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I am delighted to present you the John Richards Initiative (JRI) Annual Report 2016. This is my first annual report since I commenced as director in January 2016.

Our team has successfully attracted eight new research grants and a number of travel grants, totalling close to $700 000, in addition to our core funding and externally led NHMRC and ARC Discovery grants. This is the beginning of our five-year strategic research plan to take JRI into the next decade.

Our staff and students also continue disseminating their research with 26 publications over this reporting period. We congratulate JRI PhD student, Dr Steven Baker, on his PhD award and appointment as a Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

Professor Jeni Warburton, John Richards Chair of rural aged care research since September 2008, is retiring at the end of this year. Professor Warburton has been instrumental in laying a strong foundation for the JRI. Her research achievements around ageing in rural communities, health and aged care services, and the workforce to support these services is critical to inform policy and practice in Australia and overseas.

I would like to recognise and thank Professor Warburton for her tremendous leadership over the past decade and guidance during the transition period. I also acknowledge John Richards OAM, Chris Puckey from Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and Associate Professor Bill McGuiness, Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery, for their ongoing commitment to JRI; and the reference group, collaborators and community members who together with our staff and students strive to grow the JRI.

I am privileged to be leading an outstanding team and making a significant contribution to the JRI. Our team will carry on the JRI vision of research and innovation that makes a difference to the lives of a diverse range of older people in rural communities locally, nationally and internationally. We are excited to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the JRI next year.

Associate Professor Irene Blackberry
Director, John Richards Initiative
November 2016
About us

The John Richards Initiative is named in honour of John Richards, 2007 recipient of the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for “service to the community of the Moira Shire, particularly as a contributor to health sector development, and to the newsagency industry through the Victorian Authorised Newsagents Association.”

John Richards, a former jackaroo, soldier and farmer, was the inaugural president of the Yarrawonga District Health Service board of management, and from there was instrumental in the establishment of the Moira Healthcare Alliance. He was President of the Alliance from 2002 to 2005.

Among numerous health and community related positions, he was also a member of the Rural and Regional Council of the Victorian Healthcare Association from 2001 to 2006. In recognition of his active community involvement he was named Yarrawonga Citizen of the Year in 2004 and received the Rural Health Volunteers Award, Hume Region, from the Department of Human Services Victoria in 2005.

John Richards’ vision to support research into rural ageing and aged care came to fruition in 2007 with the establishment of the John Richards Initiative. His generous contribution was matched by ongoing support from both the Victorian Department of Health and La Trobe University. Support was originally provided over five years, but following the very successful review in 2012, all partners pledged ongoing support to the JRI. This core funding provides a stable environment from which to seek funding for research projects in the region.

Professor Jeni Warburton was appointed as Director and Inaugural John Richards Chair in rural ageing and aged care research in 2008. She passed on the baton to Associate Professor Irene Blackberry in 2016.

In recognition of his contribution to building knowledge around ageing and health, John was awarded the Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) at the La Trobe University Graduation ceremony on 10 April 2015.
JRI location

The John Richards Initiative is based on the Albury-Wodonga campus of La Trobe University. This locates the JRI in a regional area, close to many small rural communities, and on the Murray-Darling River. Albury-Wodonga is on the border of the states of Victoria and New South Wales. It is one of the fastest growing regional areas in Australia. Albury-Wodonga is approximately 3.5 hours drive from Melbourne and is easily accessible by car, train and plane. JRI collaborates extensively with interdisciplinary researchers across other La Trobe University campuses in Melbourne, Bendigo, Shepparton and Mildura.

This location is critical as it enables JRI staff and students to take advantage of the rich research potential offered by study into local ageing rural communities, rural health workforce and other relevant issues.

At La Trobe University, the JRI is situated within the College of Science, Health and Engineering at La Trobe University, and the School of Nursing and Midwifery. JRI is one of five independent research centres located under the Australian Institute of Primary Care and Ageing (AIPCA). This co-location with other research centres allows the JRI to provide a regional and rural perspective on ageing research.
The Reference Group

The JRI Reference group was established soon after the launch in 2007, when key local stakeholders were identified. The group meets twice a year and was chaired by John Richards until 2014. Peter de Koeyer took over as the Chair of Reference Group in 2015. Members of the group are consulted about research projects, and are a very useful conduit into local and regional issues.

The objective of the Reference Group is to facilitate links between the Richards Initiative and key stakeholders to provide advice to the Initiative.

The terms of reference include:

- contributing to the development of the research agenda
- informing the initiative about workforce development issues, including those relating to research, education and training
- disseminating information about the research undertaken by the Initiative and providing a conduit into the wider community.

Current members

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Peter de Koeyer (Chair)</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, Westmont Aged Care Services Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr John Richards</td>
<td>Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/Professor Irene Blackberry</td>
<td>Director, John Richards Initiative, La Trobe University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Jeni Warburton</td>
<td>Chair, John Richards Initiative, La Trobe University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Chris Puckey</td>
<td>Director, Policy and Analysis, Aged Care Branch, Department of Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Sandra Davidson</td>
<td>Manager, Older People Mental Health Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Ruth Harris</td>
<td>Manager, Support Options, Upper Murray Family Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Trevor Marshal</td>
<td>Primary Care Manager, Alpine Health</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ms Margaret Bennett</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer, Northeast Health Wangaratta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Stephen Carroll</td>
<td>Health and Aged Care, Hume Region, Department of Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Richard McClelland</td>
<td>North East Regional Manager, Murray Primary Health Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Mayssa Powell</td>
<td>Deputy Chair, Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Joan Sims</td>
<td>Community member, Beechworth</td>
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Aims and objectives

At its inception, the stated objectives of the JRI were to:

• lead research and innovation related to rural aged care workforce and health delivery initiatives

• promote interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration in developing, testing and implementing evidence based health care delivery solutions for older people in rural areas

• establish a leading rural centre for honours, and postgraduate research training in rural aged care workforce and health delivery initiatives

• develop a strategic direction for the initiative that:
  1. has strong links with consumers, industry and government
  2. addresses Victoria and Australian government research priorities
  3. develops and/or strengthens international links and undertakes comparative research
  4. takes account of La Trobe’s strengths, other Australian centres of research excellence in ageing and situates and brands La Trobe in a competitive and unique position.

Mission

Leading innovation and research that makes a difference to the lives of a diverse range of older people living in rural communities.

“JRI research needs to be locally relevant, based on rigorous research methods and disseminated internationally.”

Associate Professor Irene Blackberry
Strategic directions

Based on the overall aims and objectives of the JRI, the following strategic directions are to be pursued:

1. evidence-based research that will make a difference to the wellbeing of rural, older people
2. research directed in two strategic areas
   • healthy ageing in rural communities
   • the delivery of appropriate health and aged care services in rural contexts
3. research that builds local, national and international partnerships and collaboration to further the outcomes of the JRI mission
4. research that addresses state and national research priorities; and responds to La Trobe University’s research focus areas
5. encouragement of a training environment for postgraduate studies.

Strategic research focus

Ageing in place: age-friendly communities, diverse population, rural wellness, rural migration, volunteering

Health and aged care services: innovative models of care, workforce, shared decision-making, telehealth, technology, dementia care, diabetes, palliative care
Our team

Associate Professor Irene Blackberry
Director

BMed (Atmajaya), PhD (Monash), GradCert HealthProgEval (Melbourne)

Professional involvement

Executive Committee, Victorian Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) (2013–present)
Founding Executive Committee, Victorian AAG rural chapter (2015–present)
Invited Member, NHMRC Research Translation Faculty (2013–present)
Associate Editor, Primary Care Diabetes journal (2014–present)
Review Editor, Frontiers in Medicine journal (2014–present)
Member, Australian Diabetes Society (2012–present)
Member, American Geriatrics Society (2012–present)
Member, Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care (2010–present)
Member, Albury–Wodonga Dementia Services Network (2015–present)
Member, Hume Diabetes Collaborative Network (2015–present)
Honorary Principal Fellow, University of Melbourne (2016–present)
Honorary Principal Fellow, National Ageing Research Institute (2014–present)

Biography

Associate Professor Irene Blackberry is a medical graduate and health services researcher with significant expertise in designing and conducting randomised controlled trials of complex interventions. There are two major research streams to her work on ageing and chronic diseases, united by a focus on implementation studies of complex multi-factorial intervention across the community, primary and secondary care setting drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research methods. She has published over 60 research papers and reports including as a first author in the British Medical Journal and Medical Journal of Australia. She has supervised 16 research students to completion and is currently co-supervising four PhD students. She joined JRI in mid-2014 after leading ageing and chronic disease research at the National Ageing Research Institute and the University of Melbourne for the past decade.

Her current research focuses on improving care delivery for older people with complex multimorbidity in general practice and rural areas, embedding technology and telehealth, and the use of large datasets to improve health outcomes and care processes. Her research interests include ageing, aged care, complex intervention implementation, diabetes, chronic disease, primary care, telehealth, geriatric medicine, rural health and clinical nutrition.
Professor Jeni Warburton
Chair

BA Hons (University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK),
PhD (University of Queensland)

Professional involvement
ARC Expert Reviewer (2008–present)
Member, Australian Association of Gerontology (2008–present)
Member, editorial board, Rural and Remote Health (2011–present)

Biography

Professor Jeni Warburton is an internationally recognised researcher in ageing and social policy and headed the John Richards Initiative between September 2008 and December 2015. Prior to this, she was senior researcher at one of the lead Australian research centres on ageing at The University of Queensland.

Professor Warburton’s current research is focused on promoting healthy ageing in the community, and particularly in rural communities. She is one of Australia’s lead researchers on volunteer issues, particularly related to ageing. Her program of research has been widely funded by government, non-government and through competitive grants. To date, she has been a Chief Investigator on eight ARC grants. She has been invited to present her work as keynote addresses and through international Symposia across Australia, as well as internationally, including in Hong Kong, China, Canada, Belgium and Sweden. She is regularly asked to consult with government, and has been a member of advisory panels for both state and federal governments. Her research has had a significant impact and influence on the development of ageing policy and practice in Australia.

“One in three older people live in rural communities. Rural migration is a critical issue.”
Dr Rachel Winterton
Research Fellow

BAppSc Hons (Victoria University), PhD (Victoria University)

Professional Involvement

Member of Australian Association of Gerontology, Victorian University Rural and Research Network (2015–present)

Convenor, Rural and Remote Special Interest Group (Australian Association of Gerontology) (2016–present)

Honorary Fellow, Trent Centre for Aging and Society, Canada (2016–present)

Executive Member, Transforming Human Societies Research Focus Area (2015–present)

Biography

Dr Rachel Winterton has worked in the JRI since 2009. Her research is located primarily in the field of health geography, and focuses on how rural communities, governments and organisations are managing and responding to challenges posed by population ageing through systems of governance, health and social infrastructure.

She is internationally recognised for her work on rural ageing and voluntarism, and is currently completing a series of projects with international collaborators exploring critical perspectives on volunteering in ageing rural communities. Other research interests include the implications of rural retirement migration for rural service provision, rural organisational capacity to facilitate age-friendly communities and the role of rural systems and structures in facilitating wellness for rural ageing populations.
Dr Pauline Savy
Research Officer
RN, RPN, BAdmin, Grad Dip Gerontology, PhD Sociology

Pauline’s academic interests include teaching and publishing in sociology, and researching the provision of aged care in residential and community settings. Dr Savy has been involved as research manager for a number of JRI aged care projects.

Turi Berg
Research Officer
BSc/BA, PGrad Dip International Health, MPH

Turi joined the JRI in 2013 as a researcher, and recently began some sessional teaching. She managed the ASPIRE project, an ARC-linkage project looking at ageing well in rural communities.

Karrie Long
Research Officer
RN, BN, Grad Dip Rural Critical Care

Since joining JRI in January 2015, Karrie has been working with Dr Irene Blackberry on the Stepping Up Telehealth Pilot study across north eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales. The project examined the use of telehealth to support a new model of care for type 2 diabetes management in rural and regional primary care.

Dr Clare Wilding
Research Officer
BAppSc(OT), MAppSc, PhD

Clare is an experienced occupational therapist, researcher, and academic. She is a specialist in qualitative research and has a diverse range of research interests including ageing well; managing disability, chronic illness and mental illness; knowledge exchange; supervision and mentoring; professional development; and occupational science.

Shaun Hancock
Research Officer
BPsysc (Hons)

Shaun has recently completed an honours year and is working on a number of projects for the JRI, including the Well Ageing Vision and Engagement (WAVE), Wangaratta, Service navigation for dementia in rural communities (SENDER App) and ARC Aspire projects.

Linda Gordes
Administrative Officer

Linda has worked with La Trobe University in different roles since 1998. Linda is responsible for finance, personnel and administration tasks for the JRI.
Postgraduate students

Steven Baker – PhD awarded in August 2016

Snow on the roof, fire in the belly: Fostering independence and resilience in elderly men

The aim of this research is to explore whether elderly, socially isolated men can be supported to become more socially connected and resilient via the use of tablet and mobile technologies.

Supervised by Prof. Jeni Warburton, Dr Suzanne Hodgkin and Dr Jan Pascal.

Belinda Cash – PhD student

In sickness and in health: The experience of choice for older spousal caregivers in rural communities

The project involves a study investigating the impact of social policy and rural healthcare practices on the availability and experience of meaningful choice for older spousal caregivers.

Supervised by Dr Sue Hodgkin and Prof. Jeni Warburton.

Samantha Clune – PhD student

Health is a lot: The contribution of large health organisations to community health practices in risky places

The project is looking at the influence of large health organisations on the construction of health practices for community members in places where there may be a perception of risks and hazards.

Supervised by Dr Rachel Winterton, Prof. Tim Marjoribanks and Prof. Jane Farmer.

Md Babak Danyal – Masters Student

Development of SENDER app for dementia

The project is developing and beta testing the SENDER navigation and networking app for dementia in rural communities.

Supervised by Dr Torab Torabi and A/Prof. Irene Blackberry.

Jozette Dellemain – PhD Student

Rural case management: Developing a practice identity

A study investigating the practice of rural case management with implications for formal theory development.

Supervised by Dr Sue Hodgkin and Prof. Jeni Warburton.

Heather Downey – PhD Student

What are the factors impacting on ageing farming couples’ retirement decision making in the contemporary context?

The project involves a qualitative study interviewing couples regarding their decisions about retirement.

Supervised by Dr Guin Threlkeld and Prof. Jeni Warburton.

Kaye Ervin – PhD Student

Shared decision-making in residential aged care

Kaye’s research aims to determine current models of shared decision-making in aged care settings and to explore ways of embedding shared decision-making in dementia care.

Supervised by A/Prof. Irene Blackberry and Dr Helen Haines.

Emma Ghys – PhD Student

Food insecurity among rural older people

This research aims to determine the key issues for community dwelling, rural older people have when accessing food.

Supervised by Dr Rachel Winterton and A/Prof. Irene Blackberry.

Tshepo Rasekaba – PhD Student (external)

Telehealth for gestational diabetes mellitus

This is a mixed method study trialling the use of telehealth to improve diabetes care delivery in outpatient setting.

Supervised by A/Prof. John Furler, A/Prof. Kwang Lim and A/Prof. Irene Blackberry.
Current research

The relationship between rural living and wellness: What services and supports do older people need?


ARC Linkage project 2012 with the University of Queensland, Dept of Health and Human Services Victoria, South West Hospital and Health Service Queensland, Uniting Care Queensland and University of Alberta.

ASPIRE – Ageing Services and Supports in Rural Environments is a research project funded by the Australian government and partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria, Uniting Care Queensland and South West Hospital and Health Service Queensland. The project is being undertaken across two Australian states, Victoria and Queensland, and involves La Trobe University, Queensland University and University of Alberta, Canada. This project seeks to identify the systems and services that best support the wellness of older people living in rural communities and to better understand this relationship.

The study consists of four stages – demographic analysis, quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews and finally the integration of data. The demographic profiling of rural communities across the two states identified six diverse study sites. This was followed by the quantitative survey which was administered to 266 participants aged 65 years or older across all six sites. Data was collected about access to community services, social networks, participation in community groups, health and wellbeing, plus some basic demographic questions. The qualitative interview stage has recently begun and will explore these themes in greater detail with 60 of the survey participants. The final analysis will include the integration of data across the six study sites and a comparative analysis with our Canadian colleagues.
WAVE (Well Ageing Vision and Engagement, Wangaratta)

Winterton R and Blackberry I.

Partners: North East Health, Wangaratta, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Rural City of Wangaratta, Central Hume Primary Care Partnership, Gateway Health

Funded by North East Health, Wangaratta and Transforming Human Societies Research Focus Area.

This research seeks to identify what rural older adults expect from rural health and social care providers in relation to ageing in place, and how well this aligns with the views and perceived responsibilities of providers. This project is timely as a consequence of changing trends both in relation to rural population ageing, societal expectations of older age and shifting priorities associated with health and aged care delivery.

“What’s really valuable about the WAVE project is combining research and local knowledge together to produce something tangible for older people.”

Cathy McGowan MP
SMARRT (Small Rural Health Research Team) Partnership

Blackberry I, Farmer J, Kenny A.

Partners and funded by: Heathcote Health; Cobaw Community Health Service (Macedon Ranges); Rural NorthWest; Robinvale District Health Services; Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital; Koowearup Regional Health Service; Kilmore–Hume Health, and Alexandra District Health.

The SMARRT partnership brings together a group of Victorian remote, rural and community health services, with academic partners, to improve health outcomes for rural Victorian communities. The partnership will see remote, rural and community health services coming together to lead on the health policy agenda through development of evidence-based research, and application of that research to innovative practice.

Enhanced care pathway for older people in rural area


Partners: University of Melbourne Department of General Practice, National Ageing Research Institute, Melbourne Health and Nijmegen University

Funding body: Building Healthy Communities Research Focus Area

The ageing population and epidemic of chronic diseases present significant challenges to the Australian healthcare system. The research gap lies into innovative ways to a systematic, consistent and standardised approach to implementing 75+HA in busy general practices. We plan to improve the utility and impact of the 75+HA comprehensive geriatric assessment. The incorporation of risk stratification, an action plan and referral pathway options will allow older Australians at high risk of hospitalisation and frailty to access the appropriate services and resources in a timely and efficient manner. This issue is even more critical in rural areas where workforce and health services are limited.

The project will utilise a realist synthesis review method to elucidate primary care based comprehensive geriatric assessment.

Service Navigation for Dementia in Rural Communities (SENDER) app: a pilot

Blackberry I, Morley C, Douglass D, Torabi T, Morgan D, Mahoney A, Farmer J, Danyal B, Wilding C.

Partners: Rural Northwest Health Service, Heathcote Health Service, Department of Computer Science and Information Technology La Trobe University, Swinburne University, Telstra Digital Solution Program, Saskatchewan University Canada

Funded by Building Healthy Communities Research Focus Area.

SENDER is a prototype app for smartphones and tablets that helps rural people who are caring for someone with dementia to find the services they need and to connect to other carers and service providers. It can be challenging for carers to locate services within a fragmented health system and rural carers may be isolated by geography. The development of novel online technologies provides new solutions to these pressing problems.

Using aspects of whole-of-community-based action research and mixed methods for data gathering, this project is about beta-testing and developing the SENDER app. During a 2 month testing phase, app users (carers and service providers) will use the app in real-life contexts and provide feedback about the app’s usefulness, effectiveness, and user friendliness. Feedback will be used to further refine and develop the app. The project is currently in the recruitment and testing phase.
TRACS: Transition Rural Aged Care Service

Warburton J, Blackberry I, Winterton R.
Partner: Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
Funded by College of SHE, La Trobe University and Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

The challenges associated with moving into care settings holds particular salience in rural locations, where over one third of all older Australians live, and where there are important financial and logistic barriers to the delivery of health and aged care services. In Victoria, the majority of these in rural Victorian locations are small facilities run by local health services and are threatened with financial viability. Overall, this scenario presents significant challenges for frail older people transitioning to residential care in rural settings.

In this project we will undertake an international scoping review of transitions to residential care in rural areas, with particular attention to international models of rural care provision. It will enable us to identify gaps in practice and make recommendations re future provision. We will also undertake a series of focus group consultations to be held with key stakeholders (local service providers, allied health practitioners, older people and their families) using a place-based approach. This will enable us to understand the specific underpinnings of transitions to rural residential aged care from different perspectives.

Healthy And Resilient Together (HART)

Blackberry I and Savy P.
Partner: Beechworth Health Service
Funded by Foundation of Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR).

This project is to evaluate Beechworth Health Service-led community education and participation in the development of strategies that foster resilience and preparedness for adverse circumstances and disasters. The project is undertaken in Yackandandah and Beechworth.

Lower Hume Region ‘Your diabetes: your say’

Blackberry I and Savy P.
Partner: Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership
Funded by Lower Hume Partnership.

This project sought consumer feedback to gauge satisfaction with diabetes-focused community services and to assist with future planning to improve access, integration and quality of diabetes care across the Lower Hume Health Region.

Rural to urban migration among Chinese older people in Beijing and its impact on aged care

Winterton R and Blackberry I.
Partner: Beijing Normal University
Funded by China Studies Research Centre, La Trobe University.

This project contributes to the geographical gerontology literature by exploring the motivations for and experiences of, rural to urban migration among Chinese seniors. The number of rural older adults relocating to urban areas to access care from families or to care for grandchildren is increasing in China due to higher rural-urban service inequity and family migration to cities for employment. This research explores how the changing nature of family care provision in increasingly modernised Chinese cities will impact on the health and wellbeing of older rural-urban migrants.
Improving care for older people with dementia in rural areas

Bauer M, Fetherstonhaugh D, Blackberry I, Farmer J, Morley C.

Partner: Rural NorthWest Health

Funded by La Trobe University RFA BHC and NorthWest Rural Health Service.

Dementia is a National Health Priority Area. Nearly 1.5 million Australians are currently affected by dementia, including families and carers. The number of Australians with dementia is projected to 900,000 by 2050 with around 70% living in the community. There is little evidence in rural community service provision and it is unclear what the primary support needs of people with dementia and their carers are in a rural setting. This 12-month project will build a systematic consensus about the key support needs for people with dementia and their carers in a rural setting, and identify existing evidence-based service responses to those needs.

Collaborating partners supporting our proposal include Rural Northwest Health (in-kind, part-time project manager) and Alzheimer’s Australia (to assist with recruitment of people with dementia and carers). An expert reference group (ERG) – comprised of consumers, the CEO Rural Northwest Health, Department of Health & Human Services representatives, the director of the Victorian–Tasmanian Dementia Training Study Centres and international experts in the provision of dementia-friendly communities and systems – will guide the project.

Investigating the health benefits of volunteering by seniors

Pettigrew S, Newton R, Warburton J, Jackson B.

Partner: UWA and Curtin University

Funded by ARC Discovery.

This project aims to explore the physical health benefits associated with volunteering in later life, by looking at biological markers. Quantitative data has been collected across the volunteer and non-volunteer samples, and early comparison begun. Further, a series of in-depth interviews has also been conducted. There is a range of peer-reviewed papers being published and conference presentations being made utilising these two data sets.
Rural communities can be great places to retire to – but goods and services, infrastructure and amenities can be different to what’s available in the city. Here are some things to consider if you’re thinking of moving to a rural area.

Health and medical services
Most rural communities have GPs, but they might not be available every day, and wait times can be longer. There are fewer medical specialists, 24-hour medical facilities and hospitals in rural areas, so you will often have to travel for these services.

- Will I be able to see a doctor when I need to?
- Where is the nearest hospital?
- Will I have to travel to see medical specialists?

Buying goods and services
Rural communities have fewer shops, restaurants and services, and they can have shorter opening hours. Things can be more expensive to buy or have delivered.

In some rural communities, there’s no post service, so you might need to get a post office box in a nearby town. Some properties aren’t connected to town water or gas, and phone and internet services can also be limited.

- What is the cost of living?
- Will I be able to buy the things I need?
- Will I be able to get telephone, internet, water and gas?

Getting around
In many rural towns, residential areas don't have footpaths, street lighting or paved roads.

There is less public and community transport, which can be difficult for people who don't drive. Sometimes, driving in rural areas is more dangerous because of things like narrow shoulders, wildlife crossing, black ice and heavy frosts.

- Will I be able to use public transport?
- Are there footpaths, street lighting and paved roads where I need them?

Local government services
Because rural councils cover larger areas with fewer ratepayers, rates can be more expensive. Local government services can also be more limited, so check whether services like rubbish removal, leisure and home care are available.

Rural properties need to be maintained properly to reduce fire risk. Ask the local council what your responsibilities are.

- How much are council rates?
- What services does the council provide?
- What do I need to do to look after my property?
Social activities
Rural communities often have many activities and events, but you should check that they are the types of thing you like to do.

- Are there community activities that suit me?

Community life
Rural areas have more farming, which can involve unfamiliar smells and sounds. Noise can start early in the morning and continue through the night. Tractors and other farm machinery may use local roads and slow traffic.

Many rural communities are also popular with tourists, and can be very busy on weekends and holidays. This can affect liveability for residents. Some services and amenities might not be available during quieter times.

Some rural communities are growing and developing quickly as they become more popular. If you think this might affect your lifestyle, it’s worth finding out about development plans for the community.

- Will farming affect my lifestyle?
- Is the town a popular tourist destination?
- Will development affect my lifestyle?

How to find out more about a rural community

Visit
Spend some time holidaying or renting in the area. If it’s a tourist destination, visit at busy and quiet times. Talk to other residents and join in some activities.

Read the newspaper
Local newspapers have a lot of information about what’s happening in the community.

Visit the council website or service centre
Council has information about its services, as well as other activities and services in the community.

Visit the tourism information bureau
The local tourism information bureau can be a great place to find out what’s available and talk to other residents about life in the area.

Browse community websites
Community websites can have more information about activities, events and services in the community.
the prescribing of non-insulin anti-hyperglycaemic medications in general practice is consistent with current Australian guidelines for treatment of type 2 diabetes (T2D) in people with renal impairment.

Ageing bodies, embodied interactions and social inclusion

Vetere F, Waycott J, Warburton J, Hoang T, Ozanne E, Dow, B.

Partners: University of Melbourne, National Ageing Research Institute

Funded by ARC Discovery project.

This ARC Discovery project aims to look at technology as a potential response to social isolation in later life. In particular, we aim to look at the appropriateness of the use of avatars and virtual reality for housebound and isolated older people. The project commenced in 2016, with Dr Steven Baker, a JRI graduate, being successful in obtaining the postdoctoral research fellow position on the project.

GP Osmotic

Furler J, Best J, O’Neal D, Speight J, Blackberry I, Khunti K.

Partners: University of Melbourne, Deakin University, Nanyang Polytechnic Singapore and Imperial College London, Leicester University UK

Funded by NHMRC project grant.

The GP Osmotic study is exploring the future in type 2 diabetes management – Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM). Being a part of the study will allow people with type 2 diabetes to try this new technology that provides a powerful tool for observing blood glucose patterns clearly and in more detail than ever before to guide rational treatment choices to improve glycaemic control.
2016 JRI Oration – 15 June 2016

Healthcare Improvement Science: linking evidence to the art of caring

Presented by A/Professor Rene Melis, Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen University, Netherlands

In the past few decades there has been some remarkable improvement in health care through science and technology. Yet there seems to be a disconnect between health care as science and health care as art. If we aim to deliver truly personalised healthcare, we need to go beyond collecting evidence for each of the separate tests and intervention. Instead we need to understand how these elements work as a whole and how the value of each of these depends on the context at macro, meso and micro levels.

Diagnostic value of tests and methods is mostly evaluated ignoring the fact that there is already some information available on how likely or unlikely a certain test outcome will be.

Workshop

Frailty: what is it and what is its value?

The content of this workshop would be to first explore the history and construct of frailty conceptually (conceptual definition) as well as how frailty is being measured (operationalisation of frailty: Fried’s phenotype of frailty versus Rockwood’s accumulation of deficits), then to explore its possible uses, clinical relevance and value to (primary) care for older people (e.g. can frailty be treated? Should we want to start treating frailty?)

What is frailty? And how do you use frailty in daily practice?
Rural dementia forum – 9 & 14 November 2016

Technology for remote specialist dementia support for rural primary care providers

Presented by A/Professor Megan O’Connell, Saskatchewan University, Canada

This seminar presented the one-day one-stop assessment processes, logistics, and the interprofessional nature of rural/remote memory clinic in Canada. To reduce growing waiting list, telehealth videoconferencing has been used to communicate the diagnosis and treatment plan. Megan will also share her latest research on “Remote specialist-to-primary care support enriched care” through technology. This project includes plans for remotely delivered education aimed at impacting the clinical practice of rural primary care providers. She will test a variety of education methods, and test methods of using technology for remote dementia specialist to primary care provider support for specific rural patients without requiring face-to-face consultations for typically presenting cases. She will also describe how a remotely delivered neuropsychological assessment can aid primary care providers in making diagnoses in typically presenting dementia.

Recorded presentation by Professor Alison Bowes from Stirling University in the UK.

RemoDem: support for people with dementia in remote areas

This presentation focuses on the provision of services to older people including people with dementia and people from minority ethnic groups in Europe.

Workshop

Videoconferencing for rural caregiver support

This workshop will discuss telehealth video-conferenced support group for rural spouses of persons diagnosed with atypical young-onset dementias, including dementia due to frontotemporal lobar degeneration (FTD) in Canada. Since 2009 Megan has been providing support groups for spouses who would not otherwise have access to a support group due to the atypical nature of their spouses’ dementia and due to their geographic isolation. She now co-facilitates two monthly groups with staff from the Alzheimer Society via telehealth and include all spousal caregivers of persons diagnosed with FTD from across the province – both rural and urban.

Stats workshop – 5–6 December 2016

Statistics in research

In partnership with La Trobe Statistics Consultancy Platform and supported by La Trobe Research Culture Fund, JRI is hosting a statistics in research workshop. This professional development course is targeted for staff and students to build their knowledge and skills in quantitative research.

The workshop is presented by Dr Steve Begg and Dr Xia Li.
Invited presentations

Irene Blackberry
Presented the telehealth project to members of the Albury–Wodonga diabetes peer support group in February 2016.

Jeni Warburton
“Wellbeing among older Australians in rural areas”
Invited presentation at launch of Geographic Indicators of Wellbeing for Older Australians (NATSEM & Benevolent Society), Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne, February 2016.

Irene Blackberry
Invited to present at the round table discussion with leaders at a multicultural ageing event at parliament, Canberra, March 2016.

Irene Blackberry

Irene Blackberry
Presented to La Trobe University Council in Albury–Wodonga campus in April 2016.

Jeni Warburton
“Volunteering: Engagement in later life”
Invited keynote address, AAG Rural Conference, Dubbo, April 2016.

Jeni Warburton
“Workforce issues in rural community aged care”
Invited keynote, AAG Rural Conference Dubbo, April 2016.

Jeni Warburton and Suzanne Hodgkin
“Building healthy ageing in rural communities”
Presentation at Beyond City Limits forum, 22 April, La Trobe University Albury–Wodonga.

Rachel Winterton
“Organisational responsibility for age-friendly social participation: Views of Australian rural community stakeholders”
IFA conference, June 2016

Rachel Winterton, Norah Keating and Jacqui Eales
“Understanding community age-friendliness in the context of change”

Irene Blackberry
Invited as a keynote speaker at the Old Age in Asia Pacific Symposium in Bangkok, June 29 to July 2.
**Sue Hodgkin**  
Invited to the City University of Hong Kong (July 2016) to present a workshop on Australia’s System of Aged Care. At this workshop, all of the international scholars contributed to work on a grant proposal that was submitted to the Hong Kong Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Stream in September 2016. This grant has a significant international focus and includes experts in informal care from Australia, Germany, Israel, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

**Irene Blackberry**  
Invited as speaker at Goulburn Valley Health Research Day, July 20.

**Rachel Winterton**  
“Managing and responding to challenges posed by rural population ageing”  

**Irene Blackberry**  

**Rachel Winterton**  
ASPIRE – Ageing Services and Supports in Rural Environments. Invited presentations to U3A Loddon–Mallee and North East network, September to October 2016

**Jeni Warburton**  
Invited keynote on “social inclusion policy” at International Social Exclusion workshop, Galway, Ireland, October 2016.

**Rachel Winterton**  

**Rachel Winterton**  

**Irene Blackberry and Karrie Long**  
Presented a poster and a “table-top presentation” on the findings and methodology on a Realist Review of Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment in Primary Care. AAG Conference, November 2016.

**Turi Berg**  
Oral presentation of data on how rural older people are using information and communication technology. ICT includes technology such as telephones, televisions, radios and computers. ICT can maintain wellness by providing mental stimulation and preventing loneliness. AAG Conference, November 2016.
Media

• Irene interviewed by Border Mail for article “Directors bring expertise”, announcing her appointment as the director of JRI. 19 April, 2016

• Irene interviewed for comment by Border Mail article “Art revives creativity”. Article about adult art helping to exercise minds of residents in aged care. 4 June, 2016

• Rene Melis appeared in the Border Mail as part of the John Richards Initiative Annual Oration. Rene shared his research on frailty in a seminar and workshop. Rene is also doing research with Irene around this topic. 15 June, 2016

• Rachel interviewed by Bendigo Advertiser for article “Dying at home wish strongest in rural areas”. This article was in relation to the new palliative care framework. 8 July, 2016

• Karrie interviewed for comment by Border Mail for article “Stepping up telehealth helps North East people with type 2 diabetes”. This project was a pilot program that trialed a new model of care for type 2 diabetes. 13 July, 2016

• Irene interviewed for comment by Border Mail for article “Older generation set to rise in Hume, less young people in the region”. 19 July, 2016


• Irene interviewed by Warracknabeal Herald for article “New app for memory support” about Service Navigation for Dementia in Rural Communities or SENDER app. 6 September, 2016

• Irene and Clare were interviewed by ABC Radio about the SENDER App during Dementia Awareness month. 7 September, 2016

• Irene interviewed by Border Mail for article “App identifies help close by”, in relation to the Service Navigation for Dementia in Rural Communities or SENDER app. 9 September, 2016


• The SENDER App appeared in Health Victoria, Vol. 8 No. 9, October, 2016.

• Well Ageing Vision and Engagement (WAVE) Wangaratta launch at Wangaratta with Cathy McGowan as guest speaker. 24 October, 2016
Making an age-friendly society

Attendees at a forum have heard details about current research on ways to encourage and support rural communities to be more age-friendly, to better reach out to those who are lonely and socially isolated, and to generally identify the factors that enhance wellbeing among older members of the community.

The meeting, organised by U3A Cobram, was well attended, with more than 50 representatives from U3As across north-east Victoria and from Cobram organisations such as Probus, Cobram Community House and Senior Citizens.

Senior Victorians commissioner Gerard Mansour spoke on the findings of his report Ageing is everyone’s business — a report on isolation and loneliness among senior Victorians.

While he acknowledged the contribution towards social participation and community development that seniors groups such as those attending the forum provide, he challenged them to find further ways to reach out to those seniors who are isolated and lonely.

 Communities that build strong links between existing groups, that raise the community profile of their groups and welcome new members make a powerful contribution to the wellbeing of all seniors, including those who are lonely and socially isolated, Mr Mansour said.

La Trobe University Research Centre’s Rachel Winterton presented some preliminary results from a study aimed at identifying the key factors which determine the wellbeing of seniors in small town communities.

Dr Winterton said in small towns, the informal social networks of family, friends, neighbours, volunteers and community groups were very important, especially as formal services, such as medical specialists, allied health, residential care, home maintenance and meals on wheels are not always available.

Communities, regardless of their size, can contribute to the wellbeing and healthy ageing of all their members, the forum heard.

It is important that seniors who want to age in place — stay in their communities as they grow older — are assisted to do so.
Research collaborations

We have strong collaborations with researchers both nationally and internationally.

La Trobe University
Dr Michael Bauer
Dr Steve Begg
Dr Deirdre Fetherstonhaugh
Dr Sharon Hanna
Dr Suzanne Hodgkin
Professor Amanda Kenny
Associate Professor Michael Kingsley
Associate Professor Virginia Lewis
Dr Xia Li
Dr Pettina Love
Dr Anne-Marie Mahoney
Professor Pam Snow

University of Melbourne
Dr Malcolm Clark
Associate Professor John Furler
Associate Professor Kathleen Gray
Dr Phyllis Lau
Dr Jo-Anne Manski-Nankervis
Associate Professor David O’Neal
Associate Professor Frank Vetere
Professor Doris Young

Monash University
Associate Professor Simon Bell

Swinburne University
Dr Hilary Davis
Professor Jane Farmer

University of Queensland
Professor Martin Bell
Professor Melanie Oppenheimer
Dr Maree Petersen
Dr Andrea Petriwskyj

Bendigo Health
Dr Jessica Triay

Heathcote Health
Dr Dan Douglass

Melbourne Health
Associate Professor Kwang Lim

National Ageing Research Institute
Associate Professor Briony Dow

Northeast Health Wangaratta
Margaret Bennett
David Kidd

Rural Northwest Health
Catherine Morley

Queensland Health
Associate Professor Alison Mudge

University of Alberta, Canada
Professor Norah Keating

Saskatchewan University, Canada
Professor Debra Morgan
Associate Professor Megan O’Connell

Trent University, Canada
Professor Mark Skinner

National University of Ireland
Dr Kieran Walsh

Radboud University Medical Centre, Netherlands
Assistant Professor Rene Melis

University of Barcelona, Spain
Dr Rodrigo Serrat

Newcastle University, UK
Professor Tom Scharf

Beijing Normal University, China
Associate Professor Yang Chen

Leicester University, UK
Professor Kamlesh Khunti

Nanyang Polytechnic Singapore and Imperial College London
Professor James Best
Publications


“JRI aims to close the significant research gaps arising from older population in rural communities.”

John Richards OAM