

Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health



## A PHCRED PROGRAM FOR REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*Funded by the Department of Health and Ageing*

CUCRH is managed by three universities  
and is inclusive of all health disciplines.

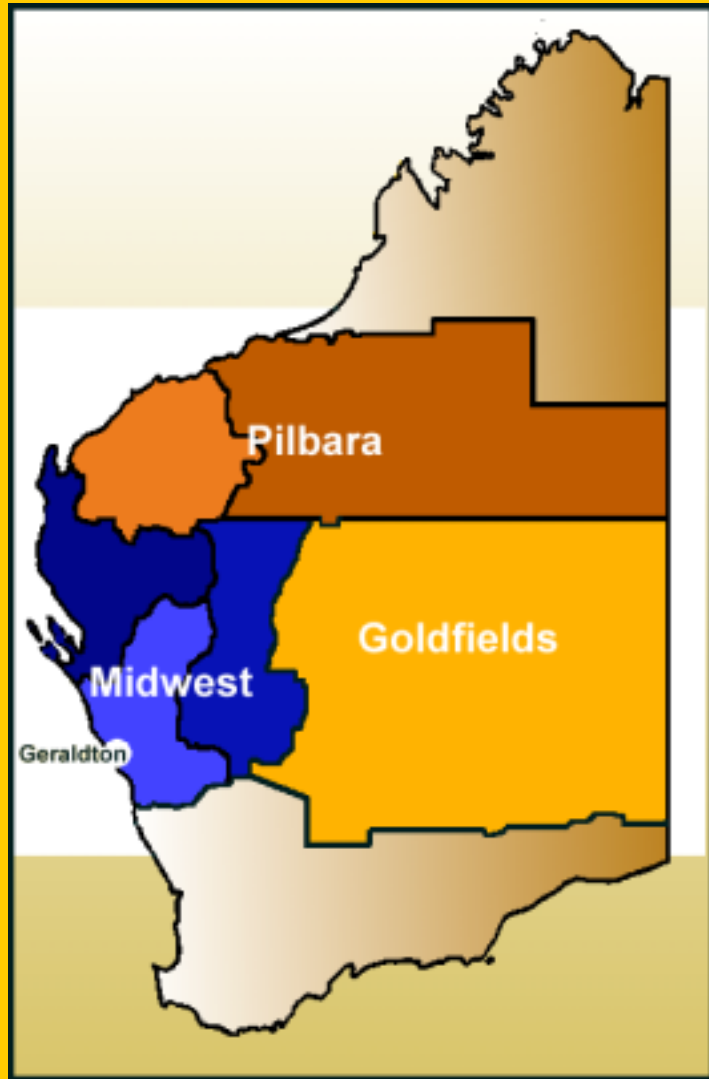
CUCRH started full operations in Jan 2000.



EDITH COWAN  
UNIVERSITY  
PERTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



CUCRH covers three large regions, incorporating two-thirds of WA and approximately 200,000 people.

The regions have three divisions, (until recently) seven state health services, four public health units, and seven Aboriginal medical services.

CUCRH is based in Geraldton and has a small office in Port Hedland.

## CUCRH's Vision

News editors are dismayed. For years rural health has been a good news story. Gone are the headlines screaming doctor shortages, shameful Aboriginal health statistics and the hopelessness of rural youth. Rural communities are now much healthier than urban communities. Comprehensive health services are readily available and diverse community organisations are actively involved in promoting healthy environments and lifestyles. Small wonder that the few vacancies for rural health professionals are highly sought after. One farming community recently had ten applications for a single locum and the best nursing students compete for the prestigious regional graduate programs. Interviews with the applicants highlight the supportive management, innovative service delivery, opportunities for professional advancement and the use of evidence based health practice, as reasons for wanting to move to the country.

Con't ...

Of course, urban residents are not likely to obtain a position. For decades, health courses have been the most popular choice among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students from rural areas. As a consequence, universities have transferred their core infrastructure to the country, permitting local study and work practice. Since experience in rural health is a prerequisite for sought-after rural employment, urban families are moving to country towns to ensure children have an opportunity for a health career.

The Commonwealth Department of Health has recently instituted University Departments of Urban Health to redress the brain drain to the country of the nation's best and brightest health professionals.

PHCRED will help CUCRH to achieve its vision by increasing primary health practitioners' and services' knowledge about research and participation in R&D, which will lead to:

- A more rewarding professional life for rural and remote health professionals
- Improved PHC practice
- Challenges and changes to existing service delivery systems and broader policies that influence health

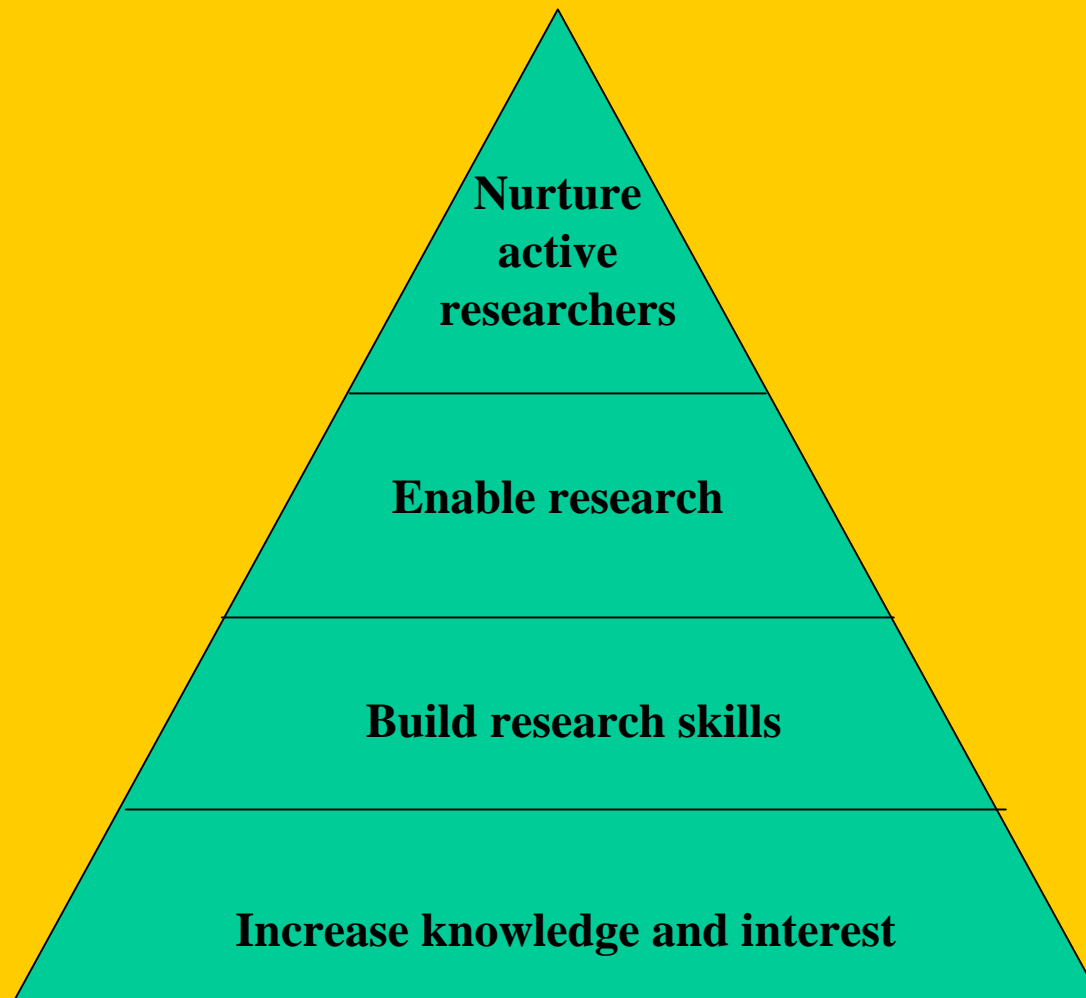
In 2002 the PHCRED Program has conducted activities in all five of its strategic objectives



*Objective 1: Develop partnerships with and between regional health services and divisions and appropriate state-based institutions to facilitate education and research activities*

MOUs outlining collaborative activities prepared with Institute for Child Health Research and the WA branch of the Johanna Briggs Institute.

Opportunities for research support widely promoted among partner organisations.



*Objective 2:  
Foster the  
involvement of  
primary health  
care providers  
in research*

## *Activities in 2002 under Objective 2:*

Evaluation of training to promote effective use of the internet and electronic databases has been completed, which demonstrated increased confidence by participants six weeks after training. A plan to address recommendations is being put in place.

Four rural/remote PHC providers sponsored to present research activities at national conferences.

Two PHC Research Fellowships (3-month) accepted (physio & AHW manager).

Development of a series of rural-based workshops (including guideline development, follow-up and evaluation) on evidence based nursing practice.

*Objective 3: Be a source of research expertise and information for rural and remote health services, divisions and health professionals*

Extensive statistical and research design assistance provided to 13 research projects by PHC providers, about half in collaboration with CUCRH academics.

Ad hoc statistical or research design assistance to an additional 11 rural PHC providers and 7 postgraduate students working on rural health topics.

Three general practice based research projects initiated (pathways to mental health care; socio-demographic profile of a new general practice client load in an area of special need; integration of care planning into general practice).

*Objective 4: Pioneer the use of new methodologies for rural, remote and Indigenous primary health care research*

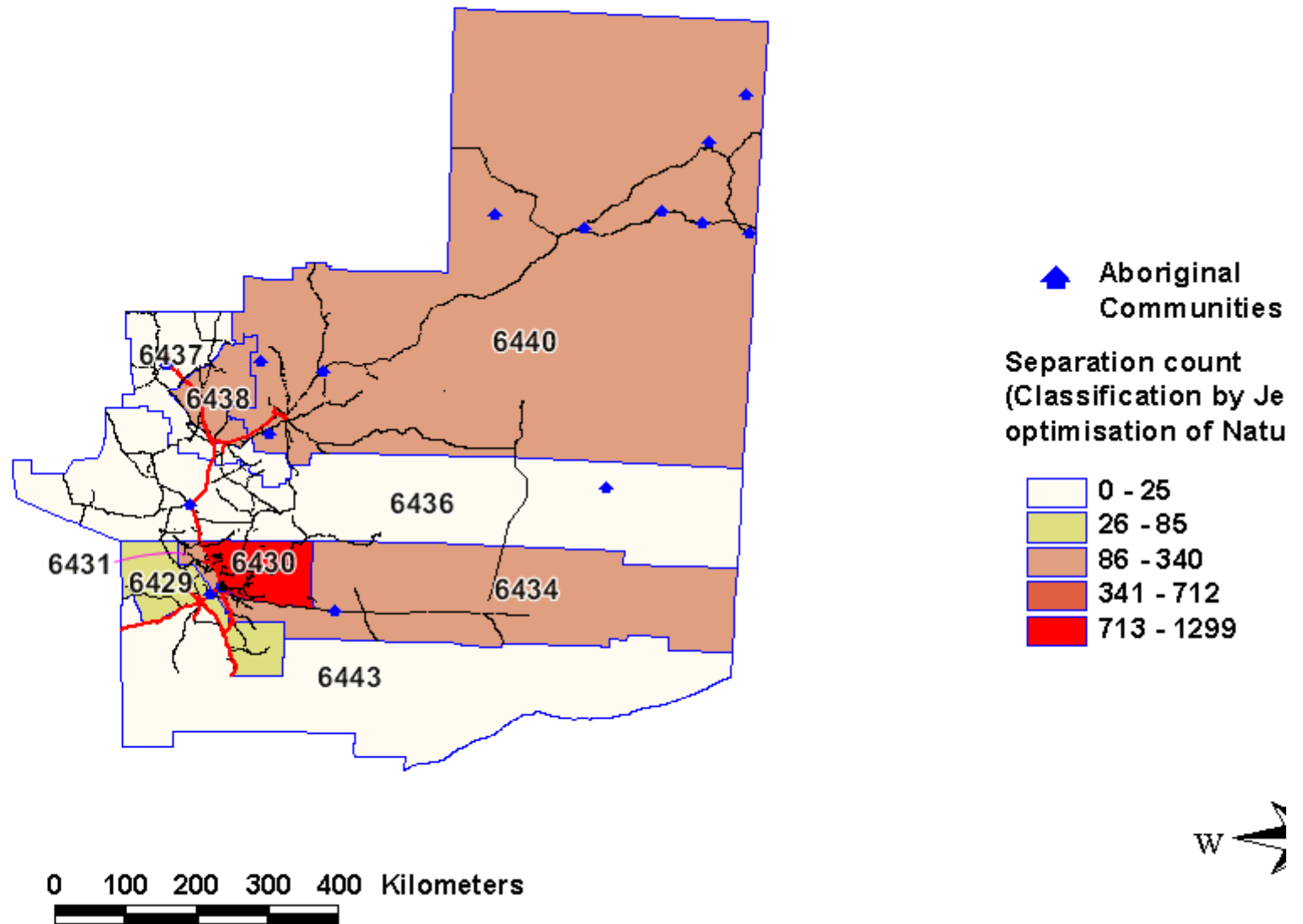
Area 1:

Anthropologically informed research on the adoption of a primary health care model in a remote health service has resulted in a peer reviewed article, external funding for an action research project on early childhood development and a program of undergraduate research training to be based in the region (piloted this year and to expand significantly in 2003).

*Area 2 under Objective 4:*

Considerable work has been done in the area of geographic systems and primary health care. A study of diabetes complications through the northern Goldfields has been completed and presented at a state forum. Ethics applications for two PHC GIS projects are under review.

# Separations by Post Code Lefroy SSD separations data set



*Objective 5: Undertake collaborative research and evaluation activities that inform national and state policy directions and regional priorities and address local and regional health needs*

Extensive work leading a team of partner organisations in the Pilbara (esp. the Pilbara Division) to develop a proposal of a consultative needs analysis and evidence-based planning for **chronic disease management**.

Collaboration with the Midwest Division and the Midwest Mental Health Team to address the findings of CUCRH research into **primary mental health care** partnerships by launching team-building educational sessions structured around case scenarios reflecting recent research on the quality of those partnerships.

Collaboration with the Midwest Division, health services and AMS to introduce and evaluate an **asthma** management strategy appropriate to small isolated towns.

In keeping with our targets, one fellowship was awarded to an Aboriginal person and two major projects (chronic disease in the Pilbara and diabetes in the Goldfields) address **Aboriginal health** priorities.



After so much hard work and good results, CUCRH staff take time out to celebrate !!

(... actually a posed picture following a much loved staff member's goodbye party ... really)