

Rural Health and Research Congress

#RHRC2019

Futureproofing Rural Health

Decentralising Allied Health Specialties: Providing Hand Therapy in a Rural Community



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Who Are We?

- Occupational Therapists
- Rural Generalists with specialist training in Hand Therapy



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What Is Our Service?

- *A specialty Hand Therapy service offering:*
- *Face to face assessment and intervention of acute and chronic hand and upper limb injuries based in Armidale.*
- *Splinting, wound mx., scar mx., oedema mx., exercises, education, assistive devices, RTW and everyday function.*
- *Chronic pain Intervention.*
- *Supporting and upskilling sole therapists.*



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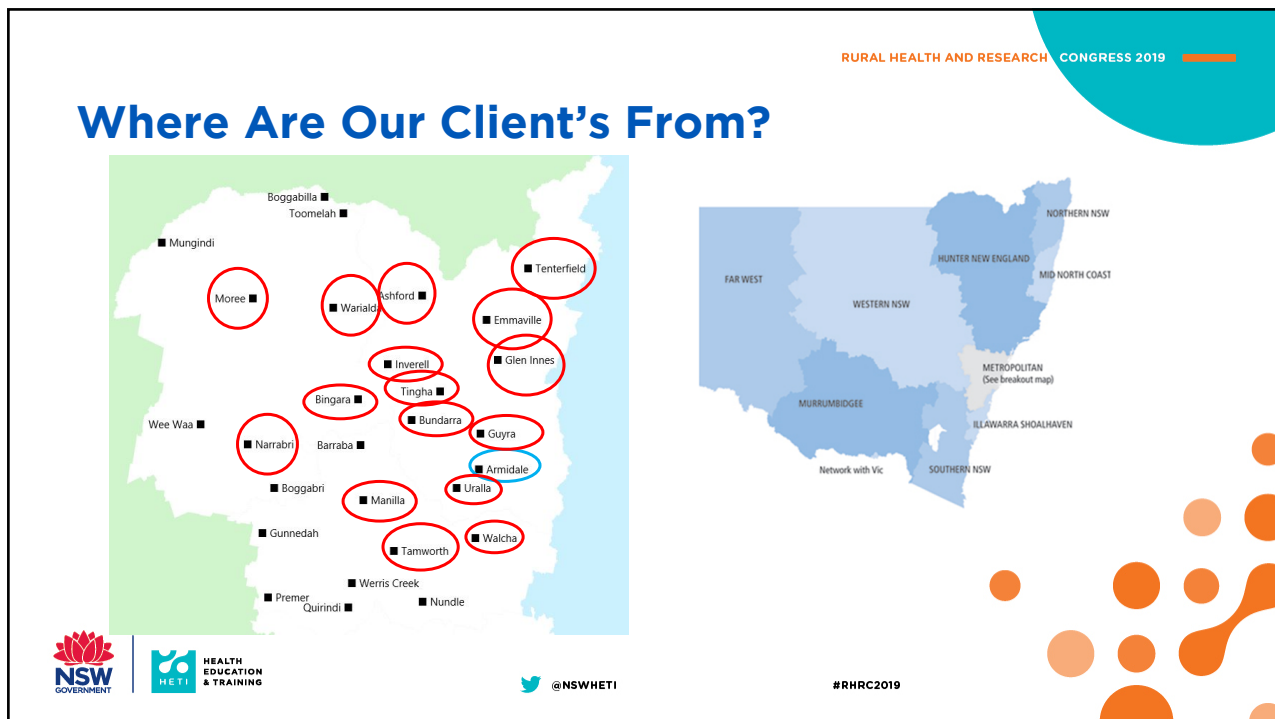
How Did We Come To Be?

- *Poor access to speciality services in rural regions.*
- *Poor functional outcomes affecting occupational roles, and overall health and well being.*
- *Lack of expertise to manage complex trauma and pain.*
- *Lack of professional networks and support.*
- *Lack of local referral options to manage complex trauma etc. therefore travel was necessary resulting in high costs and stress to clients.*

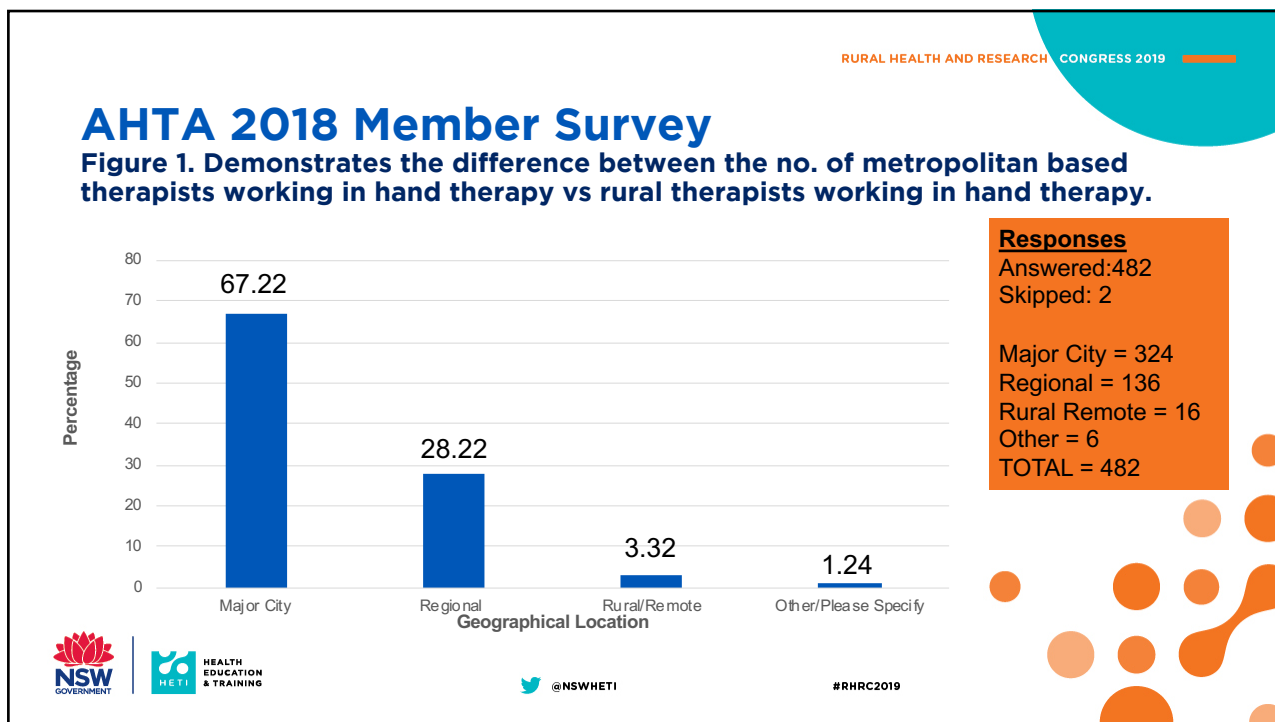


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Approach in Establishing Speciality Service

- *Self directed learning.*
- *Rural scholarships for professional development.*
- *Staff member worked in a specialist Plastic Unit in UK for 12 months.*
- *Secondments*
- *Joining the AHTA*
- *Joining NSW Hand Therapy Interest Group*
- *Promotion of service/ building networks*
- *Telehealth grant*

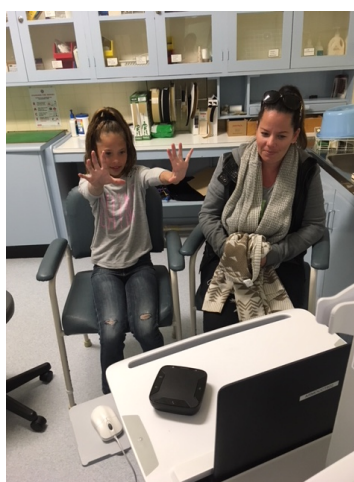
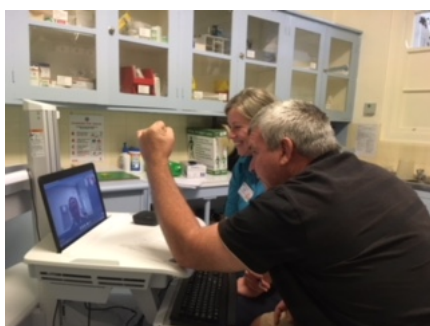


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Telehealth

- *Consultant review locally.*



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Data Collection

Qualitative

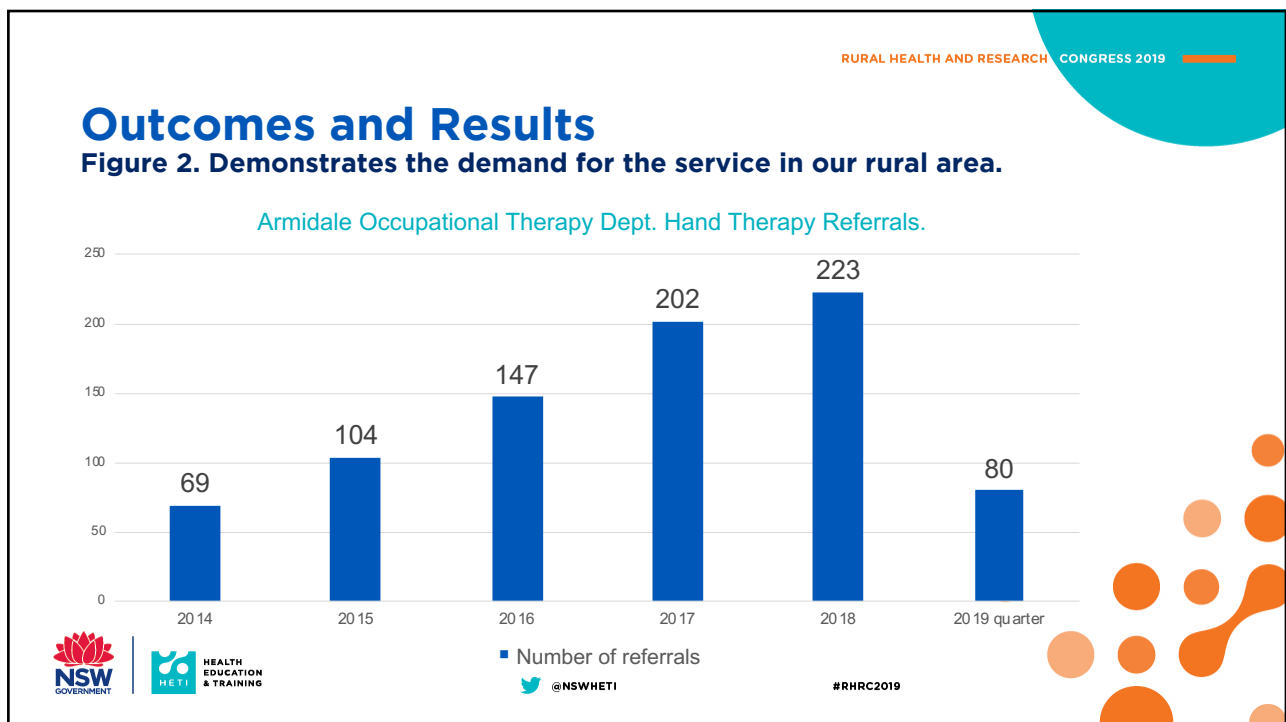
- Client Rounding
- Client questionnaire post telehealth appointments

Quantitative

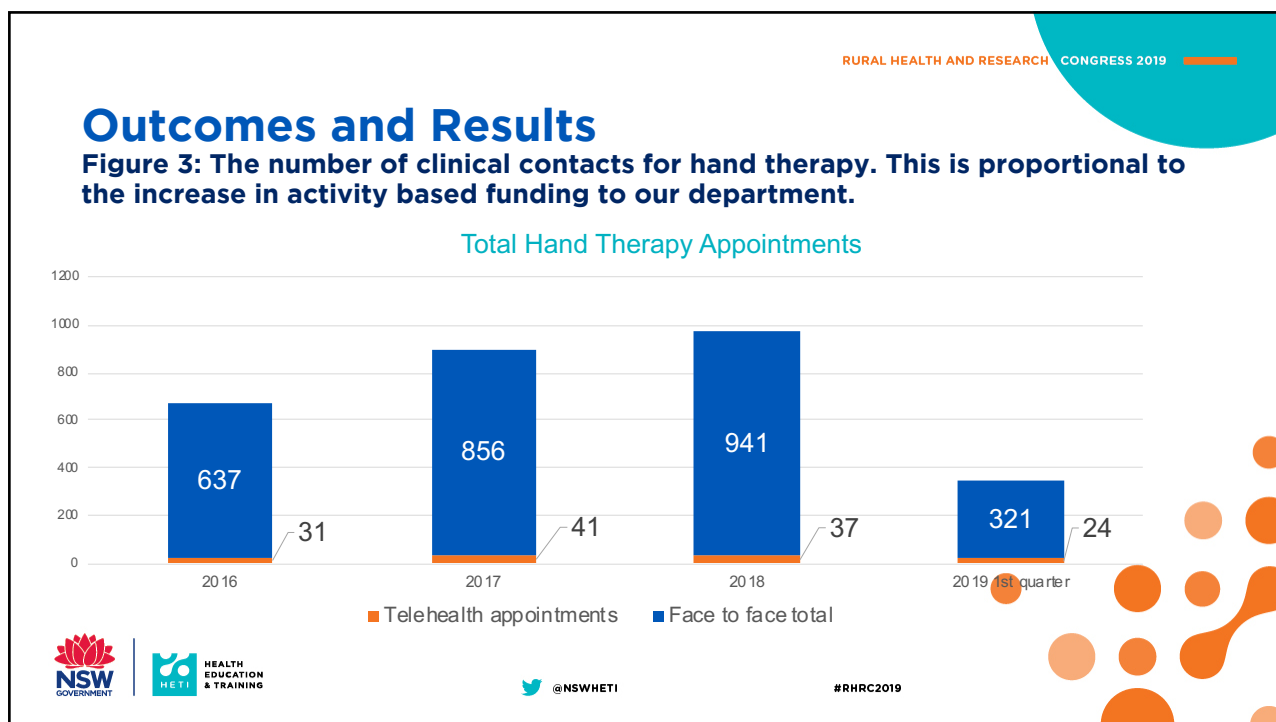
- Chime Reports
- Telehealth data reports

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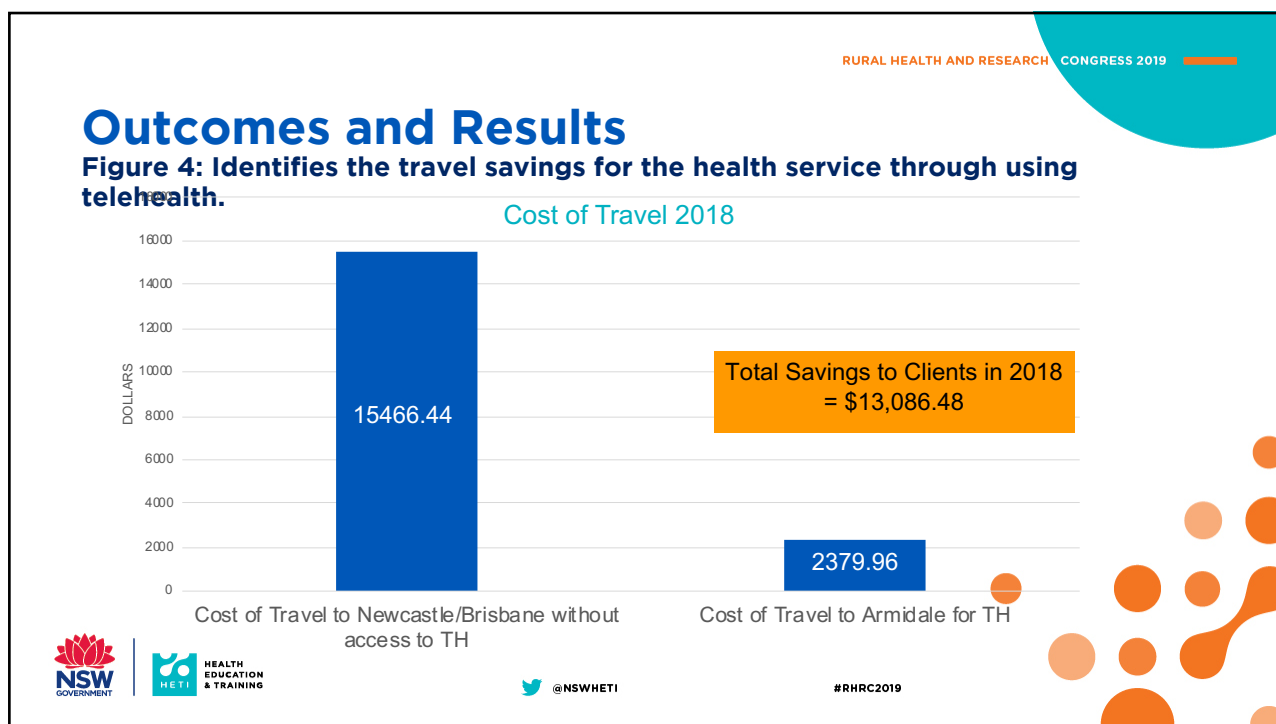
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Client Satisfaction

Qualitative Data

- *Not having to travel to Brisbane for a 5 mins review.- Client did not have to miss too much school- Costs of travel are negated by telehealth- Do not have to pay for accommodation as we don't have to go to Brisbane.*
- *Saved a trip from Tenterfield to JHH.- Gained knowledge on injury by accessing a specialist surgeon - Helpful having Katie to explain and clarify information also.*
- *Gave the opportunity to speak to my surgeon without having to travel 500km to the hospital*



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Outcomes and Results

- *Improved access to speciality service locally.*
- *Improved functional outcomes.*
- *Increased engagement and performance in occupational roles.*
- *Developed expertise and knowledge.*
- *Widened our professional networks hence referral base.*
- *Strengthened networks with specialist units.*
- *Supporting and training sole therapists.*
- *Accessing supervision and professional development.*
- *Developed trust and confidence from consultants and metropolitan hand therapists.*
- *Champion in the delivery of ehealth services in our region.*



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Futureproofing The Service

- *Designated Hand Therapy Position needs to be funded to ensure sustainability of the service.*
- *Retention of allied health staff in rural areas.*
 - *Create opportunities for career progression.*
 - *Support to up skill sole therapists.*
 - *Reduce professional isolation.*
- *Formalise partnerships with major centres to guarantee continuation referrals/support/training.*
 - *Service agreement between the hub and spoke.*



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Take Home Message

- *Our service demonstrates the array of benefits that can be achieved for clients, their families, health professionals and health services by decentralising an allied health speciality.*



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Thank you
Any Questions?

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