

# Strengthening Cancer Health Literacy in the Wimmera: Warracknabeal & Nhill

## Final Report

November 2018



The Strengthening Cancer Health Literacy in the Wimmera is a collaboration between Grampians Integrated Cancer Services (GICS) and Wimmera Primary Care Partnership (WPCP) and aims to work with two communities in the Wimmera to identify and develop strategies that will strengthen the town's cancer health literacy. It builds on the learnings of the Ophelia Grampians project that Deakin University and Grampians Integrated Cancer Services (GICS) completed in 2016.

Ophelia Grampians was developed in response to statistics that showed that despite the similar incidence of cancer, rural Victoria, particularly the Grampians region, has a higher than expected mortality rates from cancer. The project explored health literacy and related factors that may contribute to the observed higher incidence of cancer mortality rates in the Grampians region.

The goal of the Strengthening Cancer Health Literacy in the Wimmera Project was to identify, develop and implement strategies that would improve the cancer health literacy of people living in in Nhill and Warracknabeal and surrounding areas.

The first stage of the project consisted of a community survey (appendix 1), which was advertised and promoted by social media and within Wimmera PCP meetings with community groups.

A meeting in December 2017 consisting of service providers and community members from Hindmarsh, and February 2018 for Yarriambiack Shire were then held, where a total of seven strategies were identified to be developed and implemented. These strategies are based on the priority areas identified in the surveys.



## STRATEGY 1 – SKIN CANCER CHECKS

**West Wimmera Health Service**  
June 3 · 🌐

A ten minute skin check could save your life!  
Did you know that Australia has one of the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world? 😬  
Don't ignore changes in your skin! The sooner a skin cancer is identified and treated, the better chance you have of avoiding surgery or, in the case of a serious melanoma or other skin cancer, potentially deadly outcomes. ...  
[See More](#)

**WWHS**

# Free Skin Cancer Checks

**Thursday 21 June 2018**  
**Starting from 10:00am**  
**West Wimmera Health Service**  
**Nhill Campus**

- Skin Cancer inspections assessing for all levels of skin issues
- Minor Treatments can be done on site
- Referral to dermatologist if needed, can be arranged
- All assessments are free and covered under Medicare
- 50 x 10 minute appointments available

To make an appointment, please contact Allied Health Reception on:  
**5391 4267**

Please bring your Medicare Card along with you on the day and arrive 10 minutes prior to your appointment.

👍❤️ 86  
14 Comments 46 Shares

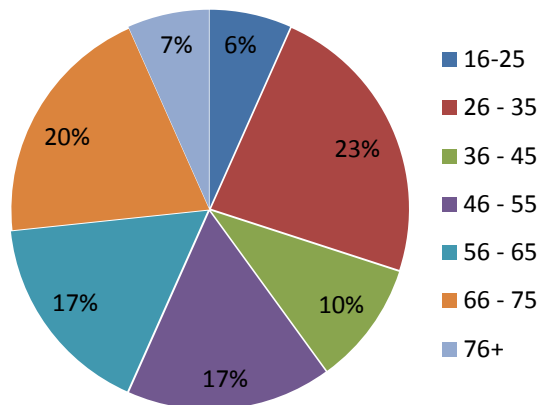
Figure 1

Skin cancer is a priority area for West Wimmera Health Service (WWHS). One of the issues identified at the workshops was that skin cancer screening is not often available locally and community members are required to travel for these screenings.

In response, the project funded a one day skin check clinic at the WWHS Nhill campus in June. The clinic was run by Stu Wilder, a nurse practitioner from Western District Health Services in Hamilton and had a capacity of 32 appointments.

The response to the clinic exceeded both expectations and the capacity of the clinic! An advertisement was posted on the WWHS Facebook page on 3 June, almost three weeks before the clinic (Fig 1). Within 24 hours, over 100 people from Nhill and the surrounding area contacted the health service to book an appointment. Those who could not get an appointment were placed on a waiting-list.

## Skin check participants



Thirty-two (32) appointments were booked for the clinic on 21 June. Two people did not attend on the day. Of the 30 who did, 18 participants (60%) were female and 12 (40%) were male.

The age range was between 18 and 79 years, with an average age of 50 years. As indicated in Fig.2 there were 7 people (23%) between the ages of 26 and 35 years, and 6 people (20%) between the ages of 66 and 75 years.

The majority of participants were from Nhill; six people came from surrounding areas including Jeparit, Kaniva and Dimboola.

Prior to the skin check participants completed a questionnaire. An analysis of this data indicated that:

- Eight participants (27%) reported that they had noticed changes in their moles prior to the clinic,
- One participant (0.3%) reported that they did not use sunscreen, and
- Two participants (0.6%) had their skin checked in the previous 12 months.

Anecdotally there was a lot of liquid nitrogen used on the day and two people were referred for further investigation.

## Waiting List

To accommodate the demand for skin checks WWHS funded a second skin check clinic on 9 August that had 42 appointments. A third skin check clinic will be organised before the end of 2018.

## Building Capacity

Recognising the limitations (and costs) of relying on a visiting clinician to perform skin checks, the project has highlighted an opportunity for WWHS to build capacity within their workforce. Allocation of funds will now be attributed to professional development for WWHS to competently perform skin checks using their own staff.

Also a proposal seeking to develop a business case to embed nurse-led skin cancer screening clinics into the primary health care system, developing referral processes through General Practice to dermatology and cosmetic surgery specialists.

This project has been developed through the Consumer Advisory Group of the Grampians Integrated Cancer Service in conjunction with the Department of Rural Health of the Melbourne Medical School.

Men's health was also identified as a priority for Nhill and the surrounding area. A men's health information night was delivered in June 2018 to raise awareness of men's health issues, especially in the areas of preventative health and screening.

The health night was organised by WWHS Community Nurses in partnership with the local CFA. The night was promoted by WWHS using local media, social media platforms and the CFA communications network.

Stu Wilder, a nurse practitioner from Western District Health Services in Hamilton made the presentation (Figure 3). Known as an engaging speaker, Stu spoke for 80 minutes on topics such as skin cancer and prostate health. Staff from WWHS offered free blood pressure checks on the night and health information was also distributed.

The night attracted 32 men from the area. 21 men (66%) had their blood pressure checked with three people (0.09%) referred for follow-up checks in one to two months.



Figure 3

Feedback received on the night was extremely positive with all participants reporting that they were more knowledgeable about their health. Many attendees reported that they could have listened to Stu talk for another hour. They liked his use of language that everybody could relate to.

Anecdotally, it was observed that the fruit and sandwich platters were more popular than the hot savoury pies and sausage rolls, suggesting attendees had taken home Stu's dietary message.

Mr S is a 52 year old man who was prompted to pay more attention to his health after attending the Men's Health night in Nhill.

Mr S took advantage of the free health checks at the event. He had his blood pressure taken and learnt it is recommended people over the age of 50 should go to their doctor at least once a year for a health check. Stu Wilder's presentation reinforced the message that he needed to look after his health and prompted him to make an appointment with a GP, something he had not done for 10 years.

The GP found that Mr S had high cholesterol requiring medication and recommended a healthier diet with more physical activity.

Three month later, Mr S attributes the lifestyle changes he has made to the Men's Health night. He now exercises regularly and is 'eating more fruit and veg than I ever did'.



## STRATEGY 3 – CFA FITNESS PROGRAM

To complement the Men's Health night, a 12-week fitness program was offered to CFA members from Nhill and surrounding area.

The program was based on the Winiam 'Footy Training for Farmers' which started 6 years ago



when members of the Landcare group approached WWHS with concerns about the health of members. A fitness instructor was funded for an initial 6 weeks and participants were required to pay a sessional fee after that. The program was deemed a success as the participants continue to meet weekly at the Winiam Hall.

The CFA fitness program started in July 2018. A community health nurse from WWHS met with the group during the first session to assess the health and fitness levels of the participants. The assessments were repeated at 6 weeks and have shown a reduction in blood pressure, weight loss and an increase in fitness levels.

The 12 week fitness program was completed on 10<sup>th</sup> October with 146 contacts over the duration of the program, averaging over 12 contacts per week. Instructor



facilitated fitness classes continue to be available as a fee-for-service arrangement each Wednesday, alternating between Nhill and Winiam.



One female CFA participant mentioned to the CFA directors about this fitness program, as they expressed their frustrations about how CFA should be meeting a fitness criteria in order to volunteer, with uncertainty of how to go about it. She informed them of this program, the attendance and the results, with the CFA directors being very impressed. A weekly commitment of \$150 was asked in order for this class to continue for CFA volunteers. An outcome is yet to be delivered.



## STRATEGY4 – TRANSPORT FACTSHEETS/INFORMATION

Transport is an ongoing issue for communities for both the Nhill and Warracknabeal communities. Acknowledging that the project has limited capacity and cannot address issues associated with the provision of transport, the focus of this strategy is on the information about services and resources that can support people who need to travel for medical appointments.

The factsheet contents include information about supports and resources available to people requiring travel for medical appointments, outside of their local area. Detailed information is provided for bus timetabling, relevant transfers, return trips and fees. The factsheet also provides guidance for those who require accommodation and prompts readers to consider using telehealth options.

An accommodation brochure (appendix 2) was also developed, with information of accommodation options close to major hospitals in Ballarat, Melbourne and Adelaide.

The factsheets have been published and distributed to different health care providers, placed in brochure stands in public healthcare waiting areas within Nhill, Kaniva, Jeparit, Rainbow, Warracknabeal, Hopetoun, Woomelang and Beulah.



Each stand also provides information on how to re-order factsheets should they need replenishing. The brochures are scheduled to be reviewed 6 monthly, unless major changes to transport and ancillary services requires an expedited update.



## STRATEGY 5 – CANCER PRESENTATION FOR KAREN COMMUNITY

The Karen population is an ethnic group from Burma. There is a growing Karen community living in Nhill who have come to Australia as refugees from Burma. In 2016 8.2% of people living in Nhill identified as Karen.

In June 2018 five Karen women took part in a focus group, speaking about cancer and what it means for these women and their families. They spoke of not knowing cancer was a disease until arriving in Australia. In refugee camps, illnesses such as diarrhoea and malaria were a much larger problem, causing many deaths.

The Karen women had seen media coverage of cancer in Australia and now understand that it is quite common in Australia. They said that they would like to know more about its causes and what screenings can be done.

This request for an information session has been passed onto the Refugee Health Nurse and Cancer Resource Nurse at WWHS. They will work with the WWHS Karen interpreter to deliver an information session to members of the Karen community on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2018.

This presentation will include information about cancer, reducing risks for cancer as well as information on oral health, specifically about the betel nut and its health risks to oral health.



Photo of Karen women of Nhill courtesy of SBS Australia



The nutrition of the isolated and elderly was prioritised at the Warracknabeal. Warracknabeal Neighbourhood House will host 'Table for One' which is based on the cooking for one or two programme developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

'Table for One' will promote healthy eating options, social connectedness and local health services to approximately 10 people who have dealt with cancer in the past or present, and live alone. A change in conditions due to drought and frost meant the



**Table for One**

Healthy eating options for people living on their own who have been touched by cancer personally or someone close to them. Incorporating opportunities for shared meals, as well as educational sessions about nutrition, exercise and general wellbeing.

**2 x FREE 6 week cooking and educational programs**

Participants will prepare a meal and eat together as well as be able to take home meals.

Please contact the Warracknabeal Neighbourhood House for more information and to register your interest.

**Phone: 5396 1360**  
**Email: [info@wnhlc.com.au](mailto:info@wnhlc.com.au)**  
**Or just come into 2 Cox St Warracknabeal**

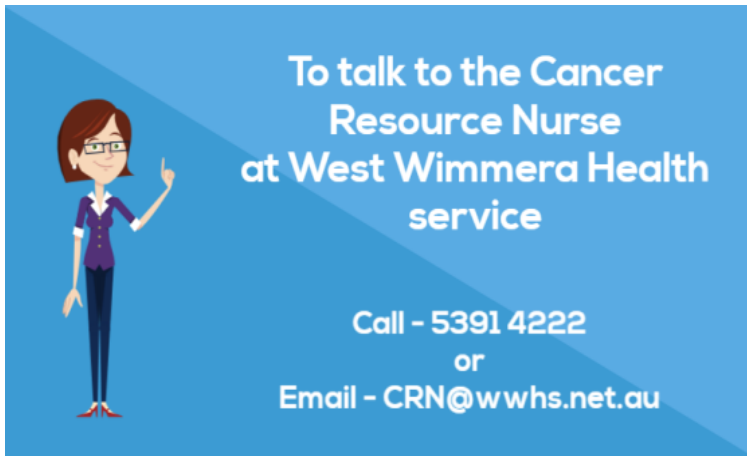
instructor became unavailable as their work load increased on the farm. The first of two six-week programs will commence on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 and finish 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019, part two begins 28<sup>th</sup> March until 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019.

Participants will be involved in meal preparation, sharing a meal, and information sessions around diet and nutrition, being delivered by staff from Rural Northwest Health.

Information sessions will cover healthy eating, exercise and general wellbeing. A recipe book will also be produced and delivered to households across Warracknabeal.



## STRATEGY 7 – CANCER RESOURCE NURSE PROMOTION



The role of the Cancer Resource Nurse is not well known by the general public of Warracknabeal and surrounding areas. The survey completed at the start of the project reported only half of respondents from Warracknabeal who have had

cancer had been in contact with the Cancer Resource Nurse.

Cancer Resource Nurses across the Wimmera have the capacity to assist individuals and families with a cancer diagnosis to negotiate and navigate the services and supports they need.

A Powtoon animation was developed for replay in waiting rooms of medical centres and health services to promote and raise awareness of the Cancer Resource Nurse role and services available. Flyers were also developed to reinforce the message and provide contact details in an accessible format that people can take with them. The flyers will be placed in the brochure stands along with the transport and accommodation brochures to be distributed across the region's health services.

Access the Rural Northwest Health Powtoon Video [here](#).

Access the West Wimmera Health Service Powtoon Video [here](#).





## Appendix 1: Survey for people living in Nhill and surrounding area

### How do you get information to make better decisions about your health?

This survey is being undertaken by Wimmers Primary Care Partnership (WPCP) and Grampians Integrated Cancer Services (GICS) with the support of West Wimmers Health Services.

The aim of this survey is to help us understand how to provide better information to keep people healthy, and if they are ill (e.g. with cancer), how can they be best supported in their community?

Any information you provide will be kept confidential.

If you would like to know more about this survey or the project, please contact Jo Richie at Wimmers PCP

Tel: 0417 512 480

Email: [jo.r@grampianscommunityhealth.org.au](mailto:jo.r@grampianscommunityhealth.org.au)

1. Where do you meet with other people in your community? Please select all that apply.

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clubs and groups               | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CFA                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Workplace    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Informal catch up with friends | <input type="checkbox"/> School       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____                   |                                       |

2. In Nhill, where do you get information about healthy lifestyle choices and health problems?

Please select all that apply.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Practitioner (GP)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends or family                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice nurse at the medical center | <input type="checkbox"/> West Wimmers Health Services (local hospital) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GP's waiting room                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community notice boards              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____                         |  |

3. Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a) It is difficult for me to travel to medical appointments in Nhill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) It is difficult for me to travel to medical appointments in Ballarat or Melbourne?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) I have at least one healthcare provider that I can discuss my health problems with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) I am able to get all the information I need to manage my health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) I see a doctor at least once a year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) If I had cancer I would want to know about it as quickly as possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Have you, or someone close to you ever been diagnosed with cancer? Yes  No

If 'Yes' please answer the following questions:

	Less than 12 months	1-2 years	3-4 years	5 or more years	
a) How long ago was the cancer diagnosed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:</i>					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
b) The person was able to get all the services they needed without difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) They were in contact with the Cancer Resource Nurse at West Wimmers Health Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) The local people and groups gave them all the support that they needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Their family received all the support that they needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Do you have any thoughts on what could be done to help people with cancer in your community?

Please list as many as possible.

6. Do you have any other thoughts on what could be done to help prevent cancer in your community?

Please list as many as possible.

7. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your gender?  Female  Male  Not specified

The following question is completely voluntary. If you do not wish to be contacted again, please leave this blank and place the survey in the box or envelope provided.

Are you interested in talking to someone in the project team about how access to information and support in Nhill can be improved?  Yes  No

If yes, please write your name and phone number below

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2: Accommodation in the City brochure



**Accommodation in the City**

Accommodation options for those travelling for medical appointments or treatment within the city

GET IN TOUCH  
Primary Care Partnership  
**Wimmera PCP**  
Working together for healthy communities  
5362 1222

Reviewed: 16.10.2018

### Ballarat

#### Rotary House

Located at St John of God Hospital  
For more info: 03 5320 2958

#### Newington Apartments

2km to St John of God/Base Hospital  
For more info: 0497 049 836

#### Pleasant Apartments

1.4km to St John of God/Base Hospital  
Pick up available for all hospital appointments  
For more info: see your treating doctor

### Melbourne

#### BDMI Rotary House

400m to Royal Melbourne Hospital  
For more info: 03 9320 7400

#### RNR Serviced Apartments

550m to Royal Women's Hospital  
600m to Peter McCallum Cancer Centre  
600m to Royal Melbourne Hospital  
For more info: 03 8354 9029

#### Peter Mac Patient Accommodation

Located at Peter Mac Cancer Centre  
For more info: 03 8559 7454

#### Ryder-Cheshire Ivanhoe Home

11km to Royal Melbourne Hospital  
11km to Peter Mac Cancer Centre  
For more info: 03 9254 2400

### Adelaide

#### Regency Apartments

1.5km to Royal Adelaide Hospital  
Long and short stay available  
For more info: 08 7073 1840

#### Adelaide Riviera Hotel

Located 500m to the RAH  
For more info: 08 8212 1700

#### Cancer Council Lodge

Low cost  
Free transport to cancer treatment centres available  
For more info: 13 11 20