



AUSTRALIAN NETWORK  
OF WHO  
COLLABORATING CENTRES

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THE AUSTRALIAN NETWORK OF  
WHO COLLABORATING CENTRES

# Capacity Mapping Report 2022



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# Foreword

The Australian Network of World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centres (WHOCCs) was established in 2019 to raise the profile and influence of Australia's WHOCCs, to share the knowledge embodied within these Centres, and to provide a networking platform that brings together all of the Australian WHOCCs. WHOCCs are globally oriented centres of excellence and achieving designation - and retaining this designation for up to four years at a time - is a complex process. Australia has relatively more WHOCCs than any other country, and is especially active in the Western Pacific Region.

In 2022, the executive committee of the Australian Network of WHOCCs undertook an in-depth capacity mapping project of Australia's 53 WHOCCs with the objective of identifying the scope of technical expertise across the network. On behalf of the Executive Committee, we are delighted to share this report with you, which summarises this capacity mapping exercise. The report outlines the different roles of the Collaborating Centres and highlights the range of their multidisciplinary activities. It reflects a high level of public health capacity that is responding to the complex health challenges faced in Australia, our region and globally.

We would like to thank each of the directors of the Collaborating Centres for their contribution to this report and warmly acknowledge their work. We also thank the Victorian Government (Department of Health) for their generous support of this Network. We would also like to thank Ms Piyali Somaia, Ms Elisa Quijano and Ms Emma Beavon for their expert management of the capacity mapping project. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the work of the Australian Global Health Alliance (Alliance) in hosting the Australian Network of World Health Organization Collaborating Centres, and particularly thank Dr Selina Namchee Lo, Executive Director of the Alliance, for her many contributions to this report.

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**There are more than 800 WHO Collaborating Centres (WHOCCs) around the world that explicitly support WHO with expertise and that cooperate on important global health challenges. Australia is home to 53 of those Centres, which reflects both the range and depth of expertise in the country and the commitment to regional and global collaboration for global health. This report serves as an introduction to the work of these Centres and the Network of Australian WHOCCs, formed in 2019.**

## Collaborating for Global Health

The world is facing unprecedented challenges in global health that require a strong and coordinated global response. As we have seen during the COVID epidemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) plays a critical role in the production and dissemination of technical expertise and leadership in such a coordinated response. The WHOCCs are key to supporting this work, even if they are often not in the headlines.

# WHO Collaborating Centres

WHO Collaborating Centres (WHOCCs) were created in 1949 and have been part of the WHO ever since. They are global centres of excellence, not part of or funded by the WHO but an essential part of international cooperation on health. While the WHO's strategic priorities and technical workplans guide activities and programs across the world, the WHO often relies on the expertise, advice and cooperation of WHOCCs to deliver on the priorities and execute its workplans. There are more than 800 centres globally, each of which must be re-designated every four years based on its expertise, collaboration and contribution to the WHO's strategic goals.

Australia is home to 53 WHOCCs, more per capita than any other country and around a quarter of all centres in the Western Pacific region. This is a sign of the range and depth of expertise in the country, and also of Australia's positive stance towards international cooperation. Australian Collaborating Centres have deep ties to the Pacific region but are global in their reach and activity.

WHO encourages cooperation between different centres, and there are an increasing number of national, regional and global networks of WHOCCs. This includes national networks in China, Brazil, and Australia, as well as global thematic networks working on specific areas such as tobacco control, health promotion and children's environmental health.



For a list of current Australian WHOCCs, scan the QR code, or head to <https://ausglobalhealth.org/whocc-network/whocc/>

The Australian Network of WHOCCs seeks to exchange information, foster good practices, and develop technical cooperation between each other, global health organisations, WHO and governments.

## Global Reach

There is very wide global reach of the Australian WHOCC Network, as Australia-based WHOCCs work across at a minimum of 68 countries, including countries in Europe, Africa, Asia as well as North, South and Central America. For historical and geographic reasons, the international work conducted by the WHOCCs is concentrated within the Western Pacific region: At least 23 centres work in the Pacific Islands, 15 work in Vietnam, 13 work in China and 12 work in Fiji. (see map on page 10-11)

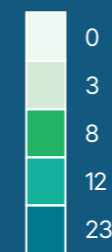
## Funding

Australian WHOCCs receive funding from a variety of sources (and rarely ever from only one source), the most common of which is the Federal government (23 centres). Many also receive funding from independent grants, their host organisations, overseas collaborating partners, and consultancy fees. The WHO provides some specific project support but does not provide funding for WHOCC operations. The Australian Network of WHOCCs is funded by the Victorian State Government Department of Health (International Health team).

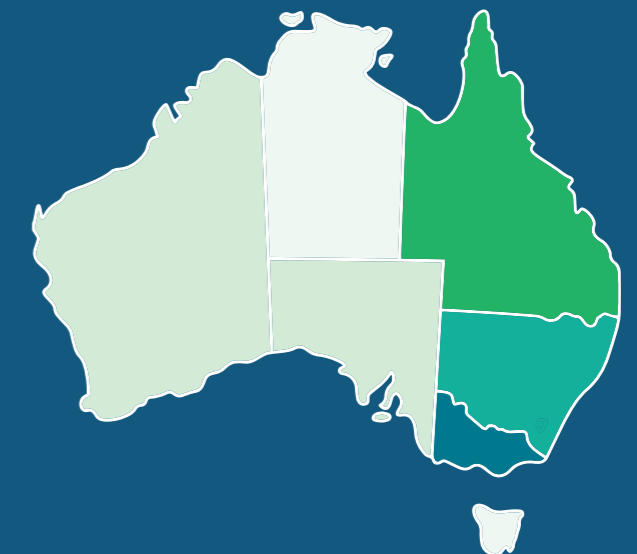
## Australian Network of WHO Collaborating Centres

Established in 2019, the Australian Network of WHOCCs is an inter-disciplinary group of global health experts. The 53 Centres that make up the network are hosted by a range of universities, government agencies, and other institutions. The work of the Australian WHOCCs includes many public health areas and utilises a broad range of public health skills. Australian WHOCCs contribute to government and WHO decision making, influence policy, help build capacity in government and non-government bodies regionally, and support advocacy around key health themes.

The Australian Network of WHOCCs was created and is hosted by the Australian Global Health Alliance. Despite its young age, the network has engaged with regional partners and enabled greater collaboration, output and impact from the WHOCCs, for the benefit of the Indo-Pacific region. The Network is now considered by WHO to be a model to emulate throughout the region.



Number of Centres in each state



- Australia is home to 53 WHO Collaborating Centres
- WHOCC are global centres of excellence
- WHOCC are not part of or funded by WHO but an essential part of international cooperation on health

- Australian Collaborating Centres represent a broad cross-section of health
- Australian WHOCC Network members contribute to all 17 SDGs
- Work of the Australian WHOCC network is based on its three strategic objectives

# Work of the WHO Collaborating Centres

Australian WHOCCs have the technical research, and implementation and training expertise to play a vital role in many aspects of the WHO's global work.

- Australian Collaborating Centres represent a broad cross-section of health including Infectious Diseases, Child and Adolescent Health, Mental Health, Law and many other areas.
- Being in the Pacific region, Australian centres have links to the Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO), the South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) and to WHO headquarters in Geneva.
- The WHO has encouraged Collaborating Centres to establish networks and increase cooperation and synergies. The Australian network is the largest national network of its kind.

An in-depth capacity mapping project conducted by the Australian WHOCC Network identified a number of core strengths and key areas of public health activity within the Australian centres.

## Health and Disease Focus Areas

- **Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)** are the leading cause of death worldwide and a priority for WHO efforts to improve global health. Australian WHOCCs work on many aspects of NCDs including broadly on NCD prevention as well as specific health areas such as nutrition, obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, substance use (e.g., drug and alcohol use including tobacco control) and gender-based violence.
- **Anti-microbial resistance** - Thirteen Australian WHOCCs work in anti-microbial resistance, an increasingly important area for global health research and promotion. In addition, eight centres work on STIs, ten work on viral infections, and seven work on neglected tropical diseases.
- **Australian WHOCCs work across diverse population groups, including key/at-risk populations** (16), child health (14), adolescent health (11), disability inclusion and rehabilitation (11), ageing (9), maternal health (9), men's health (6), refugee health (6), LGBTQIA+ health (5), men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender populations (5), neonatal health (5), and women's health (5).
- **Many WHOCCs have been deeply involved in the COVID-19 response**, both in Australia and internationally, lending their expertise to government and multilateral partners in areas such as laboratory and diagnostics training, conducting online seminars and forums on mass gatherings and health security, and establishing COVID testing for difficult to reach populations.



## Core Public Health Strengths

- **Workforce capacity development**  
At least 20 Australian WHOCC work on Health System Strengthening (HSS), a key area for regional development and development support in the Indo-Pacific region. This is an important part of both the WHO and Australian government strategies in the region. The expertise inside WHOCCs and their host organisations often play essential roles in supporting regional HSS programmes.
- **Supporting development of policy documents**  
Translating research into policy is one of the critical areas in which the WHOCCs can support both Australian and other governments. For example, many WHOCCs work regionally to support both HSS and related policy development in Pacific Island Countries.
- **Data for decision-making**  
High quality health data and data management is essential for informed health and policy decisions, such as monitoring progress towards reaching the SDGs, including Universal Health Coverage. Australian WHOCCs have expertise in collecting, analysing and using health data, and nearly half (24 of 52 Centres) support both government and non-government partners to improve collection and use of data for health.

Number of Australian WHOCC working in different public health areas

Policy and Advocacy	28
Health Promotion	27
Health Systems Strengthening	24
Workforce Capacity Building	19
Child and Adolescent Health	15
Prevention	14
Infectious Diseases	13
Non-communicable Disease	13
Climate Change Health Impacts	11



## There is a great opportunity for the Australian Government to realise and leverage the intelligence across the WHOCCs in Australia.

Currently there is limited understanding at State and Federal level of the intelligence that exists within the WHOCCs of Australia that should be drawn upon more.

### CASE STUDY

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) was created in 1987 under the Tobacco Act as the world's first health promotion foundation. It produces and supports public health campaigns to create a healthier Victoria by enabling people to control and improve their own health, providing expertise and insights to government.

VicHealth's Action Agenda for Health Promotion focuses on five strategic imperatives: promoting healthy eating and physical activity, preventing tobacco use and harm from alcohol, and improving mental wellbeing. VicHealth was designated a WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promotion in 2014, and re-designated in 2018, to provide support to WHO by:

- Providing technical support to strengthen leadership and build system capability
- Supporting member states in the Western Pacific Region, including staff mentoring programs and programme development activities for health promotion organisations.
- Hosting international delegations, forging new partnerships in health and sharing information and resources.

VicHealth works with many countries across the Western Pacific Region, including Korea, Vietnam, Singapore and Thailand. VicHealth is also part of an international alliance with other countries that have established or are in the process of establishing health promotion foundations, many based on the VicHealth model. This International Network of Health Promotion Foundations (INHPF) strengthens the work of existing foundations and supports new ones, sharing resources and expertise to build local capacity.

**"We are looking forward to continuing to collaborate and work alongside the Australian Network of WHOCC as we build back better and fairer following the COVID-19 pandemic."**

### CASE STUDY

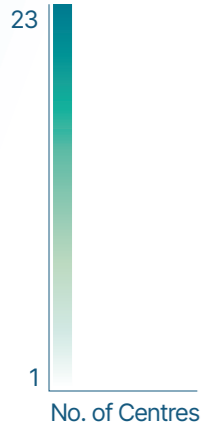
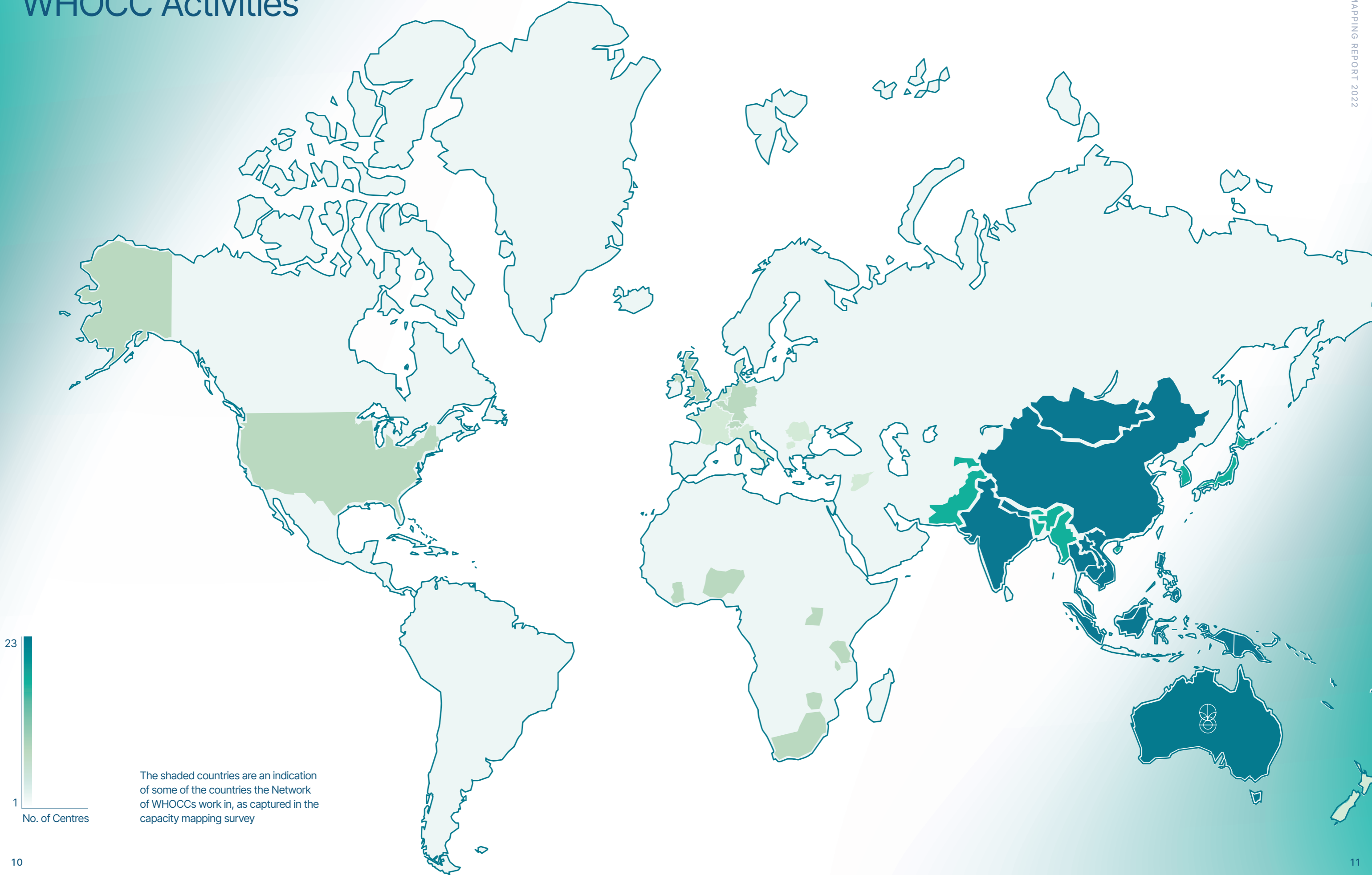
Hosted at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), the WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development (WHOCC UTS) is one of only two nursing and midwifery 'institutions of excellence' in Australia formally recognised by WHO as part of its global network of collaborating centres in nursing and midwifery.

It was first designated as a collaborating centre in 2008 and supports WHO to build capacity and strengthen health systems and the health workforce globally, but especially in the South Pacific region. UTS is internationally recognised for its research, education and policy development skills. It has close relationships and a strong network with partners across the Pacific region, with collaboration in 37 countries including 22 in the Pacific region. The centre applied to be a WHOCC at the request of 15 ministries in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in 2004.

Since 2022, the WHOCC UTS has served as Secretariat for the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centers for Nursing & Midwifery. In 2008 it was named the Secretariat of the South Pacific Chief Nursing Officers Alliance (SPCNOA).

The WHOCC UTS has since contributed to more than 50 projects in 25 countries working towards Universal Health Coverage. In addition to Nursing, Midwifery and Maternal health, the WHOCC UTS also works in Health Systems Strengthening, Human Resources for Health, Universal Health Coverage, Health Promotion and Education, Emergency Preparedness, Health Education, and many other areas of public health.

# Heatmap of WHOCC Activities

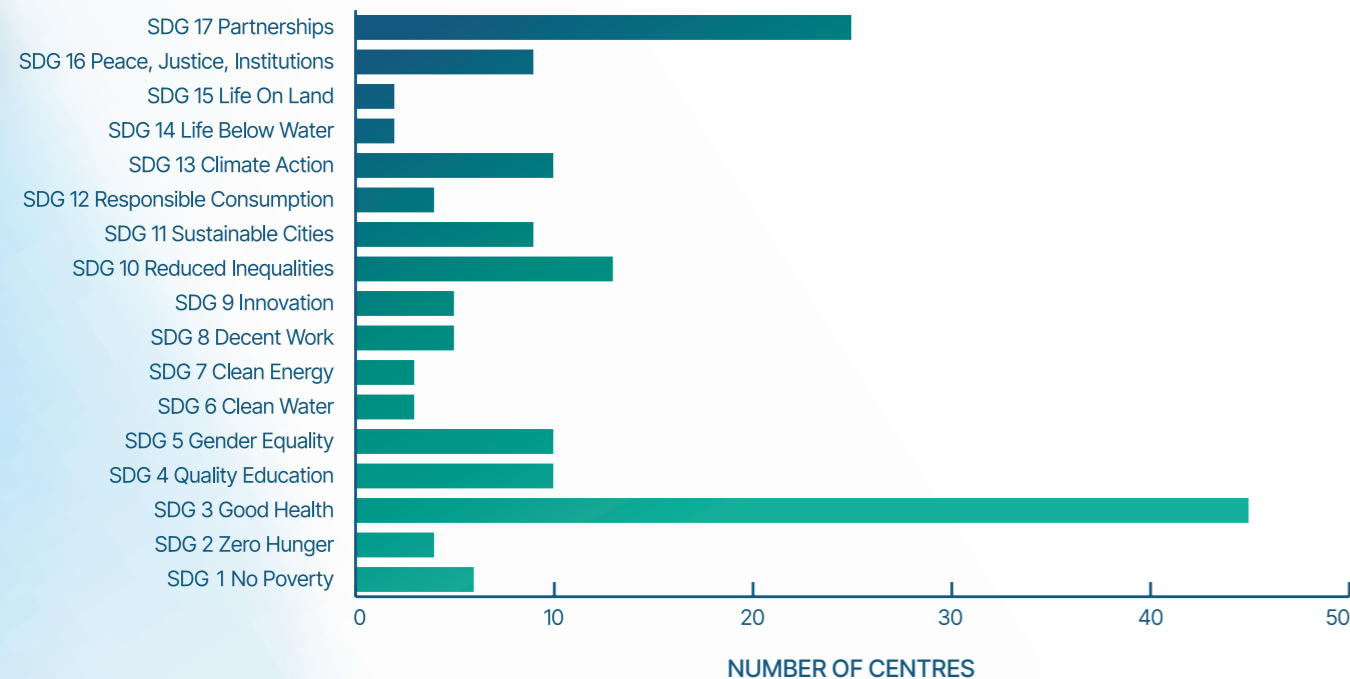


The shaded countries are an indication of some of the countries the Network of WHOCCs work in, as captured in the capacity mapping survey

# Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a blueprint adopted by all UN member states. As such, promoting and achieving the 17 SDGs is also one of the core themes of the Australian WHOCCs' work.

The broad range of work undertaken by the different Centres means that WHOCC Network members contributed to all 17 SDGs, with many Centres working in multiple different SDG areas. All WHOCCs contributed to Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), 25% contributed to Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), and around 10% contributed to Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality).



## CASE STUDY

Designated as a WHOCC in 2014, the WHO Collaborating Centre for Strengthening Rehabilitation Capacity in Health Systems, hosted by the University of Sydney, contributes to a strategic push by the WHO to strengthen capacity in rehabilitation and disability services within health systems in the Western Pacific region.

This is achieved by;

1. Providing support to the WHO by generating and disseminating evidence on strengthening rehabilitation in health systems.
2. Supporting the WHO in building workforce capacity in rehabilitation training in educational institutions.
3. Supporting the WHO in providing technical support and training in ICF for rehabilitation, disability and health personnel.

The Centre's four-year work plan supports implementation of the Western Pacific Regional Framework on Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation 2030: A Call for Action by bringing together expertise from a range of disciplines and research areas to actively contribute to the challenges for ensuring rehabilitation is available to all who need it. It has many years of achievements in capacity building and contributing to research and evidence in rehabilitation and long-term care service provision.

### Current and recent projects include:

- Working with Pacific Disability Forum to adapt the Person-Centered Emergency Preparedness Planning Resource for COVID-19, with support from WHO Western Pacific Region. People with disability are more likely to die from the COVID-19.
- Development of National Rehabilitation Strategic Plan in Mongolia (2019, ongoing)
- Systematic Assessment of Rehabilitation Situation in Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Marshall Islands (2020)
- Community Based Inclusion - The Pacific Way, Everyday Empowerment Stories (2018)

**"We hope the Australia Network of WHOCC can help us to collaborate with other WHOCCs in Australia who focus on health systems strengthening."**



# Work of the Australian WHOCC Network

## The work of the Australian WHOCC Network is based on its three strategic objectives:

1. Raise the profile and influence of the WHOCCs with WHO and the global health sector in Australia and provide evidence-based advice to influence policy and decision-making.
2. Knowledge sharing: Grow the capacity of the Australian WHOCCs in their endeavours to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals.
3. Connecting: Provide a platform to bring together Australian WHOCCs to network and collaborate.

## Network Activities

The Australian WHOCC Network engages in regular activities to strengthen information exchange and technical cooperation between WHOCCs, the WHO and government, including:

- Regularly communicating with Victoria and other state Department of Health, and other government departments (DFAT and Federal DoH)
- Regularly communicating with WHO (Geneva and regional)
- Distributing a quarterly newsletter/e-zine to improve information exchange and cooperation between WHOCCs
- Producing articles and videos to showcase the work of the WHOCCs
- Organising webinars and professional development opportunities for WHOCCs
- Hosting an annual forum.

The network is also developing its website and collecting and sharing more comprehensive information about the work of its member organisations. For example, it has recently completed a capacity scoping report to better understand the activities and capabilities of the Australian network; forming the basis for data in this report.

The network partnered with the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) to initiate a joint project across all the Australian WHOCCs on Digital Health, that successfully brought together a wealth of diverse expertise within the different WHOCCs. It hosted a Digital Health Roundtable event on 1st September 2022 to share expertise and plan future collaboration with regional partners to enhance capacity in the digital health space.

The Australian Network of WHOCCs plans to promote further cooperation around key themes, including:

- Health security (including microbial resistance)
- NCDs and ageing
- Health System Strengthening
- Climate change, the environment and health
- Health for all

## Highlighting Global Health Partnerships

As part of its role strengthening linkages and cooperation between WHOCCs, WHO and government, the Australian Network of WHOCCs regularly participates in regional and global health meetings, workshops and other activities. Recent events included:

- WHO Western Pacific Region Partners' Forum (July 2021)<sup>1</sup>.
- World Health Day 2022 - In partnership with the Australian Global Health Alliance, Climate and Health Alliance, Melbourne Climate Futures, and Monash Sustainable Development Institute, the Australian Network of WHOCCs organised an expert panel on this year's theme: Our Planet, Our Health.
- International Women's Day (March 2021), several WHOCC directors within the Australian WHOCC network were showcased in the Australian Global Health Alliance's Twitter campaign - Global Health Voices Series
- Digital Health and AI Roundtable Discussion (September 2022) with WHOCCs, global health institutions, WHO and Victorian State Government. This event brought together experts and newcomers to educate, share initiatives and collaborate and network with other WHOCCs, with a focus on identifying practical solutions to common barriers faced in implementing digital health and AI initiatives.

### CASE STUDY

**The significance of the injury problem worldwide, and specifically in developing countries, is staggering. There are an estimated 5.2 million injury deaths worldwide every year - in other words, over 14,000 people die of injury every day and many more suffer lifelong impairments as a result of serious injury.**

Since 2005, the WHO Collaborating Centre for Injury and Violence Prevention, hosted by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), has been contributing to the WHO's call to action to address the global burden of injury. In 2020, the centre was given Global WHOCC status, extending the reach of its activity and impact.

Together with partners including the Monash Alfred Injury Network (MAIN) and the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM), the centre's research and capacity building contributes to practical solutions for achieving safe, sustainable and resilient communities. Their work supports the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 3 Good Health and Well Being (including SDG 3.6 for road safety) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

MUARC has collaborative research partnerships both in Australia and across the globe, with a focus on capacity building in Lower and Middle-income countries (LMIC). The Centre also cooperates with a broad range of private sector partners including automotive, energy, and transport sectors to research and implement evidence-based injury prevention measures.

MUARC was announced as the new home of the National Road Safety Partnership Program (NRSPP) in September 2020.

MUARC is home to the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit, which has been analysing, interpreting and disseminating Victorian data on injury deaths, hospital admissions and emergency department presentations across the state, nationally and internationally for more than 30 years.

<sup>1</sup>Second WHO Western Pacific Region Partners' Forum: meeting report, Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/348284>



# Acknowledgements

With thanks and input from:

Australian WHOCC Network Executive 2021/2022:

**Professor Susan Sawyer - Co-Chair**  
(WHO CC for Adolescent Health)

**Professor Julian Gold - Co-Chair**  
(WHO CC for Capacity Building on HIV and STI Care, Treatment and Support)

**Dr Carlyn Muir**  
(WHO CC for Violence and Injury Prevention)

**Hayley Jones**  
(WHO CC for Law & Noncommunicable Disease)

**Professor Maxine Whitaker**  
(WHO CC for Vector Borne Diseases and Neglected Tropical Diseases)

**Dr. Philippa Hetzel**  
(WHO CC for Diagnostics and Laboratory Support for HIV/AIDS and Other Blood-borne Infections)

**Sharon Brabon**  
(WHO CC for Children's Health and the Environment)

**Dr. Selina Namchee Lo**  
(Executive Director, Australian Global Health Alliance)

All WHOCCs in Australia for their survey responses and input into the formation of this report

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The Australian Global Health Alliance team for their support and advice

The Victorian Government Department of Health, International Health Department for their sponsorship of the Australian Network of WHOCCs



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