

*PHCRED Annual Event Evaluation*

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## ***1.0 Background***

The Collaboration Event was held in the 'Next Generation' Building in North Adelaide. The venue was easily accessible from the central train station in central Adelaide. Adelaide was chosen due to its centrality for the PHCRED 'Tri-Statewide' collaborative partners. The event was held over one day due to budget restrictions.

The PHCRED collaboration was represented across all the partners with attendees from the Greater Green Triangle, Spencer Gulf, and Alice Springs joining those from Adelaide. A range of health researchers and practitioners attended from Adelaide and surrounding rural areas including Aboriginal Health workers from Pika Wiya, Port Augusta and rural allied health workers from the Adelaide Hills. The Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia had two representatives attending, with one of these presenting collaborative work with the Centre for Clinical Excellence. The event was also attended by representatives from the Divisions of General Practice and Government. A 'List of Delegates' was compiled and distributed to encourage networking (see Attachment).

Individual partners were asked to invite their PHCRED researchers to submit abstracts which were collated into a program centrally. The event was widely advertised through PHCRIS, PHCRED partners and SADI networks. The program appeared on the PHCRED collaboration web-site two weeks prior to the event taking place. The event was organized and facilitated by the Tri Statewide Facilitator.

## ***2. Nature of the Event***

### ***2.1 Plenary Sessions***

Three plenary talks were delivered throughout the day from: Robert Wells (ANU, Canberra), John Wakerman (CRH, Alice Springs), and Heather Petty (SA Department of Health). These were specifically engaged to address the event theme exploring the relationship of research, policy and practice.

Robert Wells is Director of the Menzies Centre for Health Policy and Executive Director of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at the Australian National University, Canberra. He works on a range of health policy and systems issues, including primary care, private health insurance, rural health and health workforce. He has participated in

national advisory committees on neurosciences research and attracting greater private sector investment in health and medical research. Drawing on his 30 years experience in the Federal government, Robert spoke about what does and does not help in engaging policy makers' attention.

John Wakerman is the head of the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs. He is a Public Health Medicine specialist and general practitioner, with a background in remote primary health care services as a medical practitioner, senior manager and researcher. He has special interests in remote health services research and health management education. He has also had substantial international experience as a public health and health service management consultant. John discussed the policy priorities for the Rural Health Alliance and potential ways in which rural health researchers can influence policy makers.

Heather Petty is a Principal Project Officer (Research Policy and Funding) at the SA Department of Health, and coordinates the Strategic Health Research program and the development of policies such as the DH Research Transformation Framework and the proposed Research and Evaluation Framework. Heather has an extensive background in health, working across rural and metropolitan health units in various clinical and management roles before working in the central office in a policy role. Heather addressed health research and policy issues in South Australia and provided the latest information about health research funding and the means to strengthen applications.

## ***2.2 Presentations and Posters.***

Twenty presentations were delivered in sessions addressing Capacity Building in PHC, Mental Health Research, Indigenous Research and Evaluation, and various Primary Health Care research conducted by bursary holders and fellows associated with PHCRED. Each session was chaired by a different Director of the PHCRED program across the collaboration who was given introductory biographies of each presenter.

A mixture of experienced researchers, novice researchers and 'first-time' presenters appeared on the program. All abstracts were compiled and distributed on the day. The presentation slides were obtained in advance to ensure smooth 'turnover' of presentations and these now appear on the collaboration web-site. Seven posters were displayed mainly from bursary holders from the GGT who could not present in person due to logistical difficulties. A full program is included in the attachment.

### ***3. Evaluation***

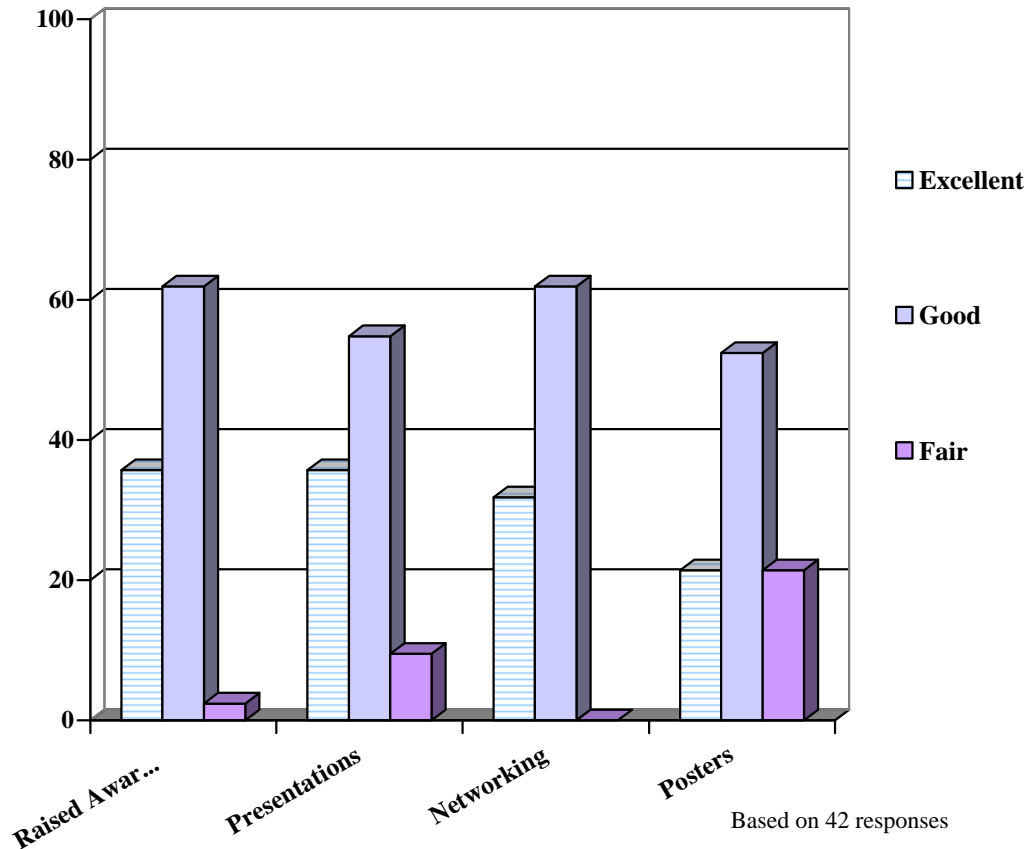
A total of 55 people attended the event throughout the day with the average attendance at any one time being around 34.

The evaluation was through a self completed questionnaire which could be 'posted' anonymously in a box provided for the purpose in order to encourage attendees to express opinions or concerns in confidence. The evaluation questionnaire was 'semi-structured' containing a short scale and a number of 'open ended' items to allow respondents to express their views. The questionnaire appears in the Attachment. 42 people completed a questionnaire (response rate of 76.4%).

### 3.1 Event Activities and Impacts

Respondents rated the event very highly with regard to raising awareness of PHC research projects with all but one respondent rating 'excellent' or 'good' (35.7%, n=15 indicating 'excellent' - see Fig: i).

Fig i: Scale findings concerning Event Activities

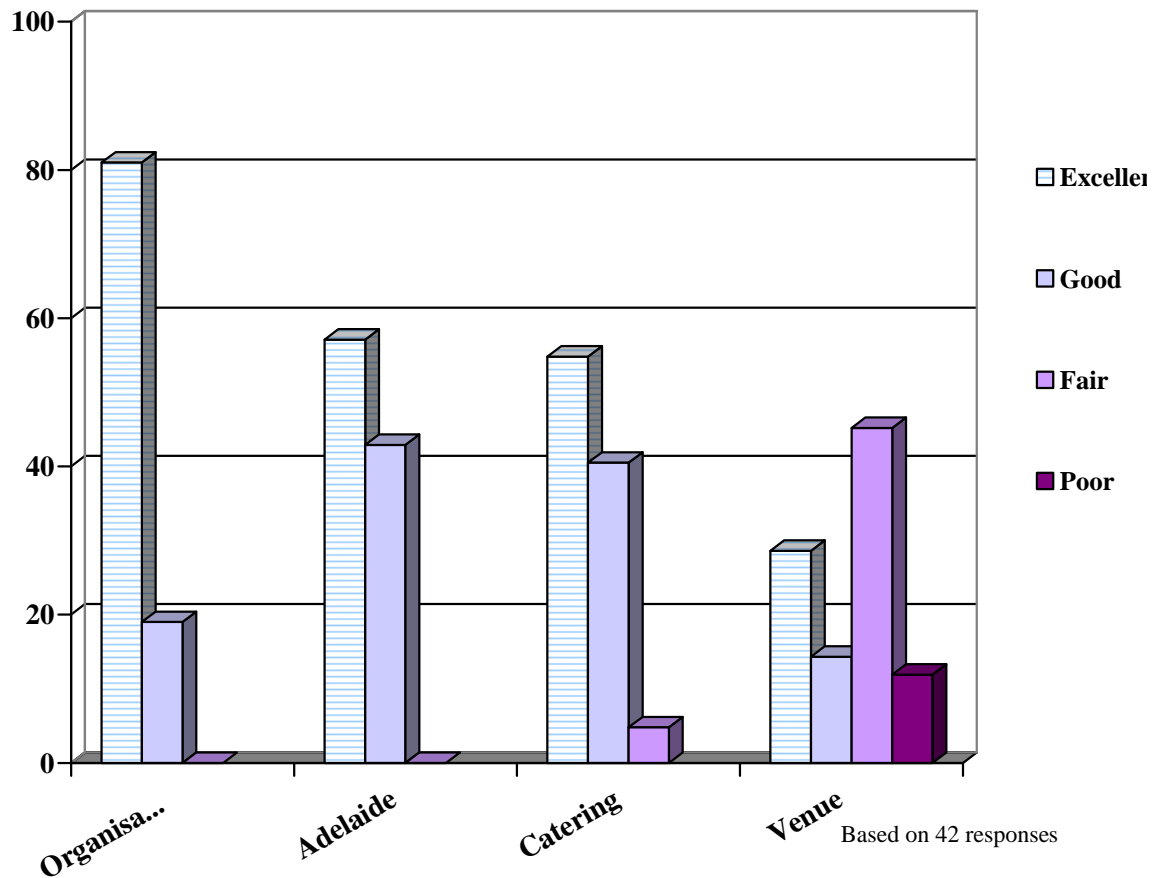


The presentations were also appreciated by the large majority of respondents, with 90.5% (n=38) indicating they were 'excellent' or 'good'. Respondents were unanimous that the event provided excellent or good 'networking / information exchange opportunities'. Posters were appreciated but less so, with 21.4% (n=9) indicating these were 'fair'. This was qualified by a number of respondents indicating a lack of time to read these during what was an event filled day:

- Ø *It was difficult to find the time to read them*
- Ø *There was so much happening. I wanted to network during breaks more than*

*read the posters but they looked fine.*

**Fig iii: Scale findings concerning Event process**



All respondents thought that the event was well organized, with 81% (n=34) indicating it was 'excellent' (see Fig ii).

- Ø *Great organization*
- Ø *These things are very difficult to sort out, Paul did brilliantly*
- Ø *Paul's a brilliant facilitator*
- Ø *The organizer kept things going really well. Well done!*
- Ø *Grateful to Paul for putting together. An excellent meeting. Well done!*

Perhaps not surprisingly, all of those who attended were happy with having the event in Adelaide with 57.1% (n=24) indicating this was 'excellent'<sup>1</sup>. Whilst the catering was

<sup>1</sup> The event was held in Port Lincoln last year.

appreciated (95.3% indicating this was 'excellent' or 'good'), respondents were more critical of the venue, with 45.2%, (n=19) indicating it was 'fair' and 11.9% (n=5) indicating 'poor'. This was explained with regard to noise from adjacent rooms and the lack of comfort:

- Ø *The noise from the kitchens was too much. Sometimes I couldn't hear*
- Ø *Having the event in the room next door – they were noisy in the break times when we were still going*
- Ø *The chairs were uncomfortable*

The venue had booked a separate event which adjourned at different times to the PHCRED event; its members congregating in the foyer area outside the event room acted as a distraction for three respondents.

Two respondents also mentioned the timing of presentations was not kept strict enough.

### ***3.2 Benefits and Improvements***

When asked spontaneously what aspects of the event were most beneficial, attendees indicated that benefits of raised awareness of PHCRED research activity, information sharing and networking opportunities, and the experience provided of presenting their work were the most worthwhile experiences of the day:

- Ø *Networking with other people was really good*
- Ø *Fantastic to hear what others are doing – not feel as isolated doing research*
- Ø *Promoting my work to research peers*
- Ø *Finding out what other PHCRED fellows are doing*
- Ø *There are a lot of different types of people here and its good to speak to some people you wouldn't get to speak to otherwise*
- Ø *Great to get the experience of presenting under my belt*
- Ø *Practicing presenting*
- Ø *Excellent network. PHCRED is a great opportunity for sharing and building connections*

Attendees who had not presented before appreciated the supportive environment provided:

- Ø *Paul was very supportive and took the time to calm me down*
- Ø *People who listened were polite. I liked the way the speaker told everyone to be*

*supportive of us first timers*

Four respondents also mentioned the plenary speakers, with each being signaled out for praise:

- Ø *The first speaker was very interesting I thought*
- Ø *Heather's talk on funding opportunities was good – it was good to get the info first hand!*
- Ø *I enjoyed John Wakerman's presentation as it said a lot about the level of activity that goes on in rural and remote places that otherwise you just don't hear about*

Few improvements were raised beyond reduced noise levels, timing and comfort (see above) with noise being by far the most cited issue (raised by five respondents). There were two equivocal opinions expressed with regard to holding the event over one day. One respondent thought it would benefit from being extended to two days in order to allow greater time to present and less intensity, with a second advocating the work convenience of attending for one day as opposed to longer.

#### ***4. Conclusion / Discussion***

Clearly the event was highly successful with many benefiting from the presentations and networking. The need to ensure the event can proceed in a quieter venue is warranted; if this cannot be guaranteed then the venue should be changed.

Concerns about restricting the event to a single day expressed at the PHCRED State-Wide Committee were unfounded. However the event was an intense affair which might benefit from reducing the number of plenary sessions to allow greater networking (a main strength of the occasion for many attendees).

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