



# EVALUATION OF THE NSW IRCST 2007 FUNDING PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH, SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION PROJECTS



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The NSW IRCST introduced its first program of funding in 2007, allocating almost \$2m to support a range of research, service development and evaluation projects across rural and remote NSW. The Funding Program aimed to:

- increase the amount of rural-based health research being undertaken
- develop the project management and clinical skills of health staff
- apply metropolitan models of care to rural and remote environments
- identify best practice models of service delivery for rural and remote environments
- contribute to the body of rural-based health literature
- raise awareness of IRCST amongst the rural and remote health workforce

A mixed methods approach was used to populate a Program Logic framework. Information was gathered from document analysis, key informant interviews and questionnaires.

The evaluation found that the program's intended outcomes were met to varying degrees by the funded projects:

- There was a high likelihood of project completion (92.6%) and achievement of project aims and objectives (>84% )
- Six research projects and three evaluation projects were completed
- Peer reviewed journal articles were published on five of the projects and results from others were disseminated through AHS, university or Division of General Practice newsletters.
- The project management and clinical skills of health staff have been developed, along with several other types of skills sets, eg information technology
- One project applied a metropolitan model of care to the rural environment
- Indications are that best practice models of service delivery were trialled; however these did not undergo rigorous analysis
- Awareness of IRCST has been raised by virtue of the promotion of the funding program and the ongoing presentation of project results

It is recommended that the structure of the funding program be retained and the following improvements be made to future funding programs:

- A simple risk assessment should be undertaken for each of the projects to identify potential barriers, with strategies put in place to minimise these barriers
- A more rigorous evaluation process should be required for each of the projects
- Consideration should be given to providing training in evaluation techniques
- Questionnaires should be distributed closer to completion of the project
- The provision of expertise and support from key external partners can be a valuable enabler, and can be critical to the success of some projects
- Evaluation methods for funding programs should be determined prior to the allocation of funds

*For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'*

Anne has worked in rural health for more than 20 years, with positions including Accountant and Business Manager at Dubbo Base Hospital; Health Improvement Manager and Health Service Development Manager for the former Macquarie Area Health Service. Anne worked with NSW IRCST for four years and has recently commenced work with Western Local Health District.

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