

## **Connecting rural students to a brighter future; Djing.gii Gudjaagalali School Clinic- implementing School-Based Integrated Care in Outer Regional NSW, Australia.**

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### **Background:**

Children and Young People (CYP) in rural Australia can struggle to access healthcare and wellbeing supports. Prohibitively long waiting times, geographic isolation, financial barriers and a lack of culturally appropriate services can all negatively impact outcomes. This inequity can affect health, wellbeing, and educational engagement resulting in lifelong negative impacts.

Djing.gii Gudjaagalali (Children Stars) School Clinic, an example of School-Based Integrated Care (SBIC), was co-designed with community to address the unmet physical, developmental, social, and mental health needs of rural CYP. A GP-led model, Djing.gii Gudjaagalali integrates available resources, streamlines the patient care journey, and brings culturally responsive care closer to home for school-aged CYP on the Far South Coast of NSW.

### **Methods:**

A critical-realist, sequential three-phase mixed methods study was conducted within the Djing.gii Gudjaagalali School Clinic in Eden, NSW.

#### Quantitative evaluation

Phase 1: School students aged 4-18 years, referred from Eden Marine High School and surrounding 5 primary schools, were recruited at their first school clinic appointment. Data measures collected included demographics, reasons for referral, clinic attendance, recommendations, school attendance, suspensions, behavioural incidents, and behavioural changes.

#### Qualitative evaluation

Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews with students, parents/caregivers, school staff and key stakeholders to understand their experiences of the clinic.

Phase 3: Semi-structured interviews with members of the SBIC Community of Practice, to explore meso and macro level views on sustainability and scale up of the model.

### **Results:**

Data collection has commenced, with detailed results anticipated prior to the conference in November 2024.

### **Conclusion:**

Based on existing national and international literature, and data collected to date, it is expected that SBIC will be shown to improve access to care, educational engagement, and wellbeing for rural students. We predict that SBIC is experienced as a convenient and acceptable model of care amongst the community.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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**50 word biography of the presenting author:**

Dr Corin Miller is a Rural Generalist with Advanced Skills in Paediatrics, and the winner of the National Rural Health Pro "Rural and Remote Health Practitioner of the Year award" 2023. Corin is currently completing a PhD with UNSW, with a focus on strengthening paediatric primary care in rural Australia.