Research making a difference

The significant burden of mental disorders and substance use disorders and a passion for innovative solutions has driven our growing and diverse research program. We need innovative prevention and treatment responses if we are to alleviate the burden. Over 40 diverse and innovative research projects are underway in 2015. These projects span collaborations across the world.

Our passion and commitment to address the burden has been reinforced by the endorsement of our Executive Advisory Board and senior staff in planning and growth. If we are to address the significant health burden we need a thriving and rigorous research agenda that can lead innovations in policy, prevention and treatment. We are partnered with academics across the globe and with government to achieve these aims.

A year of highlights

The Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS) has continued to conduct the highest quality research in order get the best possible outcomes for people living with mental disorders and substance use disorders. Our researchers have had success in securing funding from a diverse range of funders. As shown by the projects outlined in this report our diverse program is committed to finding new causes, new prevention and new treatment. We value true collaboration with clinicians and consumers as the ultimate users of our research. We are also passionate about translating the research into policy and practice. We seek new ways to get the evidence into improved policy, practice and health care delivery.

Professor Maree Teesson, Director of CREMS

Professor Kevin Gournay, Chair of the CREMS Executive Advisory Board
...our diverse program is committed to finding new causes, new prevention and new treatment. We are also passionate about translating the research into policy and practice.

Ms Leonie Manns, Chair of the CREMS Executive Advisory Board

The outputs of our research are published in the leading journals in the world. Importantly, this research is influential in driving ideas in mainstream media, online media, clinical guidelines and policy papers. We have also developed many productive collaborations with state and national government. We strive to have a focus on people and their health and our strong links with those with lived experience is critical in keeping that focus. Our links with industry are growing and that will be an area of future development.

People are the lifeblood of a thriving research centre and we have been very fortunate to attract passionate research staff, PhD students and academics to the centre. Mentoring and building the next generation of researchers is at the heart of our centre.

This year saw considerable growth in research funding and people support with significant fellowship success. The diversity of projects and funding sources is also growing strongly.

Thanks

The past and future success of the centre reflects the commitment of the Executive Advisory Board, senior leadership of CREMS, A/Profs Katherine Mills, Tim Slade, Frances Kay-Lambkin and Drs Nicola Newton and Cath Chapman, and our staff. Thanks and acknowledgement to the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) and the University of New South Wales, where the centre is located.

This annual report is a showcase of projects and people addressing some of the greatest public health challenges. Together we can build a better future for people with mental disorders and substance use.
The CREMS aims to generate new research to increase the knowledge base regarding the effective prevention and treatment of comorbid mental and substance use disorders via three research streams.
CREMS SNAPSHOT

TOTAL INCOME
$A 14,905,007

- Category 1 funding: $11,667,415
- Category 2 funding: $2,215,139
- Category 3 funding: $1,022,453

CREMS MEMBERS

- Chief investigators
- Associate investigators
- Senior research fellows
- Research fellows
- Postdoctoral research fellows
- PhD students
- Research psychologists
- Research officers
- Associate members
- Administrative staff
PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

32,763 people engaged through:

- Website: 14,133
- 123 National presentations: 12,300
- 5 Workshops: 4,400
- 4 Newsletters: 850
- 4 Int'l presentations: 600
- 12 Webinars: 480

FUTURE RESEARCH LEADERS TRAINED

- Postgraduate students
- Postdoctoral researchers
PUBLICATIONS

- **195** Peer-reviewed publications
- **1,583** Citations
- **41** Ongoing projects
- **14** Books
- **12** Systematic reviews
- **8** Reports

PEER-REVIEWED PAPERS:
KEY WORDS
Our people
Our research
Member Organisations

Four Australian Universities:
- University of New South Wales
- University of Newcastle
- University of Sydney
- Macquarie University

Three International Universities:
- University of Birmingham
- Northwestern University
- Medical University of South Carolina

Affiliated Organisations

- Phoenix Australia
- Black Dog Institute
- Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research
- Community Mental Health Drug & Alcohol Research Network
- Headspace: Australia’s Youth Mental Health Foundation
- Hunter Institute of Mental Health
- Institute of Health & Biomedical Innovation
- National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre
- Northern Sydney Drug & Alcohol Service
- Queensland University of Technology
- Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
- The Mental Health Services
- University of Wollongong

Governance Structure

Executive Advisory Board
The CREMS is led by Prof Maree Teesson (Director) and Prof Amanda Baker (Co-Director), and overseen by an Executive Advisory Board. The Board comprises all 10 CREMS Chief Investigators (see ‘Our People’) and is chaired by Prof Kevin Gournay (Kings College, London) and Ms Leonie Manns (Consumer Advocate). The Board makes decisions regarding the prioritisation and implementation of research and the administration of funds and ensures that the key objectives of the CREMS are being met. A/Prof Katherine Mills is the CREMS Program Director, responsible for coordinating activities and making everyday operational decisions.

Senior Leadership Advisory Group
The Senior Leadership Advisory Group provides leadership and support for the strategic development of the CREMS and oversees the operation of the Centre. Members are Prof Maree Teesson, A/Profs Katherine Mills, Tim Slade, and Frances Kay-Lambkin, Drs Cath Chapman and Nicola Newton.

Post Doctoral Researchers
Higher Degree Research Students
Research Staff
WHO WE ARE

We are the Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS), funded by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). We bring together the largest concentration of nationally and internationally recognised researchers that aim to prevent and treat comorbid mental health and substance use disorders.

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Our Cutting-Edge Research

**Prevention**

To reduce the occurrence and cost of mental health and substance use disorders, preventative interventions need to begin early, before the problems begin to cause disability, and vocational, educational and social harm.

Our research in this area has been on developing and evaluating universal internet-based programs to prevent substance use, mental health disorders, and related harms in adolescents.

**Treatment**

Our treatment research aims to develop and evaluate the efficacy of novel interventions to treat mental health and substance use disorders in isolation as well as their combination.

Our research has focused on the testing of psychotherapies, pharmacotherapies and e-health interventions for individuals who have both a substance use disorder and the most common mental disorders including anxiety, depressive and psychotic disorders.

**Epidemiology**

Our epidemiology stream aims to carry out cross-sectional and longitudinal epidemiological studies that examine the prevalence, correlates and natural history of mental health and substance use disorders. We also aim to carry out studies to refine and improve the ways in which disorders are diagnosed and classified.

Our research has used innovative data analytic techniques to undertake secondary analysis of existing epidemiological data sets.

**Translation**

The CREMS aims to translate research findings across all three streams of research. Our research is disseminated via four main mechanisms:

1. Publications and presentations for scientific audiences;
2. Workshops and training for professionals working in substance use, mental health and related fields;
3. The development of evidence-based resources and online portals for the public and professionals; and
4. Contributions to public policy.
Chief Investigators
Prof Maree Teesson, UNSW
Prof Amanda Baker, University of Newcastle
A/Prof Katherine Mills, UNSW
A/Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin, UNSW & University of Newcastle
Prof Paul Haber, University of Sydney,
A/Prof Andrew Baillie, Macquarie University
Prof Helen Christensen, UNSW
Prof Max Birchwood, University of Birmingham
Prof Bonnie Spring, Northwestern University
Prof Kathleen Brady, Medical University of South Carolina

Associate Investigators
Ms Leonie Manns, Consumer Advocate
Mr Trevor Hazell, Hunter Institute of Mental Health
Prof Robyn Richmond, UNSW
Dr Cath Chapman, UNSW
A/Prof Tim Slade, UNSW
Prof Brian Kelly, University of Newcastle
Dr Brian Hitsman, Northwestern University
Dr Leanne Hides, QLD University of Technology
Dr Pete Kelly, University of Wollongong
Ms Marion Downey, UNSW
Prof Michael Farrell, UNSW
Dr Glenys Dore, Northern Sydney Drug & Alcohol Service

Senior Research Fellows
Dr Natacha Carragher, UNSW
Dr Kerry Inder, University of Newcastle
Dr Sharlene Kaye, UNSW
Dr Nicola Newton, UNSW
Dr Joanne Ross, UNSW
Dr Wendy Swift, UNSW

Research Fellows
Dr Emma Barrett, UNSW
Dr Ali Beck, University of Newcastle
Dr Christina Marel, UNSW
Dr Lexine Stapinski, UNSW
Dr Matthew Sunderland, UNSW

Postdoctoral Research Fellows
Dr Erica Crome, Macquarie University
Dr Tonelle Handley, UNSW
Dr Rosemary Kingston, UNSW
Dr Louise Mewton, UNSW
Dr Kristen Morley, University of Sydney
Dr Louise Thornton, UNSW
Doctoral Candidates

Ms Louise Birrell, UNSW
Ms Katrina Champion, UNSW
Mr Mark Deady, UNSW
Ms Miriam Forbes, Macquarie University
Ms Katrina Hamall, University of Newcastle
Ms Erin Kelly, UNSW
Mr Warren Logge, Macquarie University
Ms Sonja Memedovic, UNSW
Ms Katrina Prior, UNSW
Ms Mikki Subotic, Macquarie University
Ms Zoe Tonks, UNSW
Ms Kris Tulloch, Macquarie University
Ms Kathryn Woodcock, UNSW

Research Psychologists

Ms Joanne Cassar, UNSW
Ms Kellie Cathcart, University of Newcastle
Ms Philippa Ewer, UNSW
Mr Jonathan Gaston, Macquarie University
Ms Jenny Geddes, University of Newcastle
Dr Sally Hunt, University of Newcastle
Ms Sarah Masters, UNSW
Ms Julia Rosenfeld, UNSW
Dr Alyna Turner, University of Newcastle

Research Officers

Ms Ivana Kihas, UNSW
Ms Siobhan Lawler, UNSW
Ms Natasha Nair, UNSW
Ms Nina Poccuca, QLD University of Technology
Mr Bill Reda, UNSW
Ms Maxine Robinson, UNSW
Mr Brad Shaw, UNSW
Ms Nina Te Pas, Curtin University
Ms Miriam Wyzenbeek, UNSW

Associate Members

Prof Sudie Back, Medical University of South Carolina
A/Prof Lucy Burns, UNSW
Dr Danielle Florida, UNSW
Assistant Prof Julianne Hellmuth, Medical University of South Carolina
Prof Michelle Moulds, UNSW
Ms Jaelea Skehan, Hunter Institute of Mental health

Administrative Staff

Ms Jasmin Bartlett, UNSW
Mr Christopher Pruze, UNSW
Ms Sandi Steep, UNSW
In 2015 the Epidemiology stream of CREMS continued to conduct research examining the prevalence, impact and classification of mental and substance use disorders.

Highlights of manuscripts published in 2015 include: a study showing that early onset anxiety disorders are associated with an earlier subsequent initiation of alcohol use (Ms Louise Birrell); a study demonstrating that the median time between the onset of an alcohol use disorder and first treatment contact with a health professional in Australia is 18 years (Dr Cath Chapman); an analysis showing that the prevalence of social anxiety continues to remain high in the general population with few accessing help for their anxiety (Dr Erica Crome); and a comprehensive review of current and future directions in the diagnosis and classification of mental disorders (Dr Natacha Carragher).

New collaborations were formed with researchers in the United States (A/Prof Katherine Keyes) that resulted in a study examining the narrowing gender gap in alcohol and cannabis use over time. New collaborations were also formed with researchers in Western Australia (A/Prof David Lawrence) to expand the scope of psychiatric epidemiological research carried out by the Epidemiology stream of CREMS into the area of child and adolescent mental health.

In recognition of the quality and impact of the research in the Epidemiology stream a number of awards and commendations were presented to members of the Epidemiology stream of CREMS. Dr Cath Chapman and A/Prof Tim Slade were awarded the NSW Mental Health Commission Mental Health Matters research and evaluation award for research on the epidemiology of co-occurring mental and substance use disorders in young Australians. Dr Louise Mewton was highly commended by TheMHS for her research on the classification of substance use disorders in young adults.
Dr Matt Sunderland’s project examining age-related bias in the diagnosis of depression concluded in 2015 with the outcomes demonstrating that levels of bias in the reporting of depression symptoms between older and younger adults were minimal. Matt is continuing to explore unresolved issues in the diagnosis and measurement of mental and substance use disorders through his fellowship. Dr Louise Mewton’s pilot work on the use of “brain games” to prevent mental disorders concluded but Louise was funded through a Rotary fellowship to continue this important work.

As existing projects finished up the Epidemiology stream was successful in securing new project grant funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council for a five-year project exploring the emergence and progression of symptoms of alcohol use disorder. Using an existing cohort of 18 year-old Australians this project will track the course of alcohol use disorders as they emerge over this critical life stage. This project will commence in 2016.

New and upcoming research areas for the Epidemiology stream include an exploration of the impact of social (friendship) networks on the initiation and emergence of drinking behaviours in adolescents; more detailed and sophisticated analyses of existing data to provide up-to-date information about changing trends in alcohol and drug use over time; and efforts to standardise the measurement of mental and substance use disorders to assist clinicians in the measurement of psychopathology and aid comparison across studies.

The median time between onset of an alcohol use disorder and first contact with a health professional in Australia is 18 years.
PREVENTION

Effective prevention of substance use and mental ill health is critical to delay first onset, halt the development of disorder, and prevent the onset of co-occurring disorders. 2015 was a busy year for the prevention stream with a number of key projects being completed and the commencement of exciting new projects.

The NHMRC funded Climate Schools and Preventure (CAP) study examining the effects of combined universal and selective prevention was completed with excellent retention over 36 months.

Results from this landmark trial were published in leading psychiatry journals and were disseminated at the NDARC symposium and Society for Mental Health Research (SMHR) annual conference. The NHMRC funded Climate Schools Combined (CSC) study and the Climate Schools Interactive (CSI) study, moved into their third year with long-term follow-up assessments implemented in schools.

In 2015, many of the prevention stream staff were recognised for their academic excellence through fellowships and awards. Dr Lexine Stapinski received the Early Career Research Award for Innovation from TheMHS Learning Network. PhD student Ms Louise Birrell was presented the Best Oral Presentation Award, at the SMHR Annual Conference and the NDARC Jennifer McLaren Award for Outstanding Research Achievement and Ms Katrina Champion was awarded 2015 PhD Candidate Award, Australian Rotary Health and Alliance for the Prevention of Mental Disorders. Dr Lexine Stapinski and myself were also awarded Early Career Research Fellowships from SMHR that will commence in 2016.

Our most significant highlight this year was the promotion of the Positive Choices online portal for drug prevention, which was officially launched in December 2015 by the Prime Minister and Minister for Rural Health as part of the government’s drug and alcohol prevention strategy for schools. Due to its success, funding for this project has been secured for an additional four years and a new project “Cracks in The Ice”, was funded to improve access to evidence-based information on methamphetamine.
TREATMENT

Our research examining innovative treatments for mental and substance use disorders continued to expand in 2015 with examination of a variety of novel treatment approaches (including face-to-face psychotherapies, pharmacotherapies, and e-health interventions). These interventions aim to address a range of mental and substance use disorders at various stages of disorder development (i.e., from early intervention to treatment of chronic conditions), and with varying levels of intensity (i.e., brief versus more intensive interventions).

Several interventions under investigation are targeted toward improving the physical health of individuals with mental and/or substance use disorders, in an effort to reduce the considerable morbidity and premature mortality associated with these conditions.

We have also continued to support clinician driven research through collaborative projects and our partnership with the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network Mentoring Program.

Some of the many highlights of this year include the completion of several large projects, including the landmark NHMRC funded 11-year follow-up of the Australian Treatment Outcomes Study (a large prospective longitudinal study of treatment outcomes for heroin dependence), a US NIH/NIDA funded trial led by Prof Kathleen Brady and colleagues at MUSC, examining the efficacy of buspirone in the treatment of marijuana dependence, and the DEAL Project, led by Dr Mark Deady as part of his PhD, which examined the efficacy of an online intervention for comorbid depression and alcohol use among young people.
Several exciting new projects commenced including the development and evaluation of MyHealthPA, a mobile-based intervention to reduce cardiovascular risk among people with mental disorder, led by Dr Louise Thornton as part of her UNSW Vice Chancellors Postdoctoral Fellowship; and an examination of the neurobehavioural basis of baclofen in the treatment of alcohol dependence, led by Dr Kirsten Morley with funding from the Brain and Mind Research Institute.

Our team was also successful in obtaining several more grants and fellowships from NHMRC, SMHR, the Australian Government Department of Health and other funding bodies that will commence in 2016. Prof Paul Haber will lead an international research team to conduct an NHMRC funded double-blind randomised controlled trial examining the clinical and cost effectiveness of topiramate in the treatment of alcohol dependence using a genetically based personalised approach; Dr Emma Barrett was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship which she will undertake at MUSC to further her work in the area of adolescent trauma and substance use; Dr Christina Marel was awarded an SMHR Fellowship to further her work examining trajectories of heroin dependence and the impact of treatment, and secured further funding from the AGDoH to disseminate and develop and online training program to accompany the national comorbidity guidelines.

We have also continued to support clinician driven research through collaborative projects and our partnership with the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network Mentoring Program.
TRANSLATION

Although the theme of “translation” runs through each of the Epidemiology, Prevention, and Treatment Streams of CREMS, translation and implementation science has emerged as a new and important facet of both the work we are doing within CREMS, and the strategic priorities of our major funding bodies and industry partners. Thus, in 2015, the translation of evidence-based treatments into practical resources for clinicians, consumers and policy makers has been a major focus. These activities have included the publication of clinical guidelines, treatment manuals and patient workbooks, reviews commissioned by government to inform policy and practice, and the development of online portals to improve access to effective treatments and the evidence-base.

In 2015, we were awarded some major funding by State and Federal Health Departments in support of our translational efforts. Dr Christina Mareis led the update and revision of the Australian Government Department of Health (AGDoH) National Comorbidity Guidelines. This will be the second edition of these critically important guidelines, which will be launched in 2016.

We were successful in receiving specific funding to make our evidence-based e-Health treatments available to clinicians and consumers outside of our treatment trials. For the first time, NSW Health funded A/Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin, Prof Maree Teesson, A/Prof Katherine Mills, Dr Sally Hunt, and Dr Louise Thornton to create an online tool that will serve as a virtual bridge between mental health and alcohol/other drug service clinicians in NSW, providing them with seamless access to our SHADE, DEAL, and Healthy Lifestyles evidence-based treatment programs. In addition, this tool will also provide an interface for the general community (independently of their engagement with treatment services) to access these programs to support their own mental health and wellbeing efforts. We are extremely excited about the potential of this tool, called eCllPSE, to increase the capacity of services to provide evidence-based comorbidity treatments, and in doing so, to break down the silos in which mental health and alcohol/other drug use services have traditionally operated. For the first time, the general community will also have open access to these important treatments, facilitating treatment engagement for people who have also traditionally found it hard to access support for their concerns. In typical CREMS fashion, we will be building careful research around the impact of eCllPSE on the communities and services engaging with the tool, and look forward to updating you next year on our success!

There are more opportunities increasingly available for this type of work and research in Australia and internationally, and CREMS is ideally placed to capitalise on these, and again lead the way in making our research outcomes count for people experiencing the challenges of comorbidity and those who support them.

Associate Professor Frances Kay-Lambkin, Director of Translation Research
The 2015 National CREMS Colloquium was held in conjunction with The Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS) on Tuesday 25th August at the National Convention Centre Canberra. It was jointly convened by Dr Matt Sunderland and Dr Erica Crome.

Dr Matt Sunderland

Dr Erica Crome

The colloquium focused on the theme of innovative and novel treatments for comorbid mental and substance use disorders. Some of Australia’s leading comorbidity researchers presented their latest findings in three sessions dedicated to the treatment of 'Psychosis and Substance Use', 'Depression and Substance Use', and 'Trauma and Substance Use'.

Presentations ranged from an overview by A/Prof Rebecca McKetin on short and long term management of psychosis in people who use methamphetamine, to the service provider perspectives on treating trauma and substance use in young people by Dr Browyn Milne and Ms Popi Zappia. A key theme that emerged across the eight presentations was that mental and substance use disorders must be treated simultaneously if substantial gains in patient care are to be made. Importantly, the barriers in the health care system that prevent the simultaneous treatment of mental and substance use disorders must be broken down through a greater awareness of how these disorders interact and how novel multi-component treatments can address concerns across several domains. This point was echoed by audience members in the many open discussions that occurred during time set aside after each presentation.

The Colloquium provided junior research staff and students from CREMS with the opportunity to present their research in the e-poster sessions. A total of fifteen e-posters were presented on dedicated screens throughout the day on topics including: the causal relationships between mood, anxiety, and sexual dysfunction over time, the effectiveness of personality-targeted prevention programs in school-aged children, and the treatment of co-occurring social anxiety and alcohol use disorder. The 2015 CREMS Best e-Poster award was given to Mr Brad Shaw who provided the baseline characteristics of the Climate Schools Combined study in a highly visual manner.

The Colloquium attracted a total of 60 attendees from a variety of organisations, including psychiatrists, consumer advocates, health service providers, mental health nurses, academic researchers, and students. A brief post-event survey indicated that the median rating for overall satisfaction was “completely satisfied” and median scores for questions regarding relevance, expectations, and likelihood of implementing information from the colloquium in their work as “agree” or “completely agree”.

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The Australian Treatment Outcome Study

The Australian Treatment Outcome Study (ATOS) is a landmark Australian NHMRC funded cohort study examining long-term outcomes of heroin dependence. The 11-year follow-up commenced in 2012, making it one of the longest and most comprehensive prospective studies of heroin users internationally. The study was completed in 2014 and in 2015 findings were presented at a number of national and international meetings including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Scientific Consultation on Prevention of Drug Use and Treatment of Drug Use Disorders, in Vienna. The findings have the potential to substantially improve mental and physical health outcomes for heroin users.

Binge drinking and the adolescent frontal lobe

Adolescence is a critical period for brain development, with active rewiring of circuitry that is necessary in successful development of “adult” adaptive patterns of behaviour. Binge drinking practices may interfere with the development of these important circuits, promoting continued impulsive behaviour, alcohol abuse and risk of alcohol dependence. The current study, funded through UNSW, aims to examine, for the first time, the effect of binge drinking on crucial development of connectivity in relation to cognition, among adolescents.

The Brain Games: Using brain training to prevent adolescent mental illness

Cognitive training exercises that focus on improving executive functioning have been shown to reduce symptoms related to several mental health and substance use problems. However, it is not yet clear whether such training can also prevent the onset of these problems. This fellowship, funded through Australian Rotary Health, aims to develop and test an exciting and innovative personality-targeted program based on cognitive training tasks (The Brain Games) to prevent the onset of a range of mental health and substance use problems in high risk youth.

Brief telephone interventions for reducing alcohol use harms in young people accessing emergency departments

Nationally, 10,000 young Australians present to emergency departments with alcohol-related injuries and illnesses each month. Much of this adversity could be prevented if more young people had access to effective brief interventions for alcohol use. Telephone-delivered brief interventions provide an innovative, youth friendly and accessible way of delivering treatment. This is the first clinical trial to compare the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of telephone-delivered brief interventions for reducing alcohol use and related harm in young people.
Bullying, substance use and mental health

This project, funded through UNSW (PhD Scholarship), examines school bullying focusing on its associations with substance use and mental health. It aims to assess the effectiveness of a targeted intervention on bullying involvement using data from the Preventure component of the Climate and Prevention (CAP) study. It is one of the first studies to assess the impact of a targeted substance use prevention program on bullying.

Buspirone treatment for marijuana dependence

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, yet few clinical trials have evaluated pharmacotherapy treatments for marijuana dependence. This study, funded by NIH/NIDA in the U.S.A, evaluated the efficacy of buspirone for reducing marijuana use in marijuana-dependent adults. The project was led by a team at the Medical University of South Carolina, and was completed in 2015.

The CAP Study – Combining effective universal and targeted approaches to drug prevention

The CAP (Climate and Preventure) study is a landmark NHMRC funded trial of a combined universal and selective approach to preventing substance use and related harms in adolescents. Twenty-six schools and 2,190 participants (aged 13-14) were recruited to the study in 2012 and followed up through to the end of 2015. The trial represents a world-first in the prevention of substance use among adolescents and an exciting collaboration with Professor Patricia Conrod from the University of Montreal.

The Climate Schools Combined (CSC) study: Internet-based prevention for anxiety, depression and substance use in young Australians

The Climate Schools Combined (CSC) study is an NHMRC funded trial which evaluates an online combined prevention approach for substance use, depression and anxiety. Over 6,000 students from 71 schools across NSW, QLD and WA were recruited to the study in 2014. Interventions were delivered in 2014 and 2015 and students are being followed up until the end of 2016. The CSC Study is the first trial, internationally, to develop an integrative online prevention model for mental health and substance use problems among adolescents.

Combining startle reflex modulation with serious gaming technologies to determine engagement and impact on depression and binge drinking in young people: The SHADoW Study

This trial, funded by the Hunter Medical Research Institute, seeks to capitalise on the popularity of gaming among young people to better engage this population in conversations about their current mood and binge drinking behaviours. The project team includes computer designers and programmers, neuroscientists and behavioural researchers and aims to trial a serious game which targets depression and binge drinking in young people (SHADoW).

Cracks in the Ice: Development of an online toolkit to provide trusted evidence-based information about crystal methamphetamine (‘ice’) for the Australian Community.

As part of a co-ordinated response to the National Ice Tack Force Report, The Australian Government Department of Health funded CREMS to develop Cracks in the Ice, an online toolkit which aims to improve access to evidence-based information, online resources and support around crystal methamphetamine (‘ice’) for the Australian community. Development began in July 2015 and is being informed by health professionals, experts, family members and consumers.
The CSI (Climate Schools Interactive) study: A cluster randomised controlled trial of the internet-based Climate Schools: Ecstasy & Emerging Drugs Module

Funded through the NHMRC (Postgraduate Research Scholarship), the CSI (Climate Schools Interactive) Study evaluated the Climate Schools: Ecstasy & Emerging Drugs module, an online school-based prevention program designed to educate adolescents about the harms associated with illicit drug use. The program is being trialled among Year 10 students in 2014 to 2016 through a cluster randomised controlled trial. This study is the first trial, internationally, of an internet-based prevention program dedicated specifically to the prevention of ecstasy and new psychoactive substance use.

The Deal Project: an online intervention for comorbid depression and alcohol use in young people

This project, funded through UNSW (PhD Scholarship), aimed to develop and evaluate the first online intervention aimed to specifically treat depression and alcohol use in young adults - the DEAL Program. A randomised controlled trial was conducted in 2014/2015 among young people aged 18-25 who were currently depressed and using alcohol to cope. The project was completed in 2015 and results are currently being evaluated and prepared for publication.

Develop and pilot online comorbidity tools to improve treatment engagement and effectiveness in mental health and substance use problems: eClipse

Funded in 2015 by the NSW Department of Health, this project aims to improve service delivery for co-occurring mental health and substance use problems by developing and evaluating a number of online assessment and treatment tools for a range of comorbidities. The project aims to improve engagement with effective treatments among service providers across NSW by increasing access to online evidence-informed treatments.

Development and evaluation of a mobile-delivered substance use intervention for people with mental disorders

People with mental disorders die up to 20 years earlier than the general population. Cardio-vascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of this excess mortality. This fellowship, funded through UNSW, aims to develop and evaluate the first mobile-based program for CVD risk reduction for people with mental disorders, MyHealthPA. It will allow users to track their smoking, alcohol use, fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity and mood on their smartphone as well as set goals and track progress, and is tailored to the unique needs of people with mental disorders. The project represents a world-first in e-health applications for people with mental disorders.

Development and population-based validation of hierarchical adaptive mental health screeners

Although there is a high burden of mental illness in Australia, most people with mental health problems do not seek help. A major reason for this unmet need is a lack of precise and systematic methods for identifying mental health problems in the community. Funded by the NHMRC, this project will develop and validate several rapid assessment toolkits using advanced statistical techniques to select optimal items for short forms as well as computerised adaptive testing. Brief, precise screening tools are critical to provide clearer pathways for people with mental health problems to access online and primary care services.
Diagnosing major depression in older Australian adults: Is there evidence for age-related bias?

Epidemiological studies have consistently indicated that the prevalence of depression decreases with increasing age. Researchers have debated whether this finding is a real age-dependent decline or an artefact of sampling and assessment. This NHMRC funded study seeks to use statistical methods and cognitive interviewing to investigate the potential for age-related bias in the criteria for major depression. The findings will inform recommendations to improve the diagnostic methods used diagnose and treat major depression in old age.

Dimensional-spectrum model of mental disorders: Developing new assessments to improve the diagnostic validity of multiple mental disorders

Existing psychiatric classification systems have received significant criticism in the scientific literature, especially with regards to describing comorbidity. This research, funded by the NHMRC, aims to develop an innovative diagnostic instrument for a dimensional-spectrum approach to psychopathology that can more accurately account for comorbidity and has the potential to improve utility and efficiency. The project also involves the development of innovative computer algorithms and decision rules to guide the development of an easy to use diagnostic tool for clinicians and researchers.

Eating As Treatment (EAT): A stepped wedge, randomised controlled trial

Maintenance of adequate nutrition in Head and Neck Cancer (HNC) patients is challenging. The rigours of radiation treatment and the burden of the malignancy make it difficult for HNC patients to maintain sufficient nutrition. In addition, HNC patients have higher levels of mental illness such as depression and anxiety and also higher levels of substance dependence, including alcohol misuse. It is therefore surprising that health behaviour interventions designed to improve nutritional status in HNC patients have not been evaluated. This trial aims to build on promising pilot data to evaluate for the first time a dietitian delivered health behaviour intervention (Eating As Treatment; EAT) to improve nutritional status among HNC patients.

Efficacy of behavioural activation treatment for co-occurring depression and substance use disorders: The Activate Study

Behavioural Activation Treatment for Depression (BATD-R) developed in the USA, is an innovative structured treatment that aims to activate clients in specific ways that will increase rewarding experiences in their lives. This NHMRC funded study seeks to examine the efficacy and feasibility of a modified version of BATD-R ('Activate') in reducing symptoms of depression and substance dependence among individuals in residential rehabilitation and opioid substitution therapy. The trial was conducted between 2013 and 2015, and results are currently being evaluated.

Efficacy and biobehavioural basis of baclofen in treatment of alcoholic liver disease

This project is an NHMRC funded randomised controlled trial investigating the efficacy of baclofen for the treatment of alcohol dependence in patients with alcoholic liver disease. Participants were recruited to the trial in 2015 and randomised to receive one of two doses of baclofen, or placebo for a period of 12 weeks. Patients are being followed up for six months to determine the efficacy of this intervention.
Evaluation of the CAYLUS youth worker brokerage program

Established in 2002, the Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS) supports community initiatives aimed at reducing the supply of, demand for, and harms associated with, substance misuse among young people across Central Australia. CREMS researchers are assisting CAYLUS establish a rolling monitoring and evaluation process for the activities it runs through the Youth Worker Brokerage Program, to examine the impact of its programs on alcohol and other drug use and local level community crime, and to improve the standard of youth programs in this critical area of need.

Evaluation of a tailored online hospital and post-discharge smoking cessation program for orthopaedic trauma surgery patients

Smoking during an inpatient stay in hospital increases the risk of complications associated with orthopaedic surgery, resulting in increased length of admission and a variety of complications which are associated with higher costs. This NHMRC funded randomised controlled trial aims to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of an online smoking cessation program for orthopaedic trauma patients and its effect on clinical patient outcomes.

An evaluation of transitional care for stroke patients

Funded by the Hunter Medical Research Institute, this innovative project evaluates transitional care (discharge planning and the post discharge delivery) for stroke patients and their carers. Evaluating actual transitional care practices against recommended practice will assist with research and development to improve the transitional care process for stroke patients and their carers, informing clinical practice recommendations and improving care for this important group.

Examining the feasibility of a peer-delivered healthy lifestyle intervention to reduce cardiovascular and cancer disease risk for people living with Schizophrenia

Interventions for CVD risk behaviours among people with severe mental disorders are rare and often focus on only one risk behaviour and rarely include peer-led interventions. This project, funded by the Schizophrenia Fellowship NSW, aims to evaluate a peer-delivered healthy lifestyle intervention to lower risk and improve health outcomes for people living with schizophrenia.

How do we translate research investments into clinical outcomes in Australian mental health services?

Whilst there is growing evidence about the barriers to evidence-based practice in mental health treatment, we understand little about what information clinicians actually use, or their ongoing information needs. This project, supported through Macquarie University, aims to broaden the typical focus on individual professions and barriers to implementation, and develop an understanding of the information needs of all mental health clinicians in Australia to optimise the dissemination of research into clinical practice.

The impact of real-time fMRI feedback on response to nicotine cues

Nicotine dependence is the leading preventable cause of mortality in the world today. This NIH/NIDA funded study, led by researchers at the Medical University of South Carolina, aims to develop the imaging parameters, brain-computer interface and standardised procedures for using real-time fMRI (rtfMRI) visual feedback to help nicotine-dependent individuals decrease craving when presented with smoking cues. The study will provide critical information about optimal techniques, durability and "transferability" of the effects to situations outside of the scanner and will inform the design of a larger clinical trial of smoking cessation.
Integrated treatment of OEF/OIF veterans with PTSD and substance use disorders

This NIH/NIDA funded project, led by researchers at the Medical University of Southern Carolina, evaluates the feasibility and preliminary efficacy of an integrative behavioral intervention for the treatment of co-occurring substance use disorders and posttraumatic stress (PTSD) disorder modified for use among U.S. military personnel who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom and/or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF).

Managing adverse lifestyle factors in bipolar disorder: A randomised controlled trial.

This project aims to conduct a world-first trial to evaluate a healthy lifestyles intervention in bipolar disorder. In 2015 the University of New South Wales provided seed-funding for the collection of pilot data and the development of a framework to support the scaling up to a full trial.

iTreAD (internet Treatment for Alcohol and Depression): A randomised clinical trial of internet-based treatment for binge drinking and depression in young Australians

Comorbid depression and binge drinking cause substantial functional, economic and health impacts, are under-treated and peak in young adulthood. This NHMRC funded project evaluates, for the first time, the effectiveness of an internet-based psychological treatment program, augmented with peer-driven social networking among young people with comorbid depression and binge drinking behaviours. The project offers a low cost, wide reaching, youth-appropriate treatment, which will have profound implications for service design and health policy.

Pilot evaluation of “third wave” modular group psychotherapy for comorbid clients

There is emerging evidence for “third-wave therapies”, in treating mental health clients with comorbidity for substance use. However, implementation of manualised evidence based treatments is often hampered by the complexity of comorbidity. This project seeks to develop and pilot test a group based program combining Dialectical Behaviour Therapy–Substance Abuse (DBT-S), Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP), and Cognitive Behavioural Relapse Prevention to enhance acceptability, integration and retention in treatment among comorbid clients.

Positive Choices: Development of a national prevention portal to provide access to evidence-based online substance use prevention resources for school communities

In 2014, the Australian Government Department of Health funded CREMS to develop an online portal to help school communities access evidence-based information to prevent substance use and related harms among adolescents. The portal was developed with input from teachers, parents and students across Australia and officially launched by Prime Minister Turnbull in December, 2015. This project represents a significant investment by the Australian Government in prevention of substance use problems among young Australians.

Preventing cardiovascular disease among Indigenous Australians

CVD is the leading cause of mortality for Indigenous Australians and it also contributes to a very high burden of disease. To reduce the impact of CVD on Indigenous communities it is essential that culturally appropriate interventions are trialed within Indigenous focused health settings. Funded by the Heart Foundation, this project aims to examine the feasibility of an 8-session group based healthy lifestyle intervention within Indigenous focused substance abuse services. The intervention aims to help participants reduce their smoking, improve their diet, and increase their levels of physical activity.
The RADAR project: Identifying early warning signals on the pathways to alcohol use disorder

Funded by NHMRC in 2015 this 5-year project aims to investigate the development of alcohol use disorder among Australian adolescents. It will closely track the emergence of problematic alcohol use among a cohort of 14-15 year olds Australian adolescents to better understand developmental trajectories of alcohol-related problems and identify crucial windows for prevention and early intervention.

A randomised controlled trial of N-acetylcysteine (NAC) for drug relapse prevention

This project was funded by the US Department of Defence and led by researchers at the Medical University of South Carolina. It aims to determine the efficacy of NAC in preventing relapse and reducing drug craving and PTSD symptoms among Veterans with comorbid PTSD and substance use disorder. The project was completed in 2015 and the main study findings are in press in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry.

A randomised controlled trial of online versus telephone-based information and support for lung cancer patients

Telephone support lines can provide helpful informational, emotional and practical support for cancer patients via telephone-based or electronic platforms. However, very little rigorous research has directed towards examining the efficacy of such services in improving outcomes. This study, funded by the NSW Cancer Council, examines whether: proactive telephone or online-delivered support produces outcomes superior to printed information; and proactive online-delivered support produces outcomes comparable to proactive telephone support among outpatients with lung cancer.

Randomised controlled trial of treatment for alcohol use problems and social phobia

This is an NHMRC funded randomised controlled trial of combined cognitive behavioural therapy for alcohol use problems and social phobia. It aims to determine whether combined cognitive behavioural therapy is better than cognitive behavioural therapy for alcohol alone in improving symptoms of either anxiety or alcohol or quality of life among people with comorbid alcohol use and social anxiety disorders.

The relationship between social phobia, depression and substance use disorders: The impact on treatment outcomes

This project, funded by the Australian Government and Australian Rotary Health (PhD scholarships), will use national data to explore the prevalence of mood and anxiety disorders among individuals with a substance use disorder in the general population, as well as investigate the correlates associated with this comorbidity. Using data obtained through the Activate Study, this project will also explore the impact of social phobia on the longitudinal outcomes of individuals with a substance use disorder and depression. It will provide important information to guide the timing and targeting of treatment for this population.

Social well-being and engaged living (SWEL) intervention for Australian youth at risk of mental health and other adverse outcomes

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, emotional and social growth. Many young people lack the socio-emotional skills to negotiate the transition through adolescence, and are at risk of disengaging from education, family and community. Funded by NHMRC, this is the first clinical trial to investigate the efficacy of a telephone delivered intervention for increasing social engagement, emotional health and well-being of disengaged rural and urban youth.
StraightUp: Testing the effectiveness of an integrated online intervention for students and parents to prevent substance use and related harms in adolescents.

Parents play a critical role in the development of adolescent substance use. Despite this, there are currently no integrated student and parent based substance use prevention program in Australia and none internationally that utilises an online delivery format. Funding from UNSW in 2015 supported pilot work toward the development of a full trial.

The training and support needs of youth mental health and substance use workers

Young people with comorbid disorders frequently come to the attention of a diverse range of service systems (e.g., health, social welfare, educational, and criminal justice systems), and present a significant challenge to service providers. This project, supported by the Australian Government Department of Health, aims to evaluate the training and support needs of youth workers working with clients who have substance use and mental health conditions, with a view to providing recommendations for workforce development.

Treating substance use and traumatic stress among adolescents: A pilot study

There is a critical need to intervene early in the trajectory of substance use disorders and PTSD to prevent long-term psychological and physical health problems. However, there are currently no proven treatments for adolescents with comorbid SUD and PTSD. Funded by the NSW Department of Health, this project aims to conduct a pilot study of an innovative exposure-based treatment for substance use and traumatic stress among adolescents. The findings will provide valuable information regarding the treatment of comorbid substance use and traumatic stress among adolescents and will assist with the development of a larger randomised controlled trial.

Trends over time in the epidemiology of alcohol and cannabis use in men and women: is there evidence for a closing gender gap?

Research in many countries consistently shows that men are more likely to report substance use and related harms than women. However, emerging evidence suggests this is changing with patterns of substance use converging among men and women from recent birth cohorts. This study, supported by UNSW, gathered and synthesised data from around the world to examine the potential narrowing of the gender gap in alcohol and cannabis use. The findings have significant implications for prevention, treatment, public health campaigns and future research.

Understanding the comorbidity of depression and problematic substance use: A search for shared cognitive risk factors

This project, funded by the Australian Government and UNSW (PhD scholarships), aims to shed light on the comorbidity of depression and problematic substance use by untangling the longitudinal relationship between these disorders, and considering potential cognitive risk factors that underpin this comorbidity. Findings were based on data from the Australian Treatment Outcome Study and the Activate Study. The results suggest that the relationship between depression and substance use is cross-sectional in nature, rather than either disorder posing a risk for the other in the future, and that a cognitive construct known as repetitive negative thought may be implicated in the comorbidity between these disorders.
Understanding the role of peer networks in the initiation and development of substance use and mental health problems among adolescents.

Amongst the myriad risk factors associated with adolescent substance use, friends appear to exert a strong influence. It has long been known that adolescents whose friends drink alcohol, for example, report higher levels of alcohol consumption themselves. However, is this due to influence of peers (influence effects) or do or do adolescents select friends with similar substance use attitudes and behaviours (selection effects)? The present pilot project, funded through UNSW, aims to use social network analysis to dynamically map friendship networks among adolescents examine selection and influence effects in the emergence of substance use and mental health problems. The results will inform the development of a larger trial on peer networks.

Untangling comorbidity: Substance use and mental health in young Australians

Adolescence is a time when both mental health and substance use problems first emerge. This project, funded through the Australian Government and Australian Rotary Health (PhD scholarships), aims to investigate the comorbidity of mental health problems and substance use in young Australians. The study utilises both large epidemiological datasets to map the developmental sequence of anxiety and mood disorders and first alcohol use in the Australian population as well as longitudinal clinical trial data to determine when, how and why these problems occur together.

Update and revision of the national comorbidity guidelines

The first National Comorbidity Guidelines (Mills et al., 2009) aimed to provide alcohol and other drug workers with evidence-based information on the management of comorbid mental health conditions in alcohol and other drug treatment settings. Since their publication in 2009, over 12,000 hard-copies and electronic copies have been distributed to clinicians and treatment services across Australia and it is a recommended text for students studying TAFE courses in alcohol, other drugs and mental health. The current project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, aims to update and revise the Guidelines to bring them up to date with the most current evidence.

Using epidemiology to inform the prevention and early intervention of mental and substance use disorders in Australia

Over the last 5 years researchers at CREMS have been analysing a number of large scale Australian population surveys to answer questions about the diagnosis, prevalence and correlates of mental and substance use disorders to better inform the timing and targeting of prevention and early intervention. These datasets include the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, the National Drug Strategy Household Surveys, and most recently, the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, which was conducted in 2013-2014.
Research students within the CREMS have access to world-class experts in their field, and receive mentoring in epidemiology, prevention and treatment of co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. These opportunities provide students with the foundations upon which to build their own successful programs of research.

"During my time as a PhD student at CREMS I’ve become more confident in myself as a researcher and I’ve met some amazing people in the process. I’ve been given so much emotional and professional support, and the team has consistently helped me maintain motivation to keep going"

Katrina Prior
PhD Candidate
The CREMS has a demonstrated commitment to mentoring the next generation of comorbidity researchers in Australia and internationally.

The CREMS strives to provide a collaborative and supportive research environment where researchers at all stages in their careers are given opportunities to develop, learn, lead and thrive. A number of specific activities within the centre support mentoring and leadership.

**Senior Leadership Advisory Group**
Meet weekly. Responsible for strategy, priorities, collaborations, funding and management.

**Academic Group**
Meets monthly to discuss current & new research projects, funding, collaboration & dissemination. All staff attend this meeting once per quarter.

**Research Groups**
Each of epidemiology, prevention, treatment & translation groups meet quarterly to discuss priorities, upcoming projects and to brainstorm.

**Early Career Training Program**
Provides support & training to early career researchers through monthly seminars and workshops.

**Early Career Travel & Research Funding**
Small grants are available to CREMS early career researchers to support conference attendance, collaboration and networking.
EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS (ECR)

Dr Emma Barrett
Emma is currently an ECR at NDARC and a registered forensic psychologist. Her research focuses on innovative treatments for co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. She is particularly interested in the links between substance use, trauma and aggression. She has experience in the conduct and co-ordination of randomised controlled trials of innovative treatments for individuals with comorbid conditions in a range of settings.

Dr Erica Crome
Erica is an ECR at Macquarie University and a registered clinical psychologist. She has two primary research interests, the first being understanding and managing comorbidity between common disorders such as social anxiety disorder and substance use, and the second is investigating the information needs of Australian mental health clinicians in order to optimise research dissemination.

Dr Rosemary Kingston
Rosemary is an ECR at NDARC and is interested in mood and anxiety disorders, rumination, worry, thoughts and beliefs. In 2015 Rosemary assisted with the revision of the national comorbidity guidelines, as well as assessing the training and support needs of youth mental health and substance use workers in relation to comorbidity.

Dr Tonelle Handley
Tonelle is an ECR at the University of Newcastle, with research interests centred on suicide prevention strategies for young Australians with a focus on co-occurring mental health and substance misuse as key risk factors, and incorporates both public health and clinical approaches.

Dr Christina Marel
Chris is an ECR at NDARC whose research focuses on the long-term trajectories of heroin dependence and comorbid mental health disorders. She has experience in the coordination of longitudinal research, and research examining comorbid substance use and mental health disorders among complex populations.

Dr Louise Mewton
Louise is an ECR at CRUFD, UNSW and is particularly interested in the application of innovative methods and techniques to further our understanding of the epidemiology, classification and prevention of substance misuse and mental illness during the critical adolescent period. Her program of research makes links across epidemiology, information technology, neuropsychiatry and prevention research, and reflects global research priorities.
Dr Kirsten Morley
Kirsten is an ECR in the Discipline of Addiction Medicine, Sydney University. She is interested in investigating the efficacy and bio-behavioural basis of treatments for substance use and associated comorbidities (e.g. suicide risk, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances and liver disease) through integration of neuropharmacological and psychosocial frameworks.

Dr Matthew Sunderland
Matt is an ECR at NDARC who is interested in developing efficient diagnostic instruments for co-morbid conditions using underlying dimensional constructs (normalising, externalising, thought disorders) as the guiding theoretical framework rather than the existing categorical framework of the DSM. He is also interested in investigating the diagnostic bias in epidemiological instruments when assessing major depressive episode in older Australian adults.

Dr Lexine Stapinski
Lexine is an ECR at NDARC and a registered clinical psychologist. She currently manages a collaborative project to develop and disseminate illicit drug resources for Australian teachers, parents and students. More broadly, Lexine is interested in research examining risk factors and effective interventions for alcohol and substance misuse. She has a particular interest in the inter-relationship between anxiety and substance use.

Dr Louise Thornton
Louise is an ECR at NDARC. Her areas of interest include multiple health behaviour change, qualitative research methods and the role of mobile and web 2.0 technologies in health promotion and interventions. She is particularly interested in the development and evaluation of a mobile app aimed at addressing health risk behaviours among people with mental disorders.

Dr Alyna Turner
Alyna is an ECR at University of Newcastle and a registered clinical psychologist. She is interested in the development, delivery and evaluation of psychological interventions for people with comorbid conditions (heart disease, stroke, diabetes, CVD risk behaviours, depression, anxiety, substance misuse, psychotic illness), based on cognitive behaviour therapy, problem solving therapy, motivational interviewing, and mindfulness based stress reduction techniques.

CMHDARN
Mentoring Program

CMHDARN is a joint initiative of the NSW Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies and the Mental Health Coordinating Council. It aims to build the research capacity of community mental health and alcohol and other drug organisations. The partnership provides the opportunity for CREMS ECRs to provide short-term mentoring in research to individuals and organisations working in the sector. This initiative gives members the opportunity to gain experience in mentoring others, as well as build their own links with community services, and be involved in stakeholder driven research.

Aims of the program:
The broad aim is to provide workers in community mental health and substance use organisations who have an interest in research with academic mentor support to develop their research knowledge and skill development.

Specific aims include:
1. Facilitate an increase in worker confidence, knowledge and skills in the area of research.
2. Provide mentors with an opportunity to enhance their understanding of community managed organisations and the specific operational issues which may impact on research.
3. Further develop a research culture within community managed organisations.
4. Develop deeper understanding by academic researchers of practice related issues of organisations operating in the community sector and stakeholders interests (e.g. consumers, clients, carers).

For further info go to: http://www.cmhdaresearchnetwork.com.au/activities/mentoring-program/
Ms Louise Birrell
Supervised by Tim Slade, Nicola Newton, Maree Teesson
"Untangling comorbidity: substance use and mental health in young Australians"

Dr Ben Britton
Supervised by Amanda Baker, Greg Carter "Eating as Treatment: RCT of motivational interviewing in head and neck cancer"

Ms Katrina Champion
Supervised by Maree Teesson, Nicola Newton "Internet-based substance use prevention for Australian adolescents"

Ms Vanessa Clark
Supervised by Amanda Baker, Juanita Todd, Cigarette smoking and psychosis: An examination of subjective motivations and cognitive factors associated with smoking"

Mr Mark Deady
Supervised by Maree Teesson, Frances Kay-Lambkin, Katherine Mills "Youth depression and alcohol misuse: An internet-based intervention"

Ms Katrina Hamall
Supervised by Frances Kay-Lambkin, Kerry Inder, Todd Heard "Improving the wellbeing and resilience of families living with childhood chronic illness: An examination of the effectiveness and acceptability of the CHIRP program"

Ms Sally Hunt
Supervised by Amanda Baker, Pat Michie "Neurocognitive profiles of people with comorbid depression and alcohol misuse"

Ms Erin Kelly
Supervised by Maree Teesson, Nicola Newton, Lexine Stapinski "Bullying and substance use in adolescents: risks and responses"

Mr Warren Logge
Supervised by Andrew Baillie, Paul Haber "The 'thinking behind drinking': what role does executive functioning have in progression to, and maintenance of alcohol use disorders"

Ms Kristen McCarter
Supervised by Amanda Baker, Luke Wolfenden and Sean Halpin "Effectiveness of clinical practice change strategies in improving dietitian care of head and neck cancer patients according to evidence based clinical guidelines"

Ms Samantha McCrabb
Supervised by Billie Bonevski, Amanda Baker and John Attia "Development and evaluation of an online smoking cessation program for hospitalised patients"

Ms Sonja Memedovic
Supervised by Joanne Ross, Tim Slade, Maree Teesson "Depression in people with opioid dependence"
Ms Yasmina Nasstasia
Supervised by Amanda Baker, Robyn Callister, Sean Halpin
“The antidepressant effects of exercise among young people: Pathways to change; mind, body or behaviour”

Ms Katrina Prior
Supervised by Joanne Ross, Maree Teesson, Katherine Mills
“The relationship between social phobia, depression, and substance use disorders: The impact on treatment outcomes”

Ms Mikki Subotic
Supervised by Andrew Baillie, Lexine Stapinski, Jennifer Cornish
“Investigating the role of reward drive, rash impulsivity and drinking behaviour in the relationship between social phobia and alcohol use”

Ms Zoe Tonks
Supervised by Tim Slade, Nicola Newton, Maree Teesson
“The development and evaluation of a combined parent and student internet-based substance use prevention for Australian adolescents”

Ms Kristen Tulloch
Supervised by Andrew Baillie
“Cognitive Content and Processes Related to Cravings for Alcohol”

Dr Carla Walton
Supervised by Amanda Baker, Greg Carter
“RCT of DBT in borderline personality disorder”

Ms Kathryn Woodcock
Supervised by Frances Kay-Lambkin, Maree Teesson, Amanda Baker, Katherine Mills, Peter Stanwell
“Managing comorbid substance use and trauma in Australian veterans and their partners; Assessing the acceptability and effectiveness of internet-delivered psychological support programs”
FACEBOOK

The CREMS Facebook page had 291 likes at the close of 2015, up 238% from the end of 2014.

Over the course of the year, 37,357 people saw content associated with the page (total reach).

The posts that received the highest engagement were an animation about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from Phoenix Australia and new issues of the Drug and Alcohol Connections newsletter as well as announcements relating to launch of the Positive Choices drug education portal, new NHMRC funding, NDARC scholarships and the webinar series.
TWITTER

The CREMS Twitter account had 2,000 followers at the close of 2015, up 396% from the end of 2013.

The 660 tweets sent throughout year profiled CREMS resources, events, published papers and achievements.
How many people visit the website?

In 2015 there were 39,758 page views of our website www.comorbidity.edu.au made by 14,133 users over 18,088 sessions. This was a substantial increase on 2014 (See Figure 3), with page views, users and sessions up 31%, 60% and 49% respectively.

Traffic to the website peaked with recruitment for the Concurrent treatment of PTSD and substance use using Prolonged Exposure (COPE) trial in March and with registrations and participation in the CREMS Webinar series throughout the year.

The majority of visitors to the website originated in Australia (71%) and most of the international visitors were from the US (11%), UK (4%), then Canada, India and Russia.

Sources of website traffic were search engines (54%), direct traffic such as people who had the site bookmarked (21%), referral from other sites (15%) including NDARC, Dovetail, Connections, ADIN, Macquarie University, and TheMHS Learning Network, and social media (10%).

Weekly visits to the CREMS website 2013-15

[Graph showing weekly visits to the website from 2013 to 2015]

What content did visitors access?

The website’s most visited pages, after the home page, were those featuring resources for professionals and the general public, particularly the drug education game ‘Pure Rush’ and the webinars available on demand; the COPE trial recruitment page; staff profiles; CREMS streams information page; publications list and factsheets.

The most clicked on links were training resources including the webinars available on demand; the Illegal Drug Fact Sheets and resources for professionals and the public including quarterly newsletters, projects recruiting and drug education booklets.

The most downloaded items in 2015 were the information factsheets about different illegal drugs and their effects. The CREMS newsletter was the second most downloaded item, followed by the webinars on demand.
OTHER DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

NEWSLETTER

The CREMS releases a quarterly newsletter to provide regular updates on the progress of the CRE. Each newsletter includes feature articles written by CREMS staff as well as news, new projects and publications, upcoming seminars, workshops, webinars and events.

There were over 582 subscribers to the newsletter in 2015 which is more than double the number of subscribers for 2014. Subscribers include academics, researchers, clinicians, policy makers and members of the general public.

There were 600 downloads of the newsletter in 2015 increasing from 550 in 2014 and almost doubling the recorded 325 newsletter downloads from 2013.
The CREMS webinar series was launched in 2015 to facilitate wider access to the latest research into mental health and substance use disorders. In 2015, CREMS staff delivered 8 webinars and hosted 4 webinars in-house that were viewed over 480 times.

These online interactive lectures are designed for use by clinicians, allied health professionals, teachers, consumers, carers and anyone who has an interest in mental health and substance use prevention, treatment and epidemiology.

Our webinars can be watched at www.comorbidity.edu.au/training/webinars

**Webinars from 2015**

**Co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders: How do they affect young people?**

**DR CATH CHAPMAN**

How many young people experience co-occurring mental and substance use disorders? What is the impact? And what are the implications for research, prevention and treatment?

**Drug and alcohol use among young people. What can parents and schools do to prevent the harms?**

**DR LEXINE STAPINSKI & DR NICOLA NEWTON**

What are the latest research findings on drug use among Australian young people? What strategies have been proven to prevent harms from drug and alcohol use?
Using e-Health to treat co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders in youth

MR MARK DEADY

What work is currently being trialled using eHealth to treat comorbid depression and substance use among young people?

Locating free resources to support evidence-based practice

DR ERICA CROME

Where can tools to support evidence-based decision making be located? How can e-therapies support your practice?

CREMS ONLINE PORTALS

CLEARING THE CLOUD

Clearing the Cloud (www.clearingthecloud.org.au) is an online portal that houses prevention and treatment programs for substance use and mental health problems that have been developed by the CREMS and can be accessed via the internet.

In 2015 there were 13,659 page views of the site made by 2,397 users over 2,782 visits.

The most accessed pages on the site in 2015 continue to be the information booklets about illegal drugs developed for teachers, students and parents.
The Positive Choices portal was launched in December 2015 as part of the Australian Government's drug and alcohol prevention strategy for schools.

Positive Choices is an online portal that facilitates access to evidence-based drug and alcohol education and prevention resources for teachers, students and their parents.

The portal is made possible through funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and has been developed in collaboration with researchers at the Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS), the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) and in consultation with external experts and end users.

Climate Schools

Climate Schools (www.climateschools.com.au) is an online portal that provides access to the Climate Schools programs.

As of the end of 2015, 267 schools have been registered nationally.

During the year there were 145,423 page views by 22,512 users...

... more than double the number of users in 2014.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Award Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Emma Barrett</td>
<td>University of New South Wales Dean’s Rising Star Award; TheMHS Early Career Research Award for Research Excellence (Highly Commended)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louise Birrell</td>
<td>Jennifer McLaren Award for Outstanding Research Achievement, NDARC, UNSW; Best Overall Oral Presentation, SMHR; Recipient of the Postgraduate Research Support Scheme, UNSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kellie Cathcart</td>
<td>University of Newcastle Vice Chancellor Award for Professional Staff excellence; University of Newcastle Academic Division Award for Professional Excellence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katrina Champion</td>
<td>PhD Candidate Award, Australian Rotary Health and Alliance for the Prevention of Mental Disorders Awards for Research Excellence, SMHR grant-in-aid award</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cath Chapman &amp; Tim Slade</td>
<td>NSW Mental Health Commission Mental Health Matters Award for Research and Evaluation, presented by the Hon. Pru Goward at launch of Mental Health Month at NSW Parliament House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erica Crome</td>
<td>Mentor of the Year, Walanga Muru (Indigenous Strategy Unit, MQ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miriam Forbes</td>
<td>Winner of the Macquarie University 2015 Research Excellence Award for Higher Degree Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonelle Handley</td>
<td>National Council of Women of NSW Australia Day award</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leanne Hides</td>
<td>ANZIA Internet Awards (3 shortlisted), Mobile App Rating Scale; TheMHS Mental Health Prevention or Promotion Award Commendation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samantha McCrabb</td>
<td>National Conference Funding grant from Hunter Cancer Research Alliance (HCRA)</td>
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<td>Louise Mewton</td>
<td>Highly Commended, TheMHS Early Career Research Award</td>
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<td>Katherine Mills &amp; Steph O’Donnell</td>
<td>NSW Mental Health Commission Mental Health Matters Awards Commendation for Mental Health Promotion and Wellbeing</td>
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<td>Nicola Newton</td>
<td>Australian Rotary Health and Alliance for the Prevention of Mental Disorders Award for Research Excellence; Ian Webster Award for Research Excellence, Faculty of Medicine, NDARC, UNSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katrina Prior</td>
<td>Top ranked abstract at the 2015 UNSW Postgraduate Research Symposium; Recipient of the Postgraduate Research Support Scheme, University of New South Wales</td>
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<td>Joanne Ross &amp; Mark Deady</td>
<td>The Kevin Rozzoli Community Impact Award for the development of the Suicide Assessment Kit (SAK)</td>
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<td>Brad Shaw</td>
<td>CREMS National Colloquium E-Poster prize winner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lexine Stapinski</td>
<td>The Mental Health Services Early Career Researcher Innovation Award</td>
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<td>Maree Teesson</td>
<td>Society for Mental Health Research, Oration Award</td>
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<td>Funding Body</td>
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<td>Maree Teesson, Gavin Andrews, Nicola Newton, Tim Slade, Cath Chapman</td>
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<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>Maree Teesson, Joanne Ross, Carl Lejeuz, Katherine Mills, Sharlene Kaye, Kathleen Brady, Glenys Dore</td>
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<td>Frances Kay-Lambkin, Amanda Baker, Maree Teesson, Kathleen Brady, Terry Lewin</td>
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<td>Leanne Hides, David Kavanagh, Jason Connor, Mark Daglish, Susan Cotton, Jan Barendregt, Katie Witkiewitz, Ross Young &amp; Angela White</td>
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<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>Paul Haber, Andrew Baillie, Kirsten Morley</td>
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<td>UNSW</td>
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<td>Louise Mewton and Lucette Cysique</td>
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<td>UOW / WHOs</td>
<td>Peter Kelly, Samantha Broyd, Nadia Solowij, Joanne Lunn,</td>
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<td>PhD Scholarship</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARH</td>
<td>Bruce Edwards Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARH &amp; APA</td>
<td>PhD Scholarship</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARH &amp; APA</td>
<td>PhD Scholarship</td>
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<td>UNSW</td>
<td>PhD Scholarship</td>
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<td>UNSW</td>
<td>VC Postdoctoral Fellowship</td>
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## COLLABORATIVELY LED GRANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Body</th>
<th>Chief Investigators</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Amount Awarded</th>
<th>Years Funded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHA</td>
<td>Bonnie Spring (Principal investigator)</td>
<td>mHealth intervention to preserve and promote ideal cardiovascular health</td>
<td>US$2,813,228</td>
<td>2014-2018</td>
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<td>ARH</td>
<td>Matthew Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, Ben Richardson, Britt Klein, David Austin, Helen Austin, David Castle, Helen Skouteris, Lucy Busija, Helen Christensen, Cathy Mihalopoulos</td>
<td>Timely intervention: Efficacy of a depression symptom monitoring smartphone app to deliver psychological intervention at time of greatest need</td>
<td>$163,870</td>
<td>2015-2017</td>
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<td>ARC</td>
<td>Oksana Zelenko, Ben Light, Leanne Hides, John Dalgleish</td>
<td>Designing, implementing and evaluating a mobile help-seeking toolkit for youth</td>
<td>$341,794</td>
<td>2015-2018</td>
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<td>BB</td>
<td>Richard Fletcher, Frances Kay-Lambkin, Geoffrey Skinner, Brian Kelly</td>
<td>SMS4Dads: a project to develop and pilot a smartphone-based messaging service (SMS) for new fathers offering fathering information, mood assessment and support.</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
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<td>BB</td>
<td>David Kavanagh, Kyra Hamilton, Alison Marshall, Jeannette Milgrom, Heather Rowe, Jane Fisher, Anja Wittkowski, Paul Scuffman, Leigh Davis, Anne Walsh, Ann Chang, Katherine White, Leanne Hides, Lynne Daniels</td>
<td>Promoting perinatal mental health and wellbeing: Development and evaluation of screening and intervention programs for both parents, using the Internet and text messages (SMSs)</td>
<td>$399,836</td>
<td>2012-2015</td>
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<td>BB/STRIDE/Movember</td>
<td>Angela Nickerson, David Keegan, Helen Christensen</td>
<td>Tell Your Story: A digital intervention for reducing stigma in traumatized refugees</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>2015-2017</td>
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<td>BB/Movember</td>
<td>Sam Harvey, Helen Christensen, Judy Proudfoot, Phillip Mitchell, Nicole Cockayne, Jacinta Santamaria, Richard Bryant, Nicholas Glozier, Ian Hickie, John Buchanan, Rose Ryan, Rafael Calvo, Philip Bohle, Luis Salvador-Carulla, Ana Fernandez Sanchez</td>
<td>Men@work project: Utilising new ehealth technologies to improve the mental health of Australian male workers</td>
<td>$2,878,621</td>
<td>2015-2018</td>
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<td>BS UNSW</td>
<td>Mark Larsen, Julian Epps, Nicholas Cummins, Helen Christensen</td>
<td>Automatic mobile mental health assessment with speech and social signals</td>
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<td>2015-2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Body</td>
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<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Amount Awarded</td>
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<td>HCRA</td>
<td>Ashleigh Guillaumier, Billie Bonevski, Chris Paul, Amanda Baker, Laura Twyman</td>
<td>Enforcement strategies for effective implementation of smoke free policies</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>Lynn Sage</td>
<td>Bonnie Spring (Principal investigator)</td>
<td>Intervention to enhance dietary adherence for breast cancer prevention</td>
<td>US$50,000</td>
<td>2014-2016</td>
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<td>Movember</td>
<td>Stewart Vella, Tony Okely, Helen Christensen, Frank Deane, Sandra Jones, Simon Eckermann, Stewart Trost, Remco Polman, Erika Borkoles, Chris Lonsdale</td>
<td>A national and sustainable sports-based intervention to promote mental health and reduce the risk of mental health problems in Australian adolescent males</td>
<td>$1,986,778</td>
<td>2015-2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>Alison Cear, Helen Christensen, Philip Batterham</td>
<td>Suicide prevention in schools: A social connectedness approach</td>
<td>$793,112</td>
<td>2015-2018</td>
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<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>Susan Cotton, Patrick McGorry, Andrew Mackinnon, Helen Herrman, John Gleeson, Leanne Hides &amp; Debra Foley</td>
<td>Rates, patterns and predictors of long-term outcome in a treated first-episode psychosis cohort</td>
<td>$1,344,905</td>
<td>2013-2018</td>
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<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>Philip Batterham, Matthew Sunderland, Natacha Carragher, Alison Cear</td>
<td>Development and population-based validation of hierarchical adaptive mental health screeners.</td>
<td>$380,130</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
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<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>Lorna Peters, Ron Rapee, Andrew Baillie</td>
<td>Enhancing cognitive behavioural treatment outcomes for social phobia</td>
<td>$333,000</td>
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<td>Funding Body</td>
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<td>Years Funded</td>
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<td>NIH</td>
<td>Bonnie Spring (Principal investigator)</td>
<td>Opt-IN: Optimizing INtensive lifestyle intervention for weight loss</td>
<td>US$2,078,051</td>
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<td>NIH</td>
<td>Bonnie Spring (Principal investigator)</td>
<td>Multiple behaviour change in diet and activity</td>
<td>US$2,475,295</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIH/NIDA</td>
<td>Sudie Back (Principal investigator)</td>
<td>Integrating neurobiology and neuroimaging into research on addiction and PTSD</td>
<td>US$311,208</td>
<td>2015-2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIH/NIDA</td>
<td>Sudie Back (Principal investigator)</td>
<td>Integrated treatment of OEF/OIF veterans with PTSD and substance use disorders</td>
<td>US$1,641,487</td>
<td>2010-2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIH/NIDA</td>
<td>Kathleen Brady (Principal investigator)</td>
<td>The impact of real-time fMRI feedback on response to nicotine cues</td>
<td>US$2,059,558</td>
<td>2010-2016</td>
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<td>NIH/NIDA</td>
<td>Aimee McRae-Clark &amp; Kathleen Brady</td>
<td>Buspirone treatment for marijuana dependence</td>
<td>US$1,586,869</td>
<td>2009-2015</td>
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<td>NIDA</td>
<td>Terry Bush, Bonnie Spring</td>
<td>Comparative effectiveness of adding weight control to smoking cessation quitlines</td>
<td>US$221,543</td>
<td>2012-2016</td>
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<td>Ottomin Foundation</td>
<td>Mark Larsen, Fiona Shand, Kirsten Morley, Paul Haber, Helen Christensen</td>
<td>FAST: Follow-up after a suicide attempt</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>2015-2018</td>
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<td>UOW</td>
<td>Kathleen Clapham, Scott Winch, Valerie Harwood, Peter Kelly, Kate Senior, Dave Kampers, Paul Chandler</td>
<td>Caring for Community. Investigating the contribution of Aboriginal organisations to community wellbeing</td>
<td>$47,711</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>US DOD / VA</td>
<td>Sudie Back (Principal Investigator)</td>
<td>Doxazosin in the treatment of co-occurring PTSD and alcohol use disorders</td>
<td>2015-2019</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** AGDH: Australian Government Department of Health; AHA: American Heart Association; ARC: Australian Research Council; ARH: Australian Rotary Health; APA: Australia Postgraduate Award; BB: Beyond Blue; BMRI: Brain & Mind Research Institute; BS UNSW: Brain Sciences UNSW; CAYLUS: Central Australian Youth Link Up Service; CC NSW: Cancer Council New South Wales; HCRA: Hunter Cancer Research Alliance; HF: Heart Foundation; HMRI: Hunter Medical Research Institute; Lynn Sage: Lynn Sage Cancer Research Foundation; MQ: Macquarie University; NDARC: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre; NIH/NIDA: National Institute of Health/National Institute on Drug Abuse; NHMRC: National Health and Medical Research Council; NSW MoH: New South Wales Ministry of Health; SF NSW: Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales; SMHR: Society for Mental Health Research; STRIDE: Stigma Reduction Interventions: Digital Environment project; UNSW: University of New South Wales; UoN: University of Newcastle; UOW: University of Wollongong; US DOD: United States Department of Defence; VA: Veteran Affairs; WHOs: We Help Ourselves