

# Network Update

## Celebrating Dr Jennifer Mackney's Achievement in Advancing Cancer Care in Regional and Rural NSW

The NSW Regional Cancer Research Network (NSWRCRN) is thrilled to announce that Dr Jennifer Mackney, a [recipient](#) of the NSWRCRN Shovel Ready Translational Research Grant, has been awarded \$800,000 through the Cancer Institute NSW's [Accelerated Research Implementation Grant](#). This funding will support the scaling-up of her prehabilitation model across community settings.



Dr Mackney's expanded program, known as C-SPRITES (Supported Prehabilitation – Improving Fitness, Ensuring Well-Being Before Surgery in People Living with Cancer), builds upon the success of her [pilot project](#),

which was funded by the Network. This pilot work helped to further develop the Newcastle prehabilitation model and laid the foundation for its larger-scale implementation in regional and rural communities.

Surgery plays a critical role in cancer treatment, with approximately 132,000 Australians requiring surgical intervention each year. Prehabilitation, which focuses on optimising patients' physical and mental health before surgery, is a vital component of cancer care. This approach includes exercise, nutrition optimisation, and psychological support, all of which contribute to faster recovery, reduced complications, and greater patient empowerment.

Dr Mackney explains, "This grant will allow our research team to deliver the C-SPRITES hybrid model of care within regional and rural communities. The program

will be delivered both in-person by local health providers and remotely via telehealth by our Newcastle-based team."

"Our goal is to improve access to multimodal prehabilitation services for cancer patients in rural and regional areas while assessing the program's effectiveness and its acceptability for patients, hospitals, referrers, and community partners," she added.

Through this expansion of access to essential prehabilitation services, the research aims to bridge the gap in cancer care for people living in regional and rural areas, ensuring that all Australians, regardless of location, receive the support they need before undergoing cancer-related surgery.

Dr Mackney is a Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist in Perioperative Medicine and a respiratory scientist at John Hunter Hospital, as well as a conjoint at the University of Newcastle. She is also an active member of the NSW Regional Cancer Research Network.

This significant achievement marks a major step forward in improving cancer care accessibility across NSW, particularly for those in rural and regional communities, and highlights Dr Mackney's dedication to enhancing patient outcomes through innovative research and clinical practice.

Read more about the Cancer Institute NSW's recent \$10+ million grant announcement [here](#).

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## NOW OPEN | Professional Research Support Grant Scheme

The Professional Research Support Grant Scheme is designed to provide short-term, outcome-focused research support by funding the expertise of PhD-qualified Senior Research Partners (SRPs). These experienced professionals collaborate directly with researchers to strengthen research capacity and provide expert assistance in the following areas:

- Research design and methodology
- Ethics applications
- Data analysis
- Grant writing
- Manuscript preparation

NSW REGIONAL CANCER RESEARCH NETWORK

**NOW OPEN**  
**PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT GRANTS**

Provides NSW Regional Cancer Research Network members **short-term, outcome-focused assistance** by funding **PhD-qualified Senior Research Partner assistance** to enhance research capacity.

The grant covers the cost of engaging an SRP for a set number of hours, offering tailored guidance to accelerate research progress, strengthen your academic track record, and improve future funding prospects. The awarded amount can also be included in your track record as grant income.

**Support packages include:**

- \$2,000 Package: 20 hours of research support
- \$5,000 Package: 50 hours of research support

Examples of support include assistance with ethics applications, grant writing, and manuscript preparation. Time is tracked in 15-minute increments.

To be eligible, applicants must be [members](#) of the NSW Regional Cancer Research Network and conducting cancer research aligned with the Network's objectives.

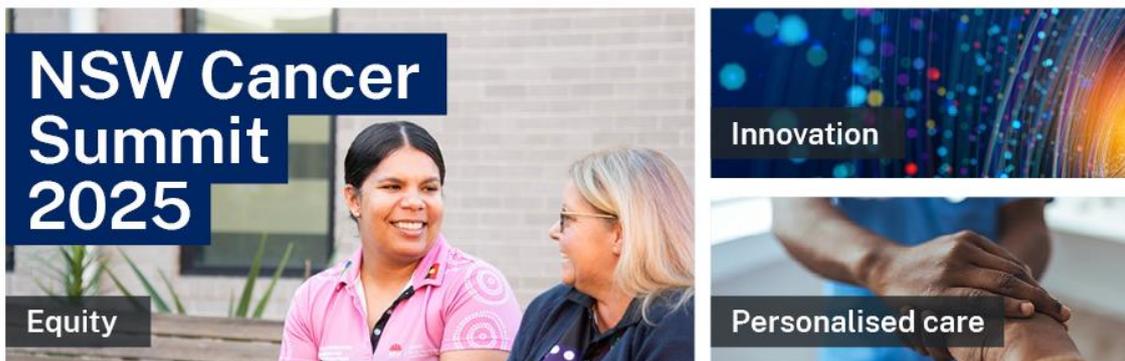
Applications must be submitted via our [online platform](#), with no email submissions accepted.

The scheme is open on a rolling basis until the total allocation is reached.

We encourage you to apply and take advantage of this valuable opportunity for research support. Further information about the scheme is available [here](#) or email [nswrcrn@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:nswrcrn@newcastle.edu.au).



Cancer Institute NSW



**Registrations, Abstracts and Rural and Regional Travel Grants for Cancer Summit 2025 now open!**

Registrations are now open for the inaugural NSW Cancer Summit 2025, a two-day event at the ICC Sydney on 13 and 14 August 2025.

The NSW Regional Cancer Research Network warmly encourages rural and regional attendance. We look forward to seeing you there!

**International Speakers include:**

Mr Mike Lovas

Director of Design and Innovation at Cancer Digital Intelligence, University Health Network, Canada

Mr Rami Rahal

Chief Executive of Te Aho o Te Kahu, New Zealand's Cancer Control Agency

**[REGISTER HERE](#)**

One day for \$82.50 or two days for \$132. Registrations close on Monday 30 June 2025.

**Rural and Regional Travel Grants Scheme (Cancer Institute NSW)**

Conference attendees from rural or regional NSW may be eligible for a grant of up to \$2,500 to attend the NSW Cancer Summit. [Find out more and submit your application today.](#)

The NSW Regional Cancer Research Network are available to support members in the preparation of their Rural and Regional Travel Grants Scheme application. If you'd like support, please submit a request through the Network's [Professional Research Support Portal](#).

[NSW Regional Cancer Research Network](#) will be offering support packages to regional members who did not secure funding to enable their attendance at the event after the outcomes of the Cancer Institute NSW Rural and Regional Travel Grants scheme have been announced. To be eligible, applicants must have submitted an abstract for consideration and have submitted a Cancer Institute NSW Rural and Regional Travel Grant application. More detail to follow.

**Abstract Submissions Open**

The Cancer Institute NSW has called for Abstracts for this year's inaugural NSW Cancer Summit.

Multiple abstract topics are open across two presentation types. Delegates are welcome to submit multiple abstracts, however each abstract must be submitted separately. For further information visit the NSW Cancer Summit [webpage](#).

We encourage NSW Regional Cancer Research Network members to consider submitting an abstract for consideration as an oral or poster presentation.

Abstracts close 5.00pm Monday 7 April.

[More info...](#)

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## Network Member Achievements

### Congratulations to Kath Dower, Northern NSW LHD!

The Network is excited to congratulate NSWRCRN Shovel-Ready Research Grant recipient, Kath Dower, on the recent successful completion of her second PhD milestone.

Kath works as a Senior Radiation Therapist at the North Coast Cancer Institute, Lismore Hospital (Northern NSW LHD), and is undertaking her PhD through Curtin University. Kath's PhD research is focused on understanding and improving patients' experiences of Deep Inspiration Breath Hold (DIBH) during Radiation Therapy (RT). A NSWRCRN Shovel Ready Research Grant supported the Virtual Reality Education Pilot Program component of this project, with virtual reality coaching and education offered to study participants to help maximise their DIBH capacity and improve radiation treatment outcomes. Kath's ongoing PhD research seeks to further identify and help address challenges related to patients' DIBH capacity in radiation therapy, through use of tailored and targeted interventions including virtual reality coaching and education, and additional pre-treatment opportunities for assessing and improving patients' ability to engage in DIBH effectively.



Kath's recent PhD milestone presentation garnered excellent reviewer feedback and highlighted the valuable work being undertaken in her research. Kath is supervised by Associate Professor Georgia Halkett, Professor Haryana Dhillon, and Associate Professor Moira O'Connor with mentoring from Dr Kate Odgers-Jewell.

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## Sector Opportunities and Events

## **HYBRID EVENT | Patient Outcomes in Thyroid Cancer: Opportunities to Improve Thyroid Cancer Care) | Dr Christine O'Neil**

**TOMORROW Tuesday 25 March**  
**12.00pm–1.00pm**

This week's Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) will feature Dr. Christine O'Neil from the HMRI Surgical and Perioperative Research Program and NSW Regional Cancer Research Network Shovel Ready Translational Research Grant [recipient](#). Dr O'Neil will present on "Patient Outcomes in Thyroid Cancer: Opportunities to Improve Thyroid Cancer Care," discussing her team's work on thyroid cancer survivors in the Hunter New England region. Dr O'Neil will highlight gaps in care and the strategies being developed to enhance patient outcomes and inform treatment decisions.

Where: Caves Theatre, HMRI (in-person) | Callaghan Room MS106 (livestream) OR [Zoom](#)

## **ONLINE EVENT | Genomics on the ground: Molecular testing in regional cancer care | Regional Cancer Forum**

**Thursday 12.00–1:30pm, 27 March 2025**

Please join the second webinar in the Regional Cancer Forum series. Leading genomics experts will discuss the vital role molecular testing in regional cancer care. The regional, rural and metropolitan cancer workforce are encouraged to participate.

### **Topics covered**

- Key aspects of genomic testing, different platforms, and critical testing considerations
- Referral pathways and results interpretation
- Genomic sequencing equity between regional and urban patients
- Clinical trial demand, capabilities and recruitment in regional centres
- Consumer advocate perspectives on genomics testing access in regional Australia
- Case study discussion: real world examples of the impact of genomic testing

A panel session will provide an opportunity for audience Q & A.

### **Chair**

Dr Samuel Harris – Medical Oncologist, Bendigo Regional Cancer Centre, Bendigo Health

### **Speakers**

Professor David Thomas – Director, Centre for Molecular Oncology, School of Biomedical Sciences, University of New South Wales; Chief Science and Strategy Officer, Omico (Australian Genomic Cancer Medicine Centre)

Dr Gregory Gaughran – Medical Oncologist; Cancer genomicist, OMICO/CASP

Dr Justine Clark – Adnyamathanha Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The Kids Research Institute Australia

[Register Here](#)

## **RESOURCE | @research website**

The @research website, part of the ReViTALISE project, offers health services research training for professionals in regional, rural, and remote communities. Its goals are to enhance access to research education, build skills to improve care, foster regional research networks, and increase consumer involvement. The site provides free resources like templates, tools, and training materials to support healthcare professionals in advancing their research capabilities.

Visit the @research website [here](#).

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## **Are you looking for a health consumer for your project or new initiative?**

Whether you're a researcher seeking valuable insights, or health staff member looking for consumer participation, [NSW Regional Health Partners'](#) Consumer Connect has consumers ready to support your projects, services or new initiatives. [More info ...](#)

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## **Want to keep up to date?**

We're now on [Blue Sky](#). Find us **@nswrcrn.bsky.social**

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X \(Twitter\)](#)!

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**We acknowledge the many Traditional Custodians of Country throughout regional, rural and remote NSW and honour their Elders, families and descendants, past and present. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs, and deep and continuing relationship with the land and waterways. We acknowledge that they are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of dispossession.**

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**The NSW Regional Cancer Research Network is funded by the [Cancer Institute NSW](#) through a Translational Cancer Research Capacity Building Grant and established through [NSW Regional Health Partners](#).**