



# national science week 2012

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The health of people living in rural, regional and remote parts of Australia is as varied as the landscape and the environment of Australia itself. In many cases, these Australians experience levels of injury, disease and overall health that are substantially worse than for the general population. But we consistently ask the question “Why?”. Unfortunately there is no easy answer for why this may occur and studying population health is very complex and there are a lot of factors to consider.



My research investigates one area that may explain differences in rural, regional and remote Australian health compared to the general population by examining differences in chronic disease behavioural risk factors (that is, smoking, alcohol, nutrition, physical activity and mental health) between urban and rural populations. I am also looking at what happens to these behaviours when people move from an urban to a rural area or a rural to an urban area and what are the differences between urban and rural schools and how these might influence behaviour.

There is limited research within Australia that investigates the health of rural Australians and also very little that compares rural populations to urban populations, therefore, I am hoping that my research will give us insight into what is different about people living in different geographical locations within Australia and how we can improve the health and wellbeing of these people.

So where did my research career begin?

Health and Physical activity has always been an area that I have had a strong interest in so after finishing college I enrolled in a Bachelor of Human Movement at the University of Tasmania. About half way through my degree, I started to develop an interest in the area of Human Movement research. After talking to my lecturers I decided to do an honours project with the Menzies Research Institute, investigating differences in physical activity behaviours among urban and rural children and adults.



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Originally I thought that I would like to become a teacher and teach human movement and development in secondary schools, however I developed a strong passion for research whilst doing my honours and decided to enrol in a PhD and continue my investigations into urban and rural population health.

I never thought that I would be doing what I am doing now and it's certainly not something that I ever considered doing as I was going through school. I love learning and the best part about doing research is that you choose the topic that you want to study. I am very excited to see where my research takes me in the future and all the opportunities it may bring.

**For more information:** [www.menzies.utas.edu.au](http://www.menzies.utas.edu.au)

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