

## HSRAANZ 2017 conference: Through the eyes of a PhD Student

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### What I thought of the HSRAANZ 2017 conference?



The Gold Coast 2017 HSRAANZ conference was my first time attending a HSRAANZ event, and my first exposure to the work of HSRAANZ. The main theme that stood out for me was that we need to rethink the way we deliver care to surround the patients, and also the limitations that we face with our stagnant views on funding models and IT systems!

There were great insights shared from international key note speakers, as well as our Australian and New Zealand colleagues. I enjoyed learning about the many innovative projects happening around Australia, NZ, UK and Canada. It seems we all have similar challenges to face, and are developing our own innovative ways to solve these. And we can learn from each other!

As it was my first HSRAANZ conference, I didn't really know what to expect. I had a look through the program beforehand and was wowed by all the interesting sessions planned, where would I start?! (I wanted to be in every room at once). The online conference app made it easy to navigate, you could create an online schedule, and meant that you weren't constantly flicking through your pocket guide to find the next session.

The break-out sessions were themed according to abstract content which meant the theme flowed well between presentations. The conference organisers clearly had put a lot of thought into these themes, and there were a lot of sessions, so WELL DONE!!

### ***Meeting new colleagues and catching up with old ones...***

The conference was three days jam packed with opportunities to learn and network. When you weren't in the sessions absorbing information and scribbling notes, you were offered plenty of well-timed breaks that were long enough to meet people and learn more!

The Marriott hotel was a beautiful location, and helped create a wonderful and relaxed atmosphere for mingling between sessions. I couldn't get over how friendly and approachable everyone was. The first person I met at the tea break on day 1 was Victoria, an epidemiologist... from my home town!! Victoria later introduced me to her colleague Judy, who (surprise) was my project mentor during my Undergraduate degree ten years earlier. We had a great little catch up, and played a game of "where are they now?"

Through the conference Welcome drinks and the Poolside Soiree (YES the soiree was just as fancy as it sounds) I met a lot of excellent colleagues who worked or studied in health economics, policy, statistics, and made connections with a few PhD students. I wasn't able to attend the Early Career Researcher networking evening arranged by the conference as I was busy preparing for my presentation the next day, but I heard great things, and this is on my must-do list for next time.

### ***What did I learn?***



My PhD supervisor emailed me details of the HSRAANZ conference abstract submission earlier in the year, and my project Community Eye Care (C-EYE-C) in Western Sydney was accepted for an oral presentation. My supervisor encouraged me to use the RE-AIM evaluation framework to explore how different aspects and layers of the health system interact to influence project outcomes and to explore the scalability of the project. I had never used this type of framework for evaluation, so that in itself was a steep learning curve.

While at the conference I was inspired by all of the "Frameworks" for health systems research that were

presented. It was great to see how these frameworks were applied and the research findings presented. My main take home from the conference was the long list of frameworks that I jotted

down during the sessions. Now that I'm back to PhD reality, I will go off and explore these frameworks further. I'm looking forward to seeing how these frameworks can be applied in my PhD research.

### ***What I want to see at future HSRAANZ conferences?***

One key thing that stood out was a comment by Prof Judith Smith in the final wind up session on Friday.

*"When will Indigenous health stop needing its own session and be visible across each of the streams?"*

While there is not a single doubt that Indigenous health issues in Australia and NZ are a key priority area for improvement, and more resources need to be invested here. Improving the health of Aboriginal Australians is everyone's responsibility. For future conferences, I would like to see less isolation of Indigenous health streamed research, and see these projects imbedded under other all of the priority themes. Indigenous health projects often involve extensive collaboration, co-design, and rethink conventional models of care. We could all learn from this knowledge!

### ***A huge thank you for the HSRAANZ conference Bursary...***

As a PhD student I submitted an abstract and was accepted for an oral presentation at the conference. The conference organisers emailed me to encourage me to apply for a HSRAANZ Bursary. The HSRAANZ bursary meant that I could stay longer than my one day of presenting, and really take in all that the conference had to offer.