



Charles Sturt  
University

## Outcomes of the Family Empowerment Program – an online therapy for rural Australians caring for someone with a substance problem

**Prof Julaine Allan**

Other contributors:

Ms Heidi Gray

Dr Nicole Snowdon

Dr Nicola Ivory

Dr Kedir Ahmed

Dr Matt Thomas





# Concerned significant others

01



Substance use can greatly impact CSOs physical and mental health <sup>11</sup>

02



Families with someone using substances tend to have higher rates of mental health distress <sup>3, 4</sup>

03



Providing support to CSOs can not only benefit their wellbeing but also reduce IP use of substances and increase IP willingness to enter a treatment program

<sup>1, 5, 6</sup>

04



Few substance use services provide support to CSOs <sup>2</sup>

05



Rural Australians face additional barriers to accessing AOD support, with most services located in major cities <sup>2</sup>



# Community Reinforcement and Family Training

---

CRAFT





# CRAFT

01



Grounded in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Motivational Interviewing <sup>10</sup>

02



Teaches safe removal of positive reinforcement for problematic substance-using behaviours while increasing positive reinforcement for non-using behaviours <sup>10</sup>

03



Aims: to increase CSO social and emotional wellbeing <sup>13</sup> and encourage the IP to enter AOD treatment <sup>12</sup>

04



Studies show CRAFT improves CSO wellbeing <sup>13</sup> and is associated with increased IP engagement with AOD services <sup>12</sup>

05



However, no studies have evaluated CRAFT when delivered online/telehealth and few studies have evaluated CRAFT in rural communities or within the Australian context



## Aim

To evaluate the effectiveness of an online delivery of CRAFT to CSOs with a loved one using substances

## Method

- A randomised waitlist control trial with a 1:1 allocation ratio was used to compare online CRAFT against a wait-list control group.
- Participants were randomly allocated to the intervention or waitlist group

# Training and Fidelity

---

- Certified Craft trainer Brian Serna from New Mexico USA
- Trained 18 clinicians
- 10 participated in the program delivery
- 6 were certified and delivered over 600 sessions of CRAFT
- Serna Solutions provided assessment of recorded sessions and clinical supervision



# Sample Population

Study participants were **self-selected people with a relative or friend who has a substance problem.**

## Inclusion:

- Family member/s of someone with substance dependence and a mental illness
- Speaks English
- Over 18 years of age
- Is able and willing to attend FEP sessions
- Is able to provide informed consent
- Having at least one contact/day on four days over the past month (in-person or electronic) with the Identified Person (IP)
- Access to a computer with internet or mobile phone with video conferencing capabilities
- Living in regional Australia (MMM2-MMM7)

## Exclusion:

- Domestic and family violence from the person with substance dependence to the family member
- Current participation in other family support/therapy programs



# Measures



An outcome evaluation was conducted within and between the groups.



The outcomes for family participants who received CRAFT were compared to those who received reading material while on the waitlist.



The following measures of psychological well-being was used:

Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Flourishing Scale (FS)

Brief-COPE



Participants accessed six structured CRAFT sessions

All sessions were conducted online via face-to-face video conferencing

# CONSORT

## Enrolment

Expressions of interest (**n=192**)

## Screening

Screened (**n=159**)

## Allocation

Completed baseline (OM1) (**n=126**)

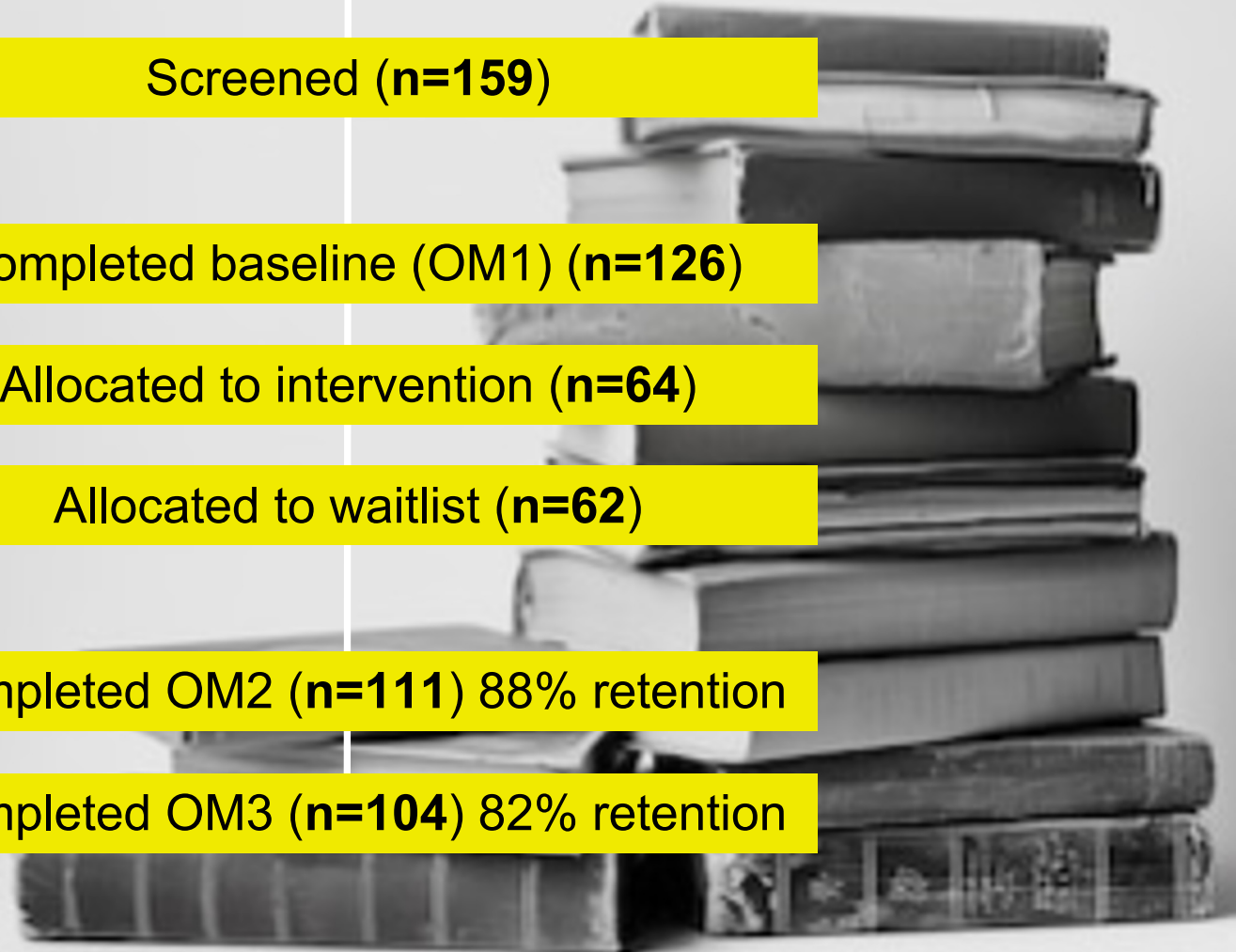
Allocated to intervention (**n=64**)

Allocated to waitlist (**n=62**)

## Follow-up

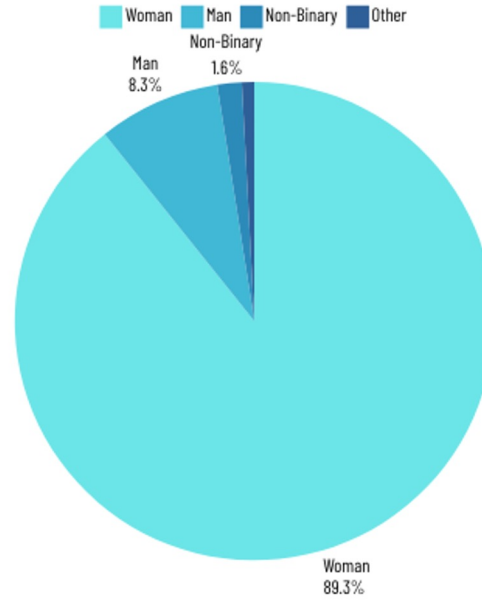
Completed OM2 (**n=111**) 88% retention

Completed OM3 (**n=104**) 82% retention

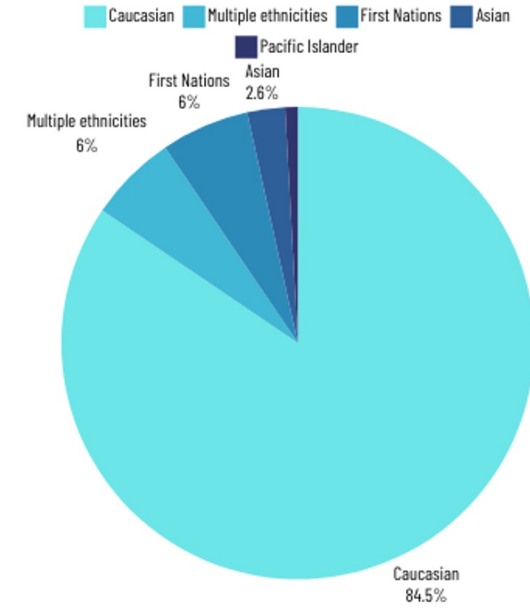


# Demographics

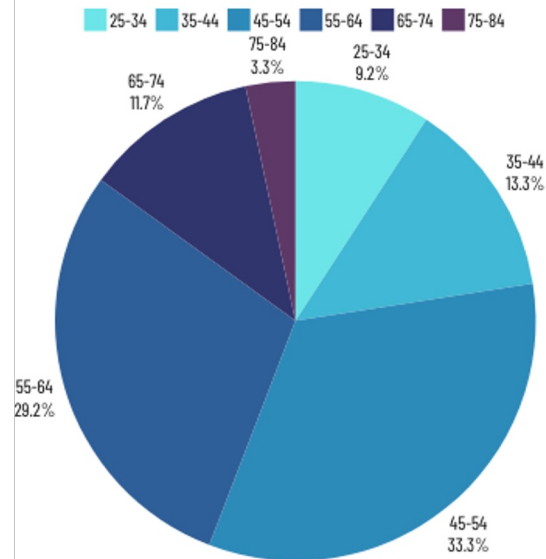
## Participant Gender



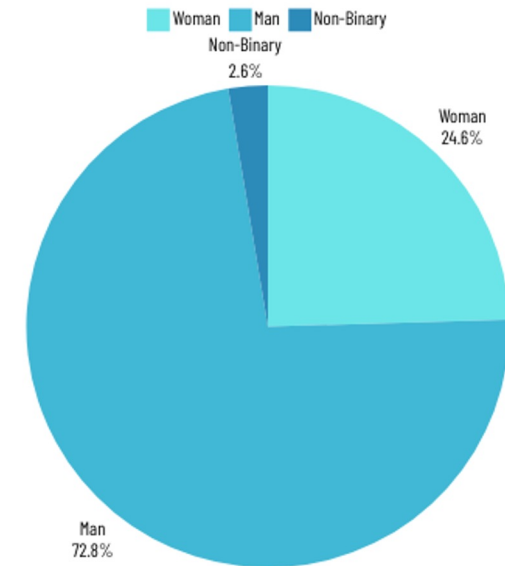
## Participant Ethnicity

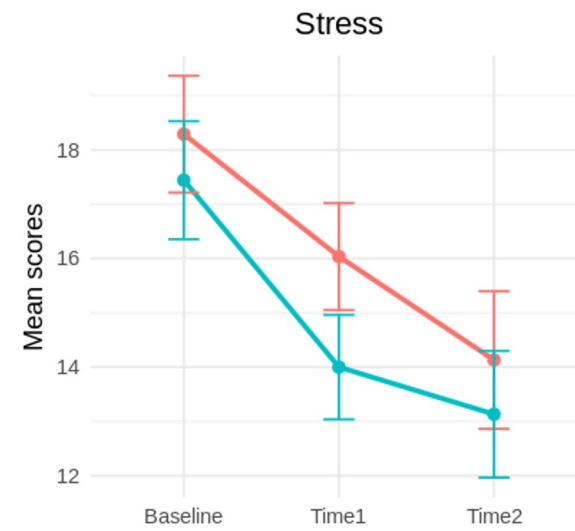
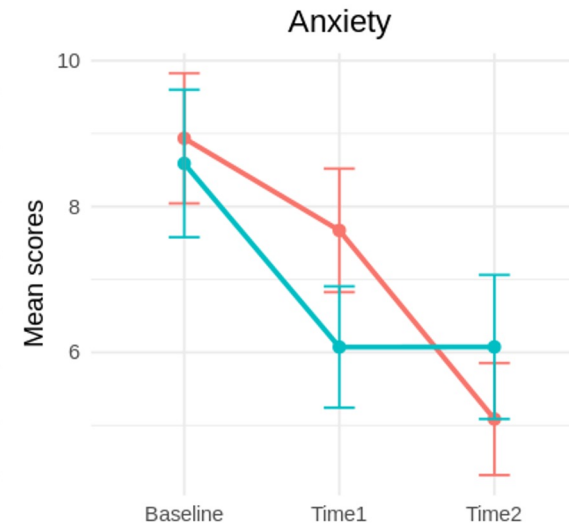
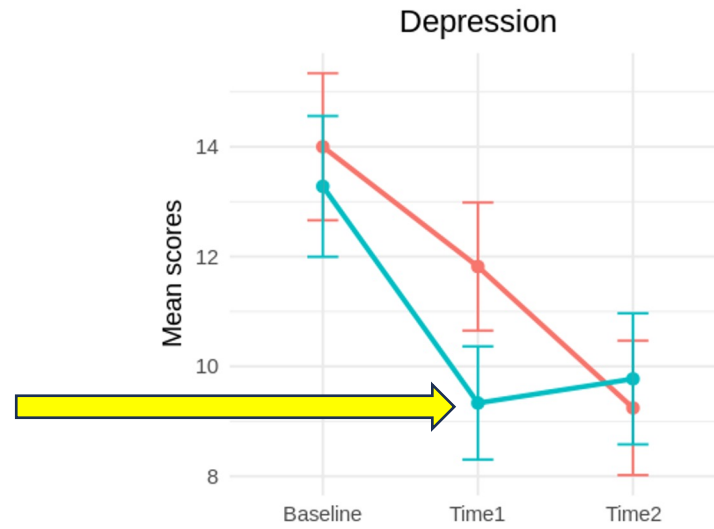


## Participant Age



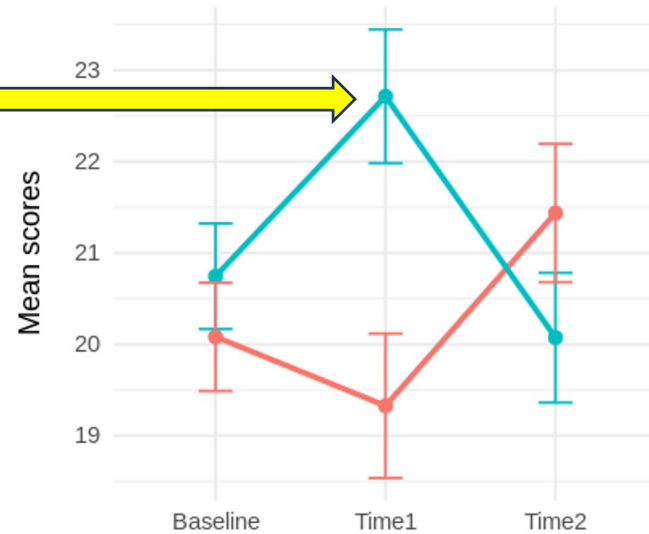
## Gender of person using AOD



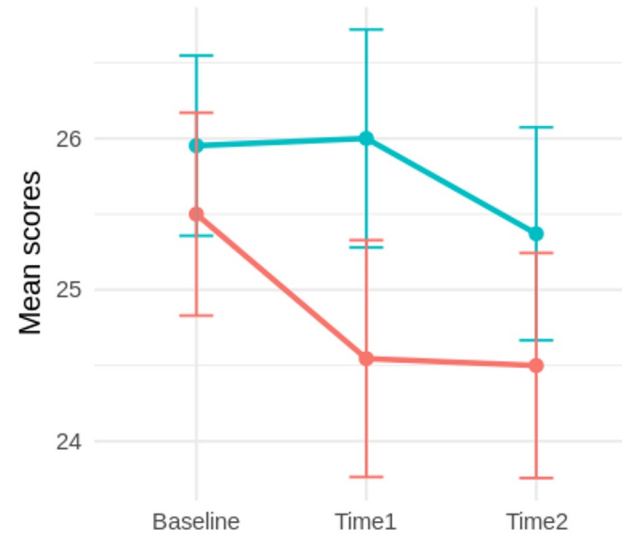


Waitlist Intervention

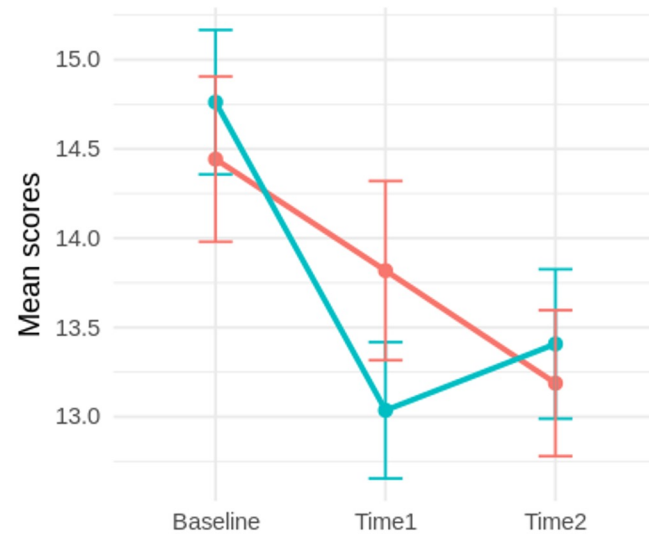
### Problem Focused Coping



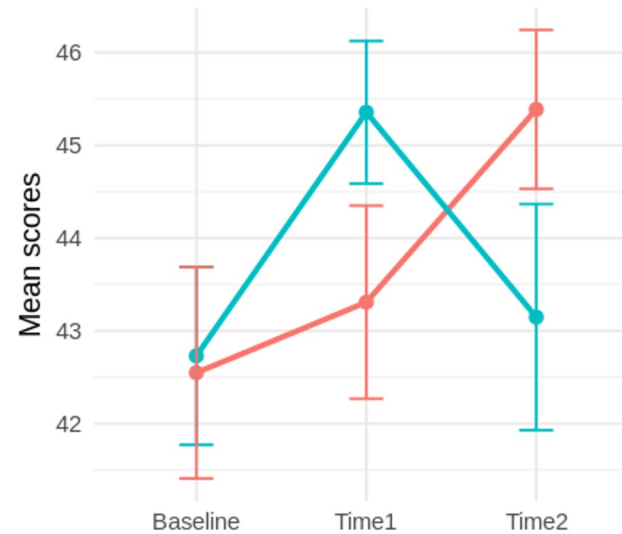
### Emotion Focused Coping



### Avoidant Coping



### Flourishing



—●— Waitlist —●— Intervention

# Experiences of CRAFT

**Communication  
strategies**

**Mental health  
strategies and self  
care**

**Practitioner's  
understanding and  
flexibility**

**Professional  
support for CSO**





# Implications

- Effectiveness of online CRAFT in rural Australia
  - Decrease in depression
  - Increase in satisfaction with life
  - Increase in problem-focused coping
- First known study to deliver CRAFT entirely online
- Shows potential to address key access barriers in rural Australian contexts
- Acceptability of online CRAFT in rural Australia - contribute to the increasing world-wide use of CRAFT
- Department of Health and Ageing - implications for future funding and support for AOD treatment services working with family members and friends.



Charles Sturt  
University

# Questions?

@: [juallan@csu.edu.au](mailto:juallan@csu.edu.au)

Listen to our podcast or read  
more here



# References

- 1) Ariss, T., & Fairbairn, C. E. (2020). The Effect of Significant Other Involvement in Treatment for Substance Use Disorders: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 88(6), 526-540. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000495>
- 2) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2023). *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia annual report*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services-australia/contents/treatment-types>
- 3) Gandhi, R., Suthar, M., Pal, S., & Rathod, A. (2017). Anxiety and depression in spouses of males diagnosed with alcohol dependence: a comparative study. *Archives of psychiatry and psychotherapy*, 19(4), 51-56. <https://doi.org/10.12740/APP/79459>
- 4) Gohil, J., Patel, M., & Samani, M. (2016). Quality of Life and Psychiatric Morbidity in Caregiver of Alcohol Dependence Patients. *IOSR Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences*, 15, 98-101. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0853-15080198101>
- 5) Higgins, S. T., Budney, A. J., Bickel, W. K., & Badger, G. J. (1994). Participation of Significant Others in Outpatient Behavioral Treatment Predicts Greater Cocaine Abstinence. *The American journal of drug and alcohol abuse*, 20(1), 47-56. <https://doi.org/10.3109/00952999409084056>
- 6) Kelly, S. M., O'Grady, K. E., Schwartz, R. P., Peterson, J. A., Wilson, M. E., & Brown, B. S. (2010). The relationship of social support to treatment entry and engagement: the Community Assessment Inventory. *Subst Abus*, 31(1), 43-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08897070903442640>
- 7) Lawrinson, P., Copeland, J., & Indig, D. (2006). Regional differences in injecting practices and other substance use-related behaviour among entrants into opioid maintenance pharmacotherapy treatment in New South Wales, Australia. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 82(supp 1), S95-S102. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0376-8716\(06\)80015-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0376-8716(06)80015-3)
- 8) McCann, T. V., & Lubman, D. I. (2018). Help-seeking barriers and facilitators for affected family members of a relative with alcohol and other drug misuse: A qualitative study. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 93, 7-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2018.07.005>
- 9) Meyers, R. J., & Godley, M. D. (2001). Developing the community reinforcement approach. In Robert J. Meyers & William R. Miller (Eds.), *A community reinforcement approach to addiction treatment* (pp. 1-7). Cambridge University Press.
- 10) Meyers, R. J., Miller, W. R., Hill, D. E., & Tonigan, J. S. (1998). Community reinforcement and family training (CRAFT): engaging unmotivated drug users in treatment. *Journal of substance abuse*, 10(3), 291-308. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0899-3289\(99\)00003-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0899-3289(99)00003-6)
- 11) Orford, J., Natera, G., Copello, A., Atkinson, C., Mora, J., Velleman, R., Crundall, I., Tiburcio, M., Templeton, L., & Walley, G. (2005). *Coping with Alcohol and Drug Problems: The Experiences of Family Members in Three Contrasting Cultures* (1 ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203759608>
- 12) Roozen, H. G., De Waart, R., & Van Der Kroft, P. (2010). Community reinforcement and family training: an effective option to engage treatment-resistant substance-abusing individuals in treatment. *Addiction (Abingdon, England)*, 105(10), 1729-1738. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2010.03016.x>
- 13) Smith, J. E., & Meyers, R. J. (2004). *Motivating substance abusers to enter treatment: Working with family members*. The Guilford Press. [https://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qR\\_8jr5-kt4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&ots=KOTXXoileV&sig=pKV-c7YnpgVYPijPSX4kW8Oh2ls&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qR_8jr5-kt4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&ots=KOTXXoileV&sig=pKV-c7YnpgVYPijPSX4kW8Oh2ls&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- 14) Thorn H, Olley R. Barriers and facilitators to accessing medical services in rural and remote Australia: A systematic review. *Asia Pacific journal of health management*. 2023;18(1):20-9.