

# Mustard seeds

by Candice Care-Unger

In 2018 West Pennant Hills was struggling with our vision, purpose and where the congregation could show up and help the local community. We were challenged most by creating communities of Joy, Hope, Love and Peace. Through a period of discernment the congregation was able to establish a relationship with one of our local hospitals. There was a research opportunity to look at the spiritual wellbeing and the contribution to resilience that spirituality played in the rolls of people who had had a traumatic injury such as a spinal cord injury or a brain injury. In a first for the congregation we created a partnership over two years which involved the congregation financially supporting an academic piece of work within the local community.

We Fast forward now to 2021 that project is finished. The outcomes have been widely disseminated through four peer review journals and we see now that the hospital and a local university in Sydney, The University of Notre Dame have created an industry partnership to create a PHD scholarship to assist a student looking to further explore the impact on Spirituality on resilience on the in-patients with spinal cord and brain injury.

This is an example of the mustard seed story. How the congregation and the church can plant a seed of hope, a seed of joy, a seed of love and a seed of peace that can blossom into something else that we may not know many years down the track.

Exploring Spirituality in the context of health care is novel, it's new, it's not well understood and yet the church has been able to mobilise what we would call seed funding to be able to help start this important work. We write about this today because the PHD scholarship is open and they are currently looking for a candidate but also to help the congregation members understand how it is that congregations can move within their own communities and that these things may not look like what they have traditionally looked like but they still have very important outcomes and very important opportunities. I attach the PHD scholarship in case anyone is interested in what this looks like. But for me as the Pastor at West Pennant Hills it's the reminder that from little things big things grow and we can absolutely make large mountain-sized shifts in systems that we didn't realise that we could influence with small courageous first steps.



The University of Notre Dame Australia is a Catholic university with campuses in Fremantle, Broome and Sydney. The Objects of the University are the provision of university education within a context of Catholic faith and values and the provision of an excellent standard of teaching, scholarship and research, training for the professions and the pastoral care of its students.

**PhD Scholarship – Enhancing resilience after spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury: Development and pilot of a program to facilitate inner strength, hope, connectedness and spiritual well-being in rehabilitation inpatients. (Full-Time, \$30,000 p.a., for Three Years)**

The University of Notre Dame Australia is offering one (tax-free) PhD stipend scholarship, \$30,000 per annum, for up to three years. We are seeking applications from highly motivated candidates interested in pursuing a PhD under the direction and supervision of an expert academic and clinical team based at the Institute for Ethics and Society (IES) and Royal Rehab, which are both located in Sydney.

The IES is a national research institute of the University of Notre Dame, based on the Sydney campus. Informed by the resources of the Catholic intellectual tradition, the IES aims at better understanding how cultivating the virtues can strengthen civil society and support human flourishing. The IES is committed to engaging with key issues in bioethics. Royal Rehab is Australia's leading provider of rehabilitation and disability services and is highly regarded for specialist expertise in brain and spinal cord injury rehabilitation. The centre is inspired by a commitment to clinical excellence, education and research, and personalised care.

This industry-linked PhD scholarship is jointly funded by the Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) and Royal Rehab. It is available to high achieving domestic students to undertake a doctoral degree.

Applications are sought in the research area of **resilience and traumatic injury rehabilitation**.

Inner strength, connectedness, hope and spiritual well-being are all factors which have been closely associated with resilience after traumatic injury, yet there is no known program which seeks to enhance the resilience of rehabilitation inpatients. This study seeks to explore these factors with rehabilitation inpatients, and address ways that these factors could be better facilitated to enhance resilience among individuals with spinal cord injury or traumatic brain injury. This project would provide important information on how best to improve the rehabilitation journey for inpatients as they prepare to return to the community. It would also provide a valuable intervention tool for rehabilitation healthcare professionals.

Applicants must hold a relevant Honours (1 or 2A) or Master's by Research degree in a relevant healthcare field, or be able to demonstrate equivalent relevant research experience. The applicants must have clinical experience as a healthcare practitioner (for example but not limited to, Social Worker, Registered Nurse, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist) and be accredited to work in Australian hospitals. Communication, team-work and written skills with strong organisational ability within a clinical setting are essential.

To apply please complete sections 1-4 (all sections), 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 7 and 8 of the [Higher Degree by Research Scholarship Application Form](#) and provide necessary supporting documentation (e.g. certified transcripts). Applicants must also include with their application a one-page statement outlining why they want to undertake a PhD in enhancing resilience after spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury at Notre Dame and how this opportunity aligns with their own research interests. Scholarship applications close on 14 May 2021 and should be submitted to Dr Kate Jones at [kate.jones1@nd.edu.au](mailto:kate.jones1@nd.edu.au).

For enquiries related to the research topic, please contact Kate Jones, [kate.jones1@nd.edu.au](mailto:kate.jones1@nd.edu.au).

For process-related enquiries, please contact the Research Office, [sydney\\_research@nd.edu.au](mailto:sydney_research@nd.edu.au)