Elm) Boonjindasup (PhD)** Improving the utility and understanding of lung function tests in children
- **Josh Francis (PhD)** Early detection of rheumatic heart disease using echocardiographic screening models based on community partnerships
- **Kelly Hosking (PhD)** Partnership and paradigm shift: Tools to sustainably eliminate chronic hepatitis B in the Northern Territory
- **Winnie Chen (PhD)** Territory Kidney Care: development, validation and modelling cost-effectiveness
- **Mari Lashbrook (PhD)** Psychosocial concerns and distress experienced by patients in a rural region following active cancer therapy: Relationship between coping and survivorship

### HDR Completions 2024

- **Anna McLean (PhD)** Improving management for women with hyperglycaemia in pregnancy in Far North Queensland
- **Diana Mackay (PhD)** Improving systems of care during and after pregnancy complicated by hyperglycaemia in regional and remote Australia: A mixed-methods evaluation of a multicomponent health systems intervention
- **Ludwig Hoon (PhD)** Utility of resolution-optimised SNP sets in the whole genome sequencing age
- **Angelica Tan (PhD)** Diagnostic approaches to the detection of zoonotic Plasmodium knowlesi infections and the role of neutrophil activation in severe malaria
- **Sarah Clifford (PhD)** The effect of recent alcohol policy changes on adult domestic, family, and sexual violence in the Northern Territory of Australia

### HDR Scholarships announced in 2024

- **Aderemilekun Babatunde (PhD)** ESKD progression and the impact of diabetes and vascular complication on lower limb amputation rates in the Northern Territory (RTP)
- **Mary Adewunmi (PhD)** Developing clinical decision support tools for medication prescribing using contemporary linked electronic health records (RTP)
- **Marylin Carino (PhD)** Exploring the mental health and wellbeing of First Nations young people living with T2D in Northern Australia and Central Canada (Menzies Primary Scholarship)
- **Ruth Outridge (MRes)** Improving emergency department care with domestic and family violence survivors: co-designing a survivor-centred model of care (Menzies Primary Scholarship)
- **Victoria Thanasos (MRes)** Beyond 'measuring' wellbeing: exploring the translation of patient reported outcome measures and impacts on First Nations haemodialysis patients in the Northern Territory (Menzies Primary Scholarship)

## STUDENT PROFILE

# Dr Wicharn (Elm) Boonjindasup

**Dr Wicharn (Elm) Boonjindasup, a paediatric respiratory physician from Thailand, shares his experience of undertaking a PhD at Menzies.**

*As a specialist, I recognise that respiratory diseases are among the prevalent global health challenges, and many often originate in childhood. Without proper management, these conditions can significantly impact long-term health and quality of life. Motivated by this, I pursued further study and research abroad, focusing on improving childhood lung health management.*

Pursuing a PhD has been one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences of my life. In 2021, I began my PhD at Menzies/Charles Darwin University, working under the guidance of Professor Anne Chang, Professor Stephanie Yerkovich, Professor Julie Marchant and Dr Margaret McElrea. The supervisors and the staff at Menzies have been incredibly supportive and encouraging throughout my PhD journey.

During the study, I was awarded the 2021 CDU Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship and the 2022 European Respiratory Society (ERS)/Asia Pacific Society of Respiriology (APSR) Young Investigator Award.

In 2024, I earned my PhD from CDU for my thesis on improving the understanding and utility of lung function testing in children with various respiratory conditions. Lung function tests are essential for optimising the management of respiratory diseases. These tests, particularly spirometry and respiratory pressure measurement, are simple, non-invasive, and widely

accessible. My PhD highlights the multifaceted benefits of lung function tests for both doctors and patients, encompassing improvements in clinical decision-making and psychosocial outcomes. It is hoped that this will lead to the implementation of lung function tests into routine clinical practice to aid in the early detection and appropriate management of childhood respiratory problems.

After completing my PhD, I now serve as an academic at Chulalongkorn University and a respiratory consultant at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital. Additionally, I actively contribute to the Thai Society of Pediatric Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, advocating the use of spirometry to enhance paediatric healthcare, particularly as its application in children remains less than ideal in many settings. In the future, I am looking forward to advancing pediatric respiratory medicine through collaborations with national and international networks.



*Dr Wicharn (Elm) Boonjindasup at Graduation.*

# In our *community*



## NAIDOC Week

The 2024 theme for NAIDOC Week was *Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud & Proud*. This theme honours the enduring strength and vitality of First Nations cultures – with fire symbolising connection to Country, to each other, and to the rich tapestry of traditions that define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It celebrates the unyielding spirit of communities and invites all to stand in solidarity, amplifying the voices that have long been silenced.

To celebrate NAIDOC Week, Menzies commenced the week with an inspiring presentation from our Senior Research Officer & Chair of the Diabetes Across

the Lifecourse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group, Sian Graham. Sian shared a powerful reminder of the enduring strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and personal insights of her journey through research.

The event also included a Welcome to Country and cultural performance by The Youth Mills Performing Co.

During NAIDOC week, Menzies supported various community events, including the Jak Ah Kit Memorial NAIDOC Golf Day, the Darwin NAIDOC Week March and the NAIDOC Ball and Awards Ceremony.

Menzies staff were also encouraged and supported to participate in NAIDOC Week activities.

Menzies understands that attending community events helps strengthen our relationships with local Traditional Owners. By offering to sponsor NAIDOC events, Menzies shows our continued support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Menzies proudly supports community events such as the Darwin NAIDOC Week March.



Sian Graham presents during NAIDOC Week.



The Youth Mills Performing Co share a Welcome to Country and cultural performance at Menzies.

## Menzies HealthLAB in 2024

2024 marks a significant milestone for HealthLAB as the team celebrates 10 years of operation in the Territory with its 17,000 participants. Throughout this year, HealthLAB has successfully engaged with over 2,400 participants, continuing to collaborate with partners across the NT to deliver interactive health promotion.

The project has further expanded its impact by initiating two new initiatives.

**SHELab:** launched and engaged with over 500 females, gathering feedback about local health priorities. This innovative program takes interactive health promotion to women and girls in regional, remote, and very remote Australia. By building on HealthLAB's proven model and established community networks, SHELab provides a tailored approach to addressing local and changing health priorities specific to each community.

**HealthLAB in Timor-Leste:** embedded within the RESPOND program, this initiative extends HealthLAB's interactive health promotion model to the Asia Pacific region. HealthLAB's delivery focuses on supporting Australia's First Nations people and international partners in sharing experiences and knowledge to strengthen the health system. The HealthLAB team has begun piloting the program in schools in Timor-Leste.

This pilot program collaborates with the Menzies-Ramaciotti Centre's First Nations staff and students to ensure culturally relevant and impactful health promotion.

Both initiatives reflect HealthLAB's commitment to fostering health awareness and building sustainable, community-focused solutions.



SHELab participants in action.



HealthLAB in Timor-Leste.

## 2024 Menzies Oration

The Menzies Oration is an annual public address designed to stimulate robust and challenging discussions about the future of health in the NT, Australia and internationally.

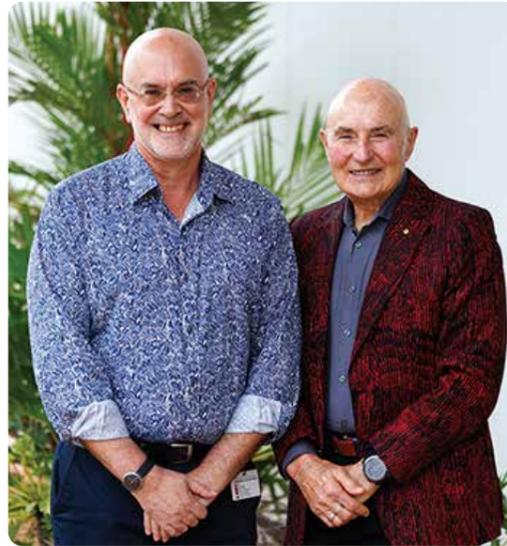
In November, Menzies was delighted to be joined by Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy, Minister for Indigenous Australians, who delivered the 2024 Oration.

A Yanyuwa woman from Northern Australia's Gulf Country, Senator McCarthy spoke about the importance of addressing health and well-being, focusing on priorities to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. She shared her family's experience with health and emphasised the importance of accessible healthcare and the need for genuine solutions to health issues.

In her oration, Senator McCarthy acknowledged Menzies' strong legacy of impact for First Nations Australians. She also reinforced that meaningful progress comes from governing well, partnering with communities, and building trust.

The 2024 Menzies Medallion, the highest honour awarded by Menzies, was presented at the event, along with the 2024 Companion of Menzies Awards.

Menzies Patron, His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO PSM, Administrator of the Northern Territory, attended the event with key stakeholders, community members, and Menzies staff and students.



Menzies Director, Professor Alan Cass AO greets Menzies Patron, His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO PSM, Administrator of the Northern Territory, at the Oration.



Senator McCarthy delivers Menzies 2024 Oration.



The Youth Mill perform at the Menzies 2024 Oration.

## Animation to raise awareness and improve engagement with First Nations families

Menzies collaborated with Miwatj Health, Katherine West Health Board, and Sunrise Health Service to create the 'What is MECSH?' animation. The video provides information about the Maternal and Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH) program with expectant women, families, and communities.

The health providers recognised the need for an easy-to-understand resource to raise awareness about the program. It also helps families make informed choices about joining. The animation features real stories from parents who have been part of the program. It uses simple English, with translations in Yolngu Matha and East Side Kriol, to explain the important support offered by the nurse-led,

team-based program. Versions of the animation with local program names were made for each organisation. There are also plans to show the animation in clinics and other community settings.

MECSH is a licensed program of Western Sydney University. The Australian Government and the Territory Government jointly funded the animation project.



What is MECSH? animation uses real experiences from women to explain the program.

## CRISP study community day at Wurrumiyanga

The Cardiovascular Risk in Indigenous People (CRISP) study held a community engagement day at Wurrumiyanga (Bathurst Island). The event was organised through a collaborative effort involving the local health service, Red Cross, community members, and key stakeholders.

Elizabeth Heenan, a long-standing member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group, played a crucial role in engaging with the community to ensure the successful execution of the event. She also worked closely with Sian Graham to guarantee the day's success. The event occurred at the Red Cross facility in Wurrumiyanga, which generously provided its premises and staff to host the occasion. A barbecue lunch featuring bush foods was provided on the day by Tarntipi Homelands Aboriginal Corporation.

Approximately 75 community members attended, and the Diabetes Partnership Team had the opportunity to share research findings from various projects, including the PANDORA Study, Calcium Arteries Scoring Study, and the CRISP study. Several Menzies staff were present, including Sian Graham, Norlisha Bartlett, Sue Cottle, Rosemary Graham, Leonie Leigh, and Dr Elizabeth Barr. The team engaged in meaningful discussions about the partnership's research. Key community organisations provided valuable support at the event, including the local health clinic, NT Health, Red Cross, Strong Women's Group, and Tiwi Land Council.

The event provided a great opportunity for Menzies to discuss the partnership's ongoing work with community members and health professionals.



A successful day at Wurrumiyanga with community members and Menzies staff.

### Creating social benefits for Darwin-based dialysis patients

The Menzies Renal Health Program, with support from the City of Darwin and Purple House, ran a series of culturally grounded activities to improve social support for dialysis patients. These events aimed to strengthen social connection and inclusion, help reduce isolation and support the mental and emotional well-being of dialysis patients receiving treatment in Darwin.

BBQs were held at Lee Point Reserve and the Jingili Watergardens. Art and craft activities (including painting and jewellery making) occurred at Purple House and Nagandji-Ba Hostel. The activities provided a space for dialysis patients to engage in creative expression, develop and maintain relationships with one another, and share stories about what matters to them.

These were the first of several patient-led activities that helped the Menzies team better understand what ‘makes a good life’ for First Nations Australians with chronic kidney disease.



Painting days with renal patients at Purple House and Nagandji-Ba Hostel.



### Fostering connections: consumer engagement through social activities

To reach a broader range of people, our renal team has been visiting dialysis units and hostels across Darwin, inviting dialysis patients to social days outside of Menzies. These events aim to strengthen relationships between renal team members, dialysis patients and co-researchers. Many First Nations people with kidney disease in Darwin have relocated for treatment, facing separation from family, community, and Country. For those on dialysis, these challenges, along with travel and diet restrictions, significantly impact their quality of life and mental health.

The social days provide an opportunity for patients to connect with others and feel part of a larger renal community.



The Renal Team with Patient Navigators from Panuku Purple House host patient centred activities, to foster social connection and support the well-being of dialysis patients receiving treatment in Darwin.

Activities are centred around what matters most to patients, such as sharing meals, arts and crafts, storytelling, and spending time on Country. Held in various locations across Darwin, these events encourage patients to share their

experiences and concerns about living with kidney disease. This approach helps the renal team understand, from the patient’s perspective, how to improve systems and processes to better support their care journey.

### Air in East Arnhem

Menzies researchers from the Remote Health Systems and Climate Change Centre have partnered with Miwatj Health on the Air in East Arnhem project. The collaboration enables Miwatj Health to employ Yolngu researchers to lead data collection and provide immediate feedback to health staff. Yolngu citizen scientists will collect environmental samples and share local experiences of climate health challenges and solutions. Data collection has already started

with non-Yolngu residents in Nhulunbuy. Some residents wear sensors to track air quality and temperature, while others provide thermal images of public places. A major milestone this year was the installation of an environmental monitoring sensor in Nhulunbuy. The sensor is monitoring the region’s first-of-its-kind air quality data. This data may be used to explore the association between air pollution and health and inform risk reduction measures.



Workshop conducted in Nhulunbuy.

### Menzies supports TB screening in communities

The REACT study, in partnership with Mala’la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation and Sunrise Aboriginal Health Services, aims to improve tuberculosis (TB) prevention and care in Maningrida and the Katherine region. This work includes engaging with community stakeholders – such as people affected by TB, Elders and Aboriginal Community Health Workers – to understand the lived experience of TB and identify community priorities. Thanks to a generous donation from the Baer Family in memory of Doris Patricia Baer, OBE, the project procured a portable digital x-ray machine. This machine enables TB screening in remote communities, eliminating the need for individuals to travel long distances for chest x-rays, a key test for detecting TB.

## Rheumatic heart disease training makes an impact

The Queensland Government aims to end rheumatic heart disease (RHD) among First Nations peoples by 2031. To support this goal, Menzies has been engaged to develop and deliver clinical training to their health workforce through the Queensland Community Engagement and Partnerships branch. The training model, developed by Menzies RHD Technical Advisor Sara Noonan in collaboration with Queensland Health staff, includes a face-to-face workshop and workbook to deliver key messages, a selection of clinical and cultural resources and local contacts, and an evaluation framework to assess the training's impact on clinical and community practice.

In 2023 and 2024, 243 Aboriginal Health Workers, Health Practitioners, nurses, doctors, midwives, school staff, environmental health staff, and others, attended 16 workshops across four health service regions in Queensland. Evaluation at four and 12 months indicates that the information and resources are useful and valued and that the training model has a lasting impact on practice. 'Thank you for this training. I wish I had all of this information 20 years ago. Absolutely lifesaving,' said one of the workshop attendees. 'This workshop was the catalyst for our department developing a presence within paediatrics and cardiology as RHD/ARF champions,' commented another health worker.

The project is building local capacity to continue RHD training and serves as a model for other regions. It is a great opportunity to implement the national RHD guidelines through education and training.



RHD Training Workbook.

## Biosafety training for wildlife handling and sampling

As part of the ZOOMAL and RESPOND projects, Menzies ran a five-day workshop on biosafety training for wildlife handling and sampling at the Universitas Andalas in Padang, West Sumatra. Throughout the training, participants gained insight into best practices for ethical and humane handling of small animals, techniques for sample collection, and stringent biosafety measures to minimise the risk of zoonotic diseases and ensure environmental safety. There were 26 attendees from various organisations across Western Indonesia including scientists, laboratory technicians, university students, veterinarians and government health officers. Conservation Medicine, based in Sabah Malaysia, ran the training. This has led to further collaborations to facilitate the training in 2025 with our



Biosafety workshop participants trek through the Biology, Educational and Research Forest of Andalas University searching for macaques and other small mammals.

colleagues from Indonesia, Malaysia and Timor-Leste. The training was a successful capacity-building activity that will help improve the surveillance of zoonotic diseases across Southeast Asia.

The evaluating zoonotic malaria transmission and agricultural land use in Indonesia (ZOOMAL) is jointly funded by the Australian Centre for International

Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The Regional Engagement in Surveillance and response to Priority diseases, providing Opportunities for National health system strengthening and Development (RESPOND) partnership is funded by the Australian Government with support from NHMRC.

## In high demand: expanding intercultural communication training across healthcare and professional organisations in the NT

Our Communicate Study Partnership's intercultural communication training is expanding rapidly. Menzies launched the pilot workshop at Gove District Hospital (GDH) in Nhulunbuy. The training is facilitated by Rarrtjiwuy Melanie Herdman (CEO of the Djalkiri Foundation), Siobhan Hensey (Menzies Senior Educator and Training Facilitator), and Liz Jarvis (Menzies Project Officer). The sessions explore Yolngu and Balanda perspectives on intercultural collaboration, guided by the principles of cultural safety. Participants are introduced to Dhuwala language, Wärrkarr (a metaphor for collaboration), Njilimungu Gakal (ways of working), and Nhukuṛu Nhānharawuy (self-reflection). The workshop aims to deepen understanding of cultural safety, highlighting the impact of power dynamics on communication, and foster critical

reflection to help participants recognise how their own cultural backgrounds influence their professional practice. The training has also gained significant interest from external organisations.

In 2024, Menzies delivered workshops at the Compass Primary Healthcare Conference and the Australian Society of Anaesthetists National Scientific Congress.



GDH intercultural communication pilot delivery team.

L-R (Pilot Day 1): Shernell Luckie (Nurse Management Coordinator - Safety and Quality, NT Health), Liz Jarvis (Project Officer, Communicate Study), Siobhan Hensey (Senior Educator and Facilitator, Communicate Study), Tiana Alley (Research Assistant, Communicate Study), Rarrtjiwuy Melanie Herdman (CEO, Djalkiri Foundation), Claire Rafferty (Co-Lead, Djalkiri Foundation) and Maddison Sims (Project Manager, Communicate Study).

## Storytelling to understand rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease

Storytelling is important to Aboriginal peoples. It holds a deep, spiritual meaning and is a way to share and preserve culture. Through yarning circles, storytelling has been incorporated into health and research, creating culturally safe environments where people feel comfortable sharing information. At Menzies, First Nations researchers use yarning circles with community members to exchange knowledge and better understand acute rheumatic fever (ARF) and rheumatic heart disease (RHD). This work is part

of the *Beyond the Scars* project, led by Associate Professor Aunty Vicki Wade, and the Check4Strep project, in collaboration with the Kids Research Institute.

The discussions provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of rheumatic fever and help identify community-driven strategies to fight the disease.



Vicki Wade (Menzies) and Felicity Douglas (Maningrida Clinic staff member) during the yarning circle in Maningrida Community.

## Culture de Timor-Leste Festival

To commemorate Timor-Leste's 25 years of Popular Consultation and the arrival of the first INTERFET (International Force East Timor) peacekeeping force in 1999, Timor Oan NT Association (TONTA) organised the first Timorese Cultural Festival in Australia. The event brought together the Territory's Timorese community, other states of Australia, Timor-Leste and the local NT community for a celebratory day of culture, food, art, traditions, history, and dance.



Menzies TL team at the stall: From L-R back row: Steven Davis, Assoc Professor Josh Francis, Meghan Bailey & Anthony Draper. L-R front row: Dr Jennifer Yan, Dirce de Rosario, Virginia de Conceicao & Lucsendar Alves.

Menzies had the opportunity to set up a stall showcasing its research and capacity-building work in Timor-Leste over the past five years. Many visitors stopped by, eager to learn about the work.

A young Timorese-born NT resident who recently graduated in Medical Laboratory Science was especially interested in our laboratory research for her future career.

## Healthy Skin Week

Menzies volunteers and staff supported Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation to run two Healthy Skin Week programs in Maningrida. Menzies and Mala'la clinical teams worked side-by-side, visiting homes to conduct skin checks, provide advice, and offer scabies treatment. This community-led initiative promotes healthy skin and helps reduce scabies, strep infections, rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease. It also includes regular skin health surveys to track infections and measure the program's impact over time.

The Menzies team appreciates the support and partnership of the Kirby Institute at UNSW, the volunteers, and the Mala'la team on this program.



The Healthy Skin Week team preparing to visit community members.

## Community-based One Health approach to brucellosis control in Timor-Leste

Village leaders have praised the approach used by the Brucellosis Reduction Using Codesign Elements in Timor-Leste (BRUCE TL) project, which aims to empower the community to respond to brucellosis:

*As a community leader, I feel the BRUCE TL program collaborates well to approach community leaders throughout the implementation process. I am happy that my village benefits from the BRUCE TL program. I believe that the program will help my community to understand brucellosis because it is a barrier to economic development at the household level.*

Evidence-based guidelines for managing human brucellosis have been developed in partnership with the clinical teams at HNGV, MoH, and Maliana Referral Hospital. The guidelines facilitate community members exposed to the disease to receive appropriate healthcare.

The community has provided co-design input through ongoing collaboration and formally through 93 participants in focus group discussions, including cattle farmers, local government officials, and village leaders.

Overall, these activities have helped the community understand the diseases affecting them and contributed to practical, long-term control strategies for brucellosis in cattle and humans. The BRUCE TL project has also strengthened research capacity, supporting Menzies' commitment to developing local research skills.



Bruce TL team with the Maliana Community members including local leadership and cattle farmers during Focus Group Discussions to inform control strategies for brucellosis in Timor-Leste.

## 25th Anniversary of the Menzies Timika Research Collaborations in Papua, Indonesia

2024 marked the 25th anniversary of the Timika International Malaria and Tuberculosis Research Collaboration, the longest of all Menzies collaborations in the Asia-Pacific. The Papuan Health and Community Development, led by former Menzies PhD student Dr Rini Poespoprodjo, coordinates community-based malaria and TB studies. The studies are in collaboration with Menzies and Indonesian partners including the District Health Authority, hospitals, Gadjah Mada University, CDC and Malaria Control Program. The collaborative research over the past 25 years has improved malaria treatment and prevention policies worldwide.

A key highlight includes Timika being the only Indonesian site in the landmark SEAQUAMAT trial. This trial showed that artesunate reduced mortality more effectively than quinine for severe malaria, influencing national policy before The Lancet publication (and later WHO policy). Other highlights include:

- the discovery of the severe disease burden and death caused by vivax malaria, especially from recurrent infections
- identification of novel mechanisms underlying severe disease and death in falciparum and vivax malaria, leading to trials of adjunctive agents
- trials and interventions to treat and prevent drug-resistant and relapsing malaria, including in pregnant women
- identifying a hidden reservoir of malaria parasites residing in the spleen, defining a new malaria life-cycle in humans relevant to malaria elimination
- molecular epidemiology, immunology and in-vitro characterisation of drug-resistant malaria

- studies and randomised controlled trials (RCTs) on the burden and treatment of tuberculosis
- implementation research improving the rollout of interventions treating and preventing tuberculosis and malaria, and strengthening health and surveillance systems

Menzies PhD students who graduated from their work in Timika include Tsin Yeo, Rini Poespoprodjo, Anna Ralph, Nick Douglas, Grennady Wirjanata, Zuleima Pava, Steven Kho, Leony Fransisca, Damian Oyong and Trisasi Lestari. Most of the graduates now lead their own research programs.



Professors Nick Anstey, Anna Ralph and Ric Price in Timika for malaria and tuberculosis studies, 2008.



Timika Research Team outside Timika Research Facility, 2007. The Timika Research Program is now led by Dr Rini Poespoprodjo (second from left).



Dr Enny Kenangalem (seated left), Dr Alison Ratcliff (centre) [Menzies Master by Research student], and Dr Hadjar Siswanto (NIHRD masters student), enrolling patients at a primary healthcare clinic in Timika in 2004. This trial (Lancet 2007), identified dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine as the best treatment for multidrug-resistant falciparum and vivax malaria in Indonesia, and led to district-wide deployment of dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine for uncomplicated malaria (along with artesunate for severe malaria) to prevent and treat malaria, resulting in a significant reduction in total malaria-attributable morbidity and mortality (PLOS Med, 2019).



Malaria cadres and representatives from Wania neighbourhood clusters participated in the socialisation of the SCOPE\* study Pre-implementation Survey, led by Dr Enny Kenangalem and Dr Annisa Rahmalia, at the Wania District Office, Timika, Papua, Indonesia.  
\*Short COurse PrimaquinE for the radical cure of P. vivax.

## Roots of healing: the science behind traditional medicinal plants

The Traditional Australian Medicinal Plants Agribusiness project aimed to explore the development of a sustainable agribusiness model for traditional medicinal plants growing in Northern Australia. The partnership included Menzies, Traditional Homeland Enterprises (T.H.E.), Integra Healthcare (Integria), The University of Queensland and the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA).

Menzies staff involved in the project included Dr Greg Leach, Dr Jo Wapling, Taylah Church, Raelene Collins, and Niamah Walters. These staff facilitated the relationship between industry and several Indigenous communities. One of these communities (Tiwi) is now in partnership with Integria, developing an on-country enterprise. Tiwi Resources and Integria are also creating potential commercial products and are seeking TGA approval for at least two medicinal plants.

Menzies' microbiology screening results help narrow the list of candidate plant species for further commercial consideration.

Three Indigenous trainees participated in the project and were hosted by Menzies. After their involvement in the project, all of them pursued further study.

Child and Maternal Health Division staff and Menzies' legal team helped create a template Benefit Sharing Agreement, which was a requirement of the CRCNA funding.

## Advancing Infant Health: The Pro-Kids and D-Kids Studies

The Pro-Kids study is a randomised controlled trial (RCT) investigating whether neonatal probiotics can prevent early-onset acute respiratory infections (ARIs) in First Nations children. Funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) – Medical Research Future Fund International Clinical Trial Collaborations, the study has secured all regulatory approvals and is now ready to commence participant recruitment.

A key strength of Pro-Kids is its international partnership with a research site in Papua New Guinea, fostering knowledge exchange and providing valuable cross-cultural insights. Beyond its scientific impact, the trial is committed to building capacity within the First Nations workforce, creating career opportunities within the Child and Maternal Health Division and promoting research practices that are relevant, respectful, and culturally informed.

The NHMRC-funded D-Kids study is also nearing a significant milestone, with only 25 participants remaining to complete recruitment in 2025. For over five years, the dedicated D-Kids team has worked closely with families, hospitals, and

primary care providers across the Northern Territory to advance the study's goals. Community engagement has been a hallmark of the trial, with many families choosing to participate multiple times, demonstrating strong trust and commitment to this vital research.

In addition to its clinical impact, D-Kids is supporting three higher degree research students in exploring the role of vitamin D in infant immune function. As the study concludes, participating families will soon learn whether their child received vitamin D or a placebo—and whether supplementation reduced respiratory infections requiring medical attention.

Together, the Pro-Kids and D-Kids trials, alongside research into maternal vaccines and the pathobiology and epidemiology of respiratory infections, represent a critical program of work with the potential to shape future healthcare recommendations and improve infant health outcomes.



D-Kids Mum and Baby from Wadeye.



D-Kids study – Mum Shae with kids, Colton and Kendal who are part of the D-Kids study, and their older sister.



The Menzies D-Kids and Pro-Kids Study team.

## 10th World Melioidosis Congress

Menzies hosted the 10th World Melioidosis Congress in Darwin in October. 180 delegates from more than 20 countries attended.

The delegates were welcomed to Darwin with a reception at Parliament House by The Hon Steven Edgington, Minister for Health. A gala dinner highlighting the history of melioidosis and past congresses was also held.

With the theme of Unity in Diversity: Global Partnerships in Melioidosis, experts and researchers participated in a dynamic program filled with inspiring stories from across the globe. The program covered the finding of new foci of melioidosis, prevention programs, new diagnostics and therapies, and the exciting work towards a melioidosis vaccine.

Delegates departed Darwin with new ideas, knowledge, and an appreciation for the Territory's cultural richness, enhancing Menzies' reputation as a leader in advanced research and global health collaboration.

Congratulations on a successful event to the local organising committee, led by Congress Convenor Mark Mayo.

The World Melioidosis Congress is a leading international forum focused on research, collaboration, and awareness of melioidosis. The International Melioidosis Network holds the congress every three years, bringing together experts worldwide. The next event will be in Kuching, Malaysia, in 2027.



Menzies Melioidosis team at the 10th World Melioidosis Congress.



The Congress will be next held in Malaysia, 2027.



Delegates enjoy the WMC 2024 in Darwin.

### About the 10th World Melioidosis Congress artwork:

#### Artist: Jayde Hopkins

Jayde is a proud Gurindji and Woolwonga woman from Darwin. She is fascinated by microbiology and genetics and is training to become an infectious diseases researcher. Jayde combines her passion for science with her talent for art. She recently completed an undergraduate in Biological Sciences and is passionate about science communication through art.

#### About the artwork, by Jayde Hopkins:

"Darwin, Australia, the unique meeting place of the 10th World Melioidosis Congress 2024, is emphasised in the centre of this painting. The shapes encircling this meeting place symbolise the diverse representation of people uniting in this shared pursuit of knowledge.

The lines connecting to this meeting place represent the various paths travelled from different corners of the world, converging upon Darwin. The icons within these lines represent different aspects of melioidosis identification and research; microscopy, *Burkholderia pseudomallei* growth on agar plates, and the forward and reverse TTS1 PCR primers across the centre.

In the background, the bacteria are depicted as individual cells, pink coloured Gram-negative rods as seen under a microscope. The negative spaces at the top and bottom of the image showcase the Northern Territory and an iconic crocodile."



10th World Melioidosis Congress artwork by Jayde Hopkins.

# Our donors and *supporters*



### Honouring a legacy: the inaugural Fakhrul Islam Scholarship

Menzies proudly announced the inaugural launch of the Fakhrul Islam Scholarship in 2024. This scholarship is a heartfelt tribute generously funded by Fakhrul's son Amin Islam OAM, to honour his father's legacy.

Fakhrul Islam had a successful career in hydrology and dam construction. Alongside his professional achievements, he was deeply committed to uplifting underprivileged communities. Fakhrul dedicated his time and expertise to building schools, mosques, and homes for those in need.

Fakhrul Islam's struggle with renal disease, compounded by the limited treatment options available in Bangladesh at the time, profoundly shaped his family's commitment to advancing healthcare. Amin Islam honours his father's dedication to improving lives and driving meaningful impact through this scholarship.

The Fakhrul Islam Scholarship is an annual award for PhD or Masters students researching renal disease or diabetes. It provides funding for advanced research training and opportunities to present at national and international conferences. The scholarship also encourages collaboration, helping the students make a greater impact in these key health areas. In 2024, the scholarship was awarded to Victoria Thanasos, whose research focuses on the implementation and impact of patient reported outcome measures for First Nations haemodialysis patients in the NT.

Menzies is most grateful to Amin Islam and his family for their generous support of our researchers.

### Baer family's gift brings life-saving x-ray technology to remote communities

In 2024, the Baer family contributed to the fight against tuberculosis (TB) by funding a FUJIFILM FDR Xair portable x-ray machine for the REACT study.

In making this gift, the Baer family honours the memory of Doris Patricia Baer, OBE. Doris' lifelong dedication to advancing healthcare in Australia includes her instrumental role in establishing the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne.

The REACT study is dedicated to halting the transmission of TB in remote areas, where limited access to healthcare services often delays diagnosis and treatment. This state-of-the-art portable x-ray machine allows Menzies to conduct on-site screenings in communities such as Maningrida and the Katherine region. Early detection through on-site screening is essential to reducing the spread of TB, preventing complications, and ultimately saving lives.

Menzies remains steadfast in its commitment to health equity, striving to deliver timely and culturally appropriate care to First Nations communities. The Baer family's generosity exemplifies philanthropy's profound role in creating lasting health improvements. As a result of the Baer family's gift, Menzies is one step closer to eradicating TB in some of Australia's most vulnerable communities.

### Medibank Private: collaborating to evaluate the impact of HealthLAB training and participation on First Nations trainees

Medibank Private is a valued partner of Menzies and champion of Menzies HealthLAB.

HealthLAB promotes healthy lifestyle behaviours through evidence-based education in regional and remote areas of the Territory. It is delivered in communities by First Nations health students, trainees, nurses, sonographers and other health professionals. It is both a valuable health promotion tool in the NT and a key training program for First Nations students beginning their health careers.

In 2024, Medibank Better Health Foundation funded an evaluation of HealthLAB's impact on First Nations students and trainees involved in the program. This evaluation will guide the development of the program and help secure future funding for HealthLAB.

### Nurturing future leaders in health research: the Maple-Brown Family Foundation Fellowships

The Maple-Brown Family Foundation's long-term commitment to health research aligns with Menzies' values of integrity, impact, quality, and excellence.

In 2024, the Foundation made a five-year undertaking to establish the Maple-Brown Family Foundation Fellowships. This commitment aims to advance the careers of early-career researchers at Menzies. The fellowships empower researchers

to address critical health disparities in Australia, focusing on remote and underserved communities. By bridging research and community impact, these fellowships are pivotal to achieving Menzies' vision of sustainable health equity.

Menzies is proud to partner with the Maple-Brown Family Foundation. A collaboration that not only amplifies our capacity to deliver impactful research but also empowers future leaders to envision and create a healthier, more equitable Australia.

### Building pathways to excellence: traineeships at Menzies

Menzies is dedicated to supporting the next generation of health professionals in the Territory. In particular, Menzies is supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as students from regional and remote communities, by helping them pursue health careers through The Ramaciotti Regional and Remote Health Sciences Training Centre.

An ongoing and critical need for the training centre is traineeships to support First Nations students in starting and continuing their health studies. Trainee Scholarships enable students to study full-time and cover some education costs.

In 2024, Menzies appreciated the continued support of Edwina Menzies and Ian Albrey, who funded three scholarships through the Edwina Menzies and Ian Albrey Training Scholarships.

Menzies was also fortunate to receive matched funding from donor Shannon Spriggs and the Macquarie Group who contributed significantly to support trainees with scholarships this year.

### 2024 Donors and Supporters

Menzies is grateful to the following donors for their generous support throughout 2024:

Anonymous Foundation	Ms Megan Duffy
Australasian Society For HIV, Viral Hepatitis And Sexual Health Medicine	National Heart Foundation of Australia
Australian Government	PPD Australia
Australian Graduate Women Inc.	Ryan Family
Barlow Impact Group	Sabeline
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	Shannon Spriggs
Compass Group Foundation	Sylvia And Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation
ConnectEast	The Asche Family
Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research	The Baer Family
Edwards Lifesciences Foundation	The Colvin Foundation
Edwina Menzies & Ian Albrey	The Gemma McLeod Foundation
Giese Family	The Ian Potter Foundation
Graham Blashki	The Macquarie Group
Henry M Jackson Foundation	The Ramaciotti Foundations
John and Barbara Hargrave	The Ray and Margaret Wilson Foundation
Leducq Foundation	The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International
Maple-Brown Family Foundation	The Thrasher Research Fund
Medibank Health Research Fund	Women and Infants Research Foundation
Mr Amin Islam OAM	

#### Donations

\$329,626

#### Corporate and Philanthropic Partners

\$2,303,319

Menzies greatly values its ongoing partnerships with Charles Darwin University and the Northern Territory Government and is sincerely grateful for their generous support.



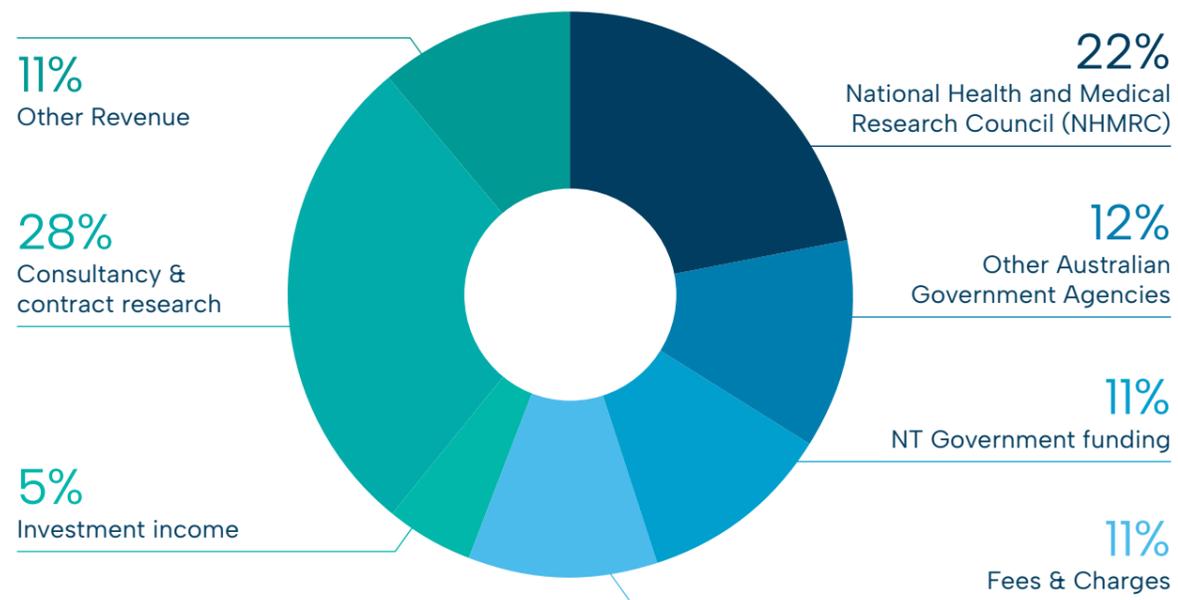
# Our *financials*



# Financial summary

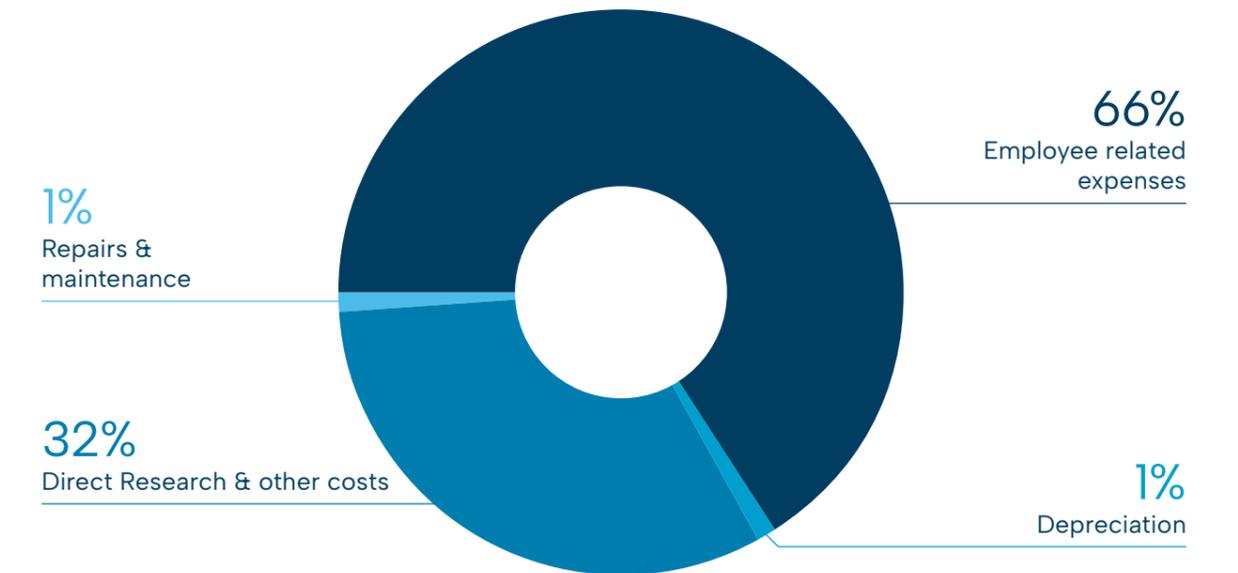
## TOTAL REVENUE \$60,361,727

 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)	\$12,820,610
 Other Australian Government Agencies	\$7,506,992
 NT Government funding	\$6,345,376
 Fees & Charges	\$6,587,711
 Investment income	\$3,220,939
 Consultancy & contract research	\$17,192,365
 Other Revenue	\$6,687,734



## TOTAL EXPENSES \$54,145,183

 Employee related expenses	\$35,544,148
 Direct Research & other costs	\$17,593,358
 Depreciation	\$717,707
 Repairs & maintenance	\$289,970



 Loss on disposal of assets	\$130,061
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 Gain on value of investments	\$104,092
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*Thank you to the many individuals and communities who permitted Menzies to use photographic images of themselves and their children throughout this publication.*



For the purposes of this document, “Indigenous” refers to Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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