

# From Concept to Capacity: DACRIN's Evolution as a Collaborative Network for AOD Research in NSW

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## INTRODUCTION

The NSW Drug and Alcohol Clinical Research and Improvement Network (DACRIN) was established to overcome persistent barriers to high-quality clinical research in Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) treatment - barriers identified nationally by Sanson-Fisher et al. (2010), including fragmented infrastructure, limited research culture, and poor generalisability from single-site studies. DACRIN addresses these challenges by fostering a collaborative, multicentre model that supports rigorous, inclusive, and practice-relevant trials across NSW.

## APPROACH

DACRIN is a collaborative network connecting clinicians, researchers, and people with lived and living experience (LLE) across NSW, including Local Health Districts (LHDs), specialty networks, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), and Canberra Health Services. Initially established informally in 2014 as a collaboration of LHDs and specialty networks, DACRIN was formalised in 2018 with support from the NSW Ministry of Health's Centre for Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAOD). In 2022, membership was extended to include NGOs, further strengthening the network's reach and diversity. Organisational membership to DACRIN is open to NSW-based AOD service providers with at least one day per week research coordinator capacity.

## METHODS

### 1 Strategic Foundations and Leadership

DACRIN's growth has been supported by strategic planning and funding from the CAOD, enabling the appointment of the DACRIN Statewide Coordinator. The DACRIN Council, comprising a Chair, representatives from member organisations (Table 1), and the CAOD, provides strategic oversight and guides the network's direction and priorities.

### 2 Infrastructure and Collaboration

To support collaboration, DACRIN introduced shared tools, training partnerships, and a public website alongside a members-only SharePoint platform. Individual staff from member organisations can join DACRIN as member affiliates and access shared resources and training.

### 3 Research Priorities

DACRIN research priorities were developed through a consultation process involving surveys with researchers, clinicians and people with LLE. This collaborative approach identified key gaps and opportunities with priorities refined through so-design. The final stage included consumer review of all wording and images to ensure, clarity respect and relevance.

### 4 Cultural Safety and Consumer Engagement

DACRIN is working to embed cultural safety and strengthen the involvement of people with LLE in research design and governance to ensure that research is inclusive, respectful, and informed.

## RESULTS

DACRIN now includes 86% of NSW Local Health Districts, key NGOs, and Canberra Health Services. The network has grown to 300+ affiliate members, delivered 250+ professional development activities and supported 50+ collaborative studies. DACRIN member affiliates have produced 1,000+ publications, recruited 20,000+ participants across multisite trials and secured \$55M+ in competitive funding. DACRIN's leadership is recognised nationally through full membership in the Australian Clinical Trials Alliance (ACTA).

Fig 1. DACRIN Growth

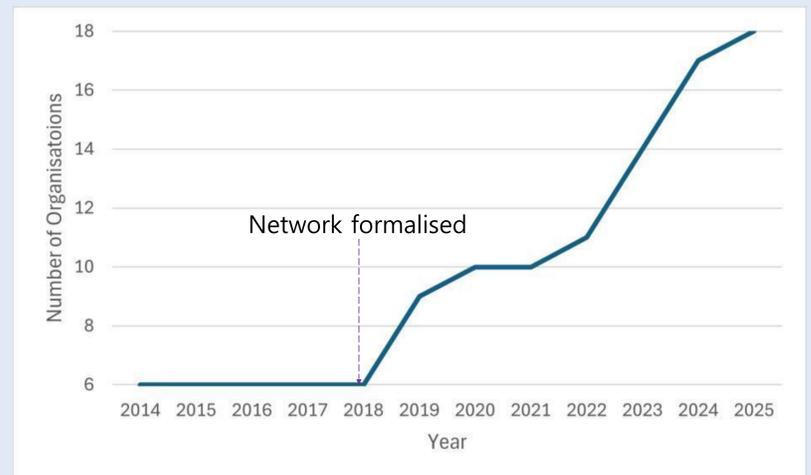


Fig 2. DACRIN Research Priorities



Table 1. DACRIN Membership & Council

Year joined	Organisation Name	DACRIN Council Members	
2014	Hunter New England LHD	Adrian Dunlop	Mel Jackson
2014	South Eastern Sydney LHD	Nick Lintzeris	Greer Dawson
2014	Sydney LHD	Paul Haber	Fahim Cader
2014	Western Sydney LHD	Robert Graham	Jennifer Luksza
2019	Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD	David Reid	Siyu Qian
2019	Justice Health Network	Peter Thompson	Sobi Kim
2019	Northern Sydney LHD	Mark Montebello	Lauren Monds
2020	Central Coast LHD	Steven Childs	Kathren Coombes
2020	Western NSW LHD	Stan Theodorou	Meredith Eagle
2022	NADA - Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs	Rob Stirling	Mei Lin Lee
2023	Nepean Blue Mountains LHD	Karen Fisher	Nicole Benaud
2023	Northern NSW LHD	Lucy Dodds	Sarah Hutchinson
2024	Mid North Coast LHD	Sarah Fox	Amber Domberelli
2024	NUAA - NSW Users and Aids Assoc.	Mary Harrod	Adriaan Bazelmans
2024	Southern NSW LHD	Mark Hardy	Kaniz Fatema
2025	Canberra Health Services - ACT	Tracey Soh	Amanda Coslett

## CONCLUSION

DACRIN's journey from concept to capacity has been enabled by sustained investment from the CAOD. Over ten years, DACRIN has grown into a statewide network that supports AOD services to lead inclusive, collaborative research. Through shared infrastructure, coordinated support, and consumer engagement, DACRIN offers a scalable model for building research capacity across health systems.

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Scan to visit the DACRIN website



### Reference

Sanson-Fisher R, Brand M, Shakeshaft A, et al. (2010). Forming a national multicentre collaboration to conduct clinical trials: Increasing high-quality research in the drug and alcohol field. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 29(5), 469-474. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3362.2009.00166.x>