

Quality, Equity and Systems  
Transformation in Primary Health Care  
(QUEST PHC) – Phase 1

**Final Report Executive Summary**

Circulation requires authorisation from DHCRC

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## RESEARCH TEAM

Emeritus Prof Jennifer Reath – Western Sydney University (Lead March 2021 to August 2022)

Dr Phyllis Lau – Western Sydney University (Lead September 2022 to February 2023)

Emeritus Prof Tim Usherwood – The University of Sydney

Prof Andrew Page – Western Sydney University

Prof Kath Peters – Western Sydney University

A/Prof Kathy Tannous – Western Sydney University

Prof Penelope Abbott – Western Sydney University

Dr Steven Trankle – Western Sydney University

Dr Natalie Cochrane – Western Sydney University

Dr Samantha Ryan – Western Sydney University

## RESEARCH TEAM (ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUBPROJECT)

Emeritus Prof Jennifer Reath (Lead August 2022)

Dr Phyllis Lau (Lead September 2022 to February 2023)

Prof Peter O'Mara – The University of Newcastle

Dr Summer Finlay – University of Wollongong

Mr Jamie Newman – Orange Aboriginal Medical Service

Prof Penelope Abbott – Western Sydney University

Dr Samantha Ryan – Western Sydney University

## PROJECT CONTROL GROUP

Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre – Ms Win Yee Tan (Chair mid-August 2022 to February 2023)

Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre – Dr Toby Hodgson (Chair March 2022 to mid-August 2022)

Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre – Dr Isobel Freat (Chair March 2021 to March 2022)

Brisbane North Primary Health Network – Ms Amie Horwood, Ms [Amanda Queen](#)

Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network – Dr Brendan Goodger

Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network – Ms Lizz Reay, Ms Kate Tye

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network – Ms Emma McKeown, Ms Janelle Devereaux

South Western Sydney Primary Health Network – Ms Kristen Short, Mr Keith McDonald

Western New South Wales Primary Health Network – Mr Andrew Coe

Western Sydney Primary Health Network (WentWest) – Mr Ray Messom, Ms Jane Assange

Western Australia Primary Health Alliance – Ms Chris Kane

## PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

Brisbane North Primary Health Network – Ms Amie Horwood, Ms Joanne Dieudonne

Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network – Dr Brendan Goodger

Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network – Ms Lizz Reay, Ms Kate Tye

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network – Ms Emma McKeown, Ms Janelle Devereaux

South Western Sydney Primary Health Network – Ms Kristen Short, Mr Keith McDonald

Western New South Wales Primary Health Network – Mr Andrew Coe

Western Sydney Primary Health Network (WentWest) – Mr Ray Messom, Ms Jane Assange

Western Australia Primary Health Alliance – Ms Chris Kane

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners – Dr Paresh Dawda

Australian College Rural and Remote Medicine – Dr Ken Mackey

Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health – Dr Rose Loughheed, Mr Iain Crawford

South Australia Prison Health Service – Dr Tom Turnbull

## PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUBPROJECT)

Mr Abe Ropitini – Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

Dr Jason Agostino – National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

Ms Julie Tongs – Winnunga Nimmitjah

Ms Vendula Corston – Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Phase 1 of the Quality, Equity and Systems Transformation in Primary Health Care (QUEST PHC) project, which was funded by the Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre (Project ID DHCRC-0102), extended previous work by Western Sydney University in partnership with PHNs in Greater Western Sydney.

### Aim

The overall aim of the QUEST PHC project is to develop Australia's first comprehensive, evidence-based, professionally endorsed tool for analysing and reporting quality data across all components of general practice in Australia, thereby informing quality improvement and potentially providing a framework for alternative primary health care funding models. In this phase of the project, the objective was to establish content validity of a suite of indicators and measures developed previously.

### Research design

We used a mixed methods approach including quantitative and qualitative data collected from a wide range of sources to strengthen our findings. These comprised:

- a Delphi consensus study using three rounds of online survey with a variety of primary health care experts from Australian general practices and PHNs involved in quality improvement initiatives; this study aimed to explore the relevance and feasibility of the previously developed suite of indicators and measures.
- literature review to identify primary healthcare indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and justice health;
- literature review to identify PRMs potentially applicable in Australian general practice setting;
- focus group consultations with primary healthcare consumers, seeking their views about key patient-reported measures (PRMs) identified to be suitable for QUEST PHC;
- focus group and interview consultations with Justice Health stakeholders, seeking their views about indicators and measures relevant in the prison setting;
- focus group and interview consultations with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) stakeholders, seeking their views about indicators and measures relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### Key results

The Delphi study established consensus with participating general practice and PHN staff for the suite of QUEST PHC indicators and measures previously developed. Whilst the ratings of all measures were high for both relevance and feasibility, some measures were less feasible than others, particularly patient-reported measures (PRMs). Qualitative responses from the Delphi study described systemic, GP and patient-related barriers, including concerns about the use of PRMs in general practice. Consumer participants expressed concerns about use of the four PRMs identified from the literature

for the QUEST PHC indicators. These included the complexity of the language, the unclear purpose, lack of applicability across different contexts.

Although quality indicators were noted to be important and necessary in Australian prisons, there are many structural and environmental challenges to implementing a universal tool in a diverse system. Whilst Justice Health stakeholders thought that the QUEST PHC suite of indicators and measures would support PHC quality in the prison system, the complex prison system and the many variabilities across prisons in different states would be potential barriers to the implementation of such a tool.

Primary health care delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people is multifaceted and requires particular consideration of issues including cultural safety, training, funding and governance. Whilst there may be value in expanding quality indicators already currently measured in Aboriginal and Community-Controlled Health Services to include some of QUEST PHC indicators and measures, further consultations with the community and ACCHS sector will be required.

### **Recommendations for application of the QUEST PHC indicators and measures**

1. Develop the QUEST PHC suite of indicators and measures into a digital solution that is integrated with existing clinical information systems in general practices to measure quality in Australian general practice at the practice, PHN, jurisdictional and national level.
2. Review the measures considered more challenging to implement in particular:
  - Consult with key stakeholders to develop strategies for PRMs and collection of linked data.
  - Consult with general practice and the PHNs on the interpretation of the data generated by QUEST PHC – in particular the impact of different practice contexts including socio-economic status of the patient population.
3. Engage consumers in co-designing PRMs and making recommendations on ways to integrate their routine use in Australian general practice.
4. Pilot the QUEST PHC solution in a range of general practices to test its capacity to support quality improvement and inform measurement of general practice quality.
5. Conduct discussions with governments and key stakeholders to consider the potential of QUEST PHC as a tool for measuring and remunerating high quality in Australian general practice in alignment with the recommendations of the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report December 2022.
6. Ensure primary health care professionals are remunerated adequately and supported to undertake data collection for quality improvement.
7. Plan approaches with Justice Health and ACCHS sectors that would enable application of QUEST PHC or similar measures in these Justice Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings.