



**REDUCING THE IMPACT OF CHRONIC
HEPATITIS B IN SEASONAL WORKERS IN
REGIONAL QUEENSLAND**

————— Dr Haylee Fox —————

PROJECT TEAM



**DR ROBYN
PRESTON**

Central Queensland
University



**DR GERALDINE
VAUGHAN**

Central Queensland
University



**A/PROF CATHERINE
O'MULLAN**

Central Queensland
University



DR HAYLEE FOX

Central Queensland
University

BACKGROUND

- The number of Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) workers is increasing in Queensland
- Visa restrictions mean PALM workers are Medicare ineligible and require Private Health Insurance
- Access to health care is a human right
- Social determinants of health and unique healthcare needs for the population
- High prevalence of Blood Borne Viruses (Hepatitis B) and Sexually Transmissible Infections in Pacific Island countries



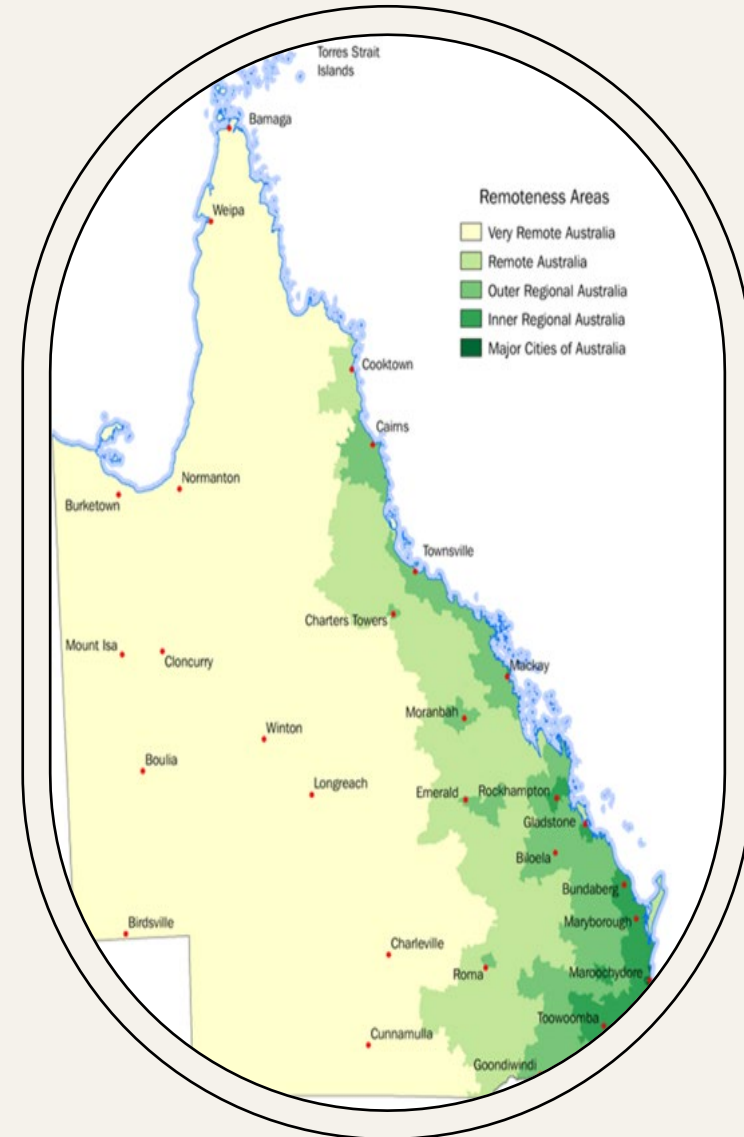
AIMS AND METHODS

AIMS

- To better understand the experiences of Seasonal Workers with Chronic Hepatitis B (CHB) in regional Queensland accessing health care and services
- To better understand the experiences of health care and service providers who provide care and support for Seasonal Workers in regional Queensland
- To identify equity gaps in Hepatitis B policy in Australia

METHODS

- 1-hour qualitative interviews with Seasonal Workers and health care and service providers in regional Queensland
- Document review and policy analysis of public health Hepatitis B policy documents in Australia



RESULTS



SEASONAL WORKERS

- *N* = 18
- Samoa, PNG, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands
- Systemic and structural barriers: Medicare ineligible, out-of-pocket costs, private health insurance, casual employment conditions
- Cultural and behavioural barriers
- Lack of autonomy, disempowered, stigma, inequitable access

HEALTH CARE AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

- *N* = 27
- Doctors, nurses, health educators, policymakers, pastoral care officers
- Ethical dilemma in terms of testing and diagnosis
- Medicare ineligibility and PHI a barrier
- Delayed emergency presentations
- Lack of translation services and culturally specific resources
- Feelings of not providing adequate care

POLICY GAPS

- Public health policies at both the state and federal government levels lack inclusion of seasonal workers as a priority population for hepatitis B
- The exclusion of seasonal workers from BBV health policies impedes efforts to ensure equitable access to hepatitis B care and treatment for this population group.

FINAL THOUGHTS

“If you're going to get sick, you can't work, you can't survive, you can't pay for anything. You're better off to go home.” – Seasonal Worker

“Why would I want to go and see the nurse for an hour? I need to make money now and if I die from hepatitis B or liver cancer, well, that'll probably happen later on. I'll just forget about that for now” – Seasonal Worker

“If they come with a pre-existing medical condition, it's hard to provide any medical treatment for it because the health fund does not pay for it” – Public Health Clinician

“In the event that they return a positive [hepatitis b] result, what are we going to do about that? They're non-Medicare funded....So that would be the reason why we would not often screen for that” - GP





THANK YOU & QUESTIONS

— h.fox@cqu.edu.au —