

3. RESULTS

3.1 Participants' survey

There were 55 people present at the live site in North Sydney, of whom three were presenters and two were investigators. These five individuals did not complete a participant questionnaire.

Of the 10 sites that requested a connection by videoconference, two, the Illawarra and Northern Rivers, were unable to be connected due to transmission difficulties. Consequently, eight rural sites took part in the participant survey. There were a total of 46 participants at these sites. There were 14 people present at the Illawarra, and four at Northern Rivers, who were unable to participate in the session. Although not connected to the session, the facilitator from the Northern Rivers site, Lismore, completed a participant questionnaire based on her previous experience of Bug Breakfast transmissions, and this was included with the responses (Table 2).# Therefore, for the purposes of this evaluation, the facilitator at Lismore has been identified as a participant, making a total of 47 at the remote sites.

Response rates

A total of 90 participants completed a questionnaire. The number of people attending the session and the number of participant responses from each location are presented in Table 2. The response rates from the remote sites and the live site were 96 per cent and 90 per cent, respectively.

TABLE 2

Numbers of participants and responses from each site for July Bug Breakfast

Location of site	Participants (N)	Responses (N)
North Sydney	50	45
Remote		
Orange	14	12
Broken Hill	10	10
Dareton	7	7
Wallsend	7	7
Dubbo	3	3
Port Macquarie	2	2
Queanbeyan	2	2
Tamworth	1	1
Lismore#	1	1
Total remote	47	45

TABLE 3**Age and gender of participants by site**

	North Sydney		Remote sites	
Gender	N	%	N	%
Male	16	36	6	13
Female	29	64	38	85
Not stated	0	0	1	2
Age groups				
20–29	12	27	3	7
30–39	15	33	10	22
40–49	11	24	18	40
50–59	4	9	13	29
60–69	3	7	0	0
Not stated	0	0	1	2

Profile of participants

The age and gender of the respondents is presented in Table 3. The majority of the participants (74 per cent) were female. The North Sydney audience contained more men and was younger than the rural audience.

Most of the participants at North Sydney (87 per cent) had previously attended a Bug Breakfast, while for 44 per cent of the remote participants this was their first experience. Participants were asked their job title and their principal responsibilities in that role. Job titles were grouped into one of three categories: public health, clinical or other. Responsibilities were grouped into four categories: immunisation, communicable diseases, training and other. Table 4 compares the responses between the locations.

TABLE 4**Type of job and principal role within job of participants by site**

	North Sydney		Remote sites	
Position	N	%	N	%
Public Health	39	87	16	36
Clinical	2	4	27	60
Other–Not stated	4	9	2	4
Responsibility				
Immunisation	8	18	5	11
Communicable Diseases	7	16	20	44
Training	19	42	7	16
Other	11	24	13	29

TABLE 5				
Access to videoconferencing venue by site				
	North Sydney		Remote sites	
Venue at worksite	N	%	N	%
Yes	19	42	25	56
No	25	56	18	40
Not stated	1	2	2	4
Time taken to travel to venue (minutes)				
< 30	5		11	
30–60	16		5	
> 60	4		2	

Accessing the session

Half the participants (49 per cent) were able to join the broadcast of Bug Breakfast at their worksite, the remainder had to travel to participate. The length of time spent travelling to the venue is presented by site in Table 5. Overall, more participants at North Sydney travelled and for longer periods than their rural counterparts.

Of the 18 rural participants who travelled to participate seven were identified as working in public health.

Reasons for participating

When asked why they participate in Bug Breakfast, 86 participants responded, many citing several reasons. The most common reason was to obtain current information about and overviews of communicable diseases (n=55), followed by meeting professional development and continuing education needs (n=28), and networking (n=6). Participants were asked whether attending Bug Breakfast helped them to do their job and 82 per cent agreed that it did. Sixty-three people also offered a comment to this question. Of these, one-third (n=21) saw Bug Breakfast as a source of up-to-date information, a response particularly cited by the remote audience.

Questions for live site participants

Participants at the live site were asked to comment on: the impact of videoconferencing on their learning; the venue; and the time allowed for questions.

Twenty-nine per cent of participants reported that videoconferencing hindered their learning experience. Thirteen provided comment to this question, and of these 10 cited distracting background noise from the remote sites caused by the failure to mute the microphones. When asked whether the layout of the room hindered their learning, 49 per cent felt that it did. Twenty-nine people offered comment to this question and the majority of these (n=23) cited that the venue was not big enough to comfortably accommodate the audience.

The screen onto which the presentations are projected is located near the door to the room. Participants were asked whether this position was distracting when there were late arrivals to the session, and 29 per cent reported that it was. However, few exercised the opportunity to comment and those who commented inferred that the disruption did not disturb them significantly.

If time permits following the presentations, each site is given the opportunity to ask the speakers a question. Sixty-seven per cent of participants reported that insufficient time is allowed for questions. Respondents commented that at least 10 minutes should be allocated, as the discussion is an important reason for attending. They also felt that it was important that the participants at the remote sites were able to ask questions.

Questions for remote site participants

Of the 23 remote site participants who had previously connected to a Bug Breakfast: 13 reported that the Bug Breakfast that was evaluated was typical of the videoconferencing quality; and 18 indicated that ‘sometimes’ or ‘frequently’ the transmission of Bug Breakfast could be interrupted due to technical problems.

Participants were asked to rank the quality of the images received and the quality of the sound and Table 6 presents their responses. Most people felt that the picture quality was average and the quality of the sound was poor.

TABLE 6		
Picture and sound quality of Bug Breakfast broadcast		
Remote sites		
Picture quality	N	%
Good	11	25
Average	31	69
Poor	2	4
Not stated	1	2
Sound quality		
Good	1	2
Average	10	22
Poor	33	74
Not stated	1	2

Remote participants were also asked whether videoconferencing hindered their learning, and 47 per cent felt that it did. Twenty-two provided comment: 13 cited distracting background noise originating from both the live site and other remote sites; 11 commented on the poor quality of the sound of the transmission, of these, six comments specifically raised the issue of the speakers not speaking directly into the microphone; and three people mentioned the picture quality.

Seventy-six per cent of remote site participants confirmed that they received a hard copy of the PowerPoint presentation prior to the session.

Most liked aspect of Bug Breakfast

All participants were asked what they liked the most about participating in Bug Breakfast, and this elicited 81 responses. Access to current relevant information was the most frequently cited reason (n=61) and was provided by similar numbers at the live site (n=35) and at the remote sites (n=26). Opportunities for networking was cited by 22 people, more participants

at North Sydney (n=16) providing this explanation. Quality of the speakers was given equal weight to networking by the rural participants (n=6) and was also valued by the live audience (n=11).

Least liked aspect of Bug Breakfast

The quality of the learning environment was the aspect of the training that the participants liked the least. The most common response from the North Sydney audience was the crowded room (n=7) and of the 37 comments provided to this question by rural participants 26 reiterated issues with the quality of the sound.

Future attendance

Overall, 90 per cent of participants reported that they would attend future videoconferenced Bug Breakfast sessions. Table 7 compares responses to this question from the remote sites and North Sydney. More remote participants (11 per cent) were unsure whether they would attend in the future.

TABLE 7				
Attendance at future Bug Breakfast sessions				
	North Sydney		Remote sites	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	43	96	38	85
No	0	0	0	0
Not sure	1	2	5	11
Not stated	1	2	2	4

3.2 Facilitators' survey

All of the facilitators (n=10) provided feedback, including the facilitators for the two sites that could not be connected, the Illawarra and Northern Rivers. Two facilitators were new to Bug Breakfast, Dareton in the Far West Area Health Service was connected for the first time and the single participant-facilitator in Tamworth was a new participant. At one site the facilitator did not participate in the session and so additional comment was obtained from the public health manager who did. Consequently the total number of respondents who contributed to this part of the evaluation was 11.

Connecting to Bug Breakfast

While a number of sites experienced technical difficulties in making the connection on the morning of the evaluation, most facilitators said that usually it took about 10 minutes for the link to be made.

A number of potential barriers to participation were identified, including:

- the videoconferencing facilities are often booked by other users and consequently advance warning is helpful to secure the facilities;
- the time constraints of an early link in particular for Broken Hill which is in a time zone 30 minutes behind Sydney. However there is an advantage to this time as the night clinical staff are coming off duty which makes it easier for them to participate;
- one site experienced difficulties in receiving the electronic copy of the PowerPoint presentations due to an error in the contact email address.

Time taken to organise participation

When asked how long it took to make the arrangements for the participation of their site most said that it took about an hour. This time is spent on tasks such as arranging for the set-up, sending email advice advertising the session and photocopying the presentations for distribution to participants.

Training in using the videoconferencing technology

Only one facilitator had received training in the use of the videoconferencing technology; five said that trained staff were available to provide assistance if required; and in Broken Hill there is a poster in the room providing instructions. One facilitator was shown how to activate the mute function prior to the session beginning.

Perceived benefits for staff

The most common response to the question regarding the benefits for staff from attending (n=8) was that Bug Breakfast provided up-to-date information on relevant topics. In particular the contribution of experts in their field to the sessions was valued as was access to these experts during question time. Question time is considered an important part of the session. It was noted that speakers needed to be made aware of the time constraints for the broadcast so that the presentations do not impinge on the question time.

The multidisciplinary background of participants at the remote sites was noted (n=6) and is seen as a very positive aspect of the session. Indeed, multidisciplinary participation is encouraged by the facilitators. Many of these participants are from outside of public health, such as clinical hospital staff including emergency department staff. One facilitator commented that they considered that a broad participation is enabled by the style of the presentations, which allow those not specialised in communicable diseases to join. Another commented that it enabled clinical people to gain a better understanding of the role of their Public Health Unit in the management of disease. Another found the epidemiology interesting.

The sessions provide an opportunity for networking with others across the State, both within public health and beyond this. They are seen as an important source of continuing education for rural staff and stimulate discussion within rural public health units.

Many facilitators noted the convenience of the having the videoconference site at their workplace however they also indicated that some participants travelled for an hour or more to attend.

Quality of the organisation provided by the Department

The facilitators expressed appreciation for the organisation and delivery of the sessions and stated that the current arrangements worked well. In particular, they liked that on the day all they needed to do was to wait to be dialled in. They considered the sessions to be well organised with good speakers and relevant topics. The provision of copies of the presentations beforehand is valued and they feel that this encourages people to attend. One facilitator commented that the screen should be given over to the presentation of the slides

and that little was gained by seeing the North Sydney audience. Facilitators felt that there needed to be a good lead-time to a session to allow sufficient notice to participants.

Suggestions to improve delivery

While noting that Bug Breakfast is a great concept almost all facilitators (n=9) commented that the sound quality is a problem, particularly where speakers are softly spoken. Suggestions for improving this included:

- providing a different sort of microphone for the use of the speakers such as clip on microphones;
- improving the muting at the rural sites;
- muting the background noise at the live site.

There also appeared to be difficulty in hearing the questions from the live site. This was not cited as a problem for questions from the remote sites.

While advance copies of the presentations were appreciated, one facilitator cited difficulties in printing and then reading the slides when complex backgrounds are used. They suggested providing the speakers with specifications for using PowerPoint.

Other points raised included having:

- time for questions;
- the session videotaped for distribution;
- a set day and time to assist with booking the equipment.

One facilitator noted that the videoconferencing had improved since it first commenced.

3.3 Presenters' survey

All three presenters cited experience of videoconferencing prior to the session; however, only one had used the medium to present before. This presenter claimed considerable experience. No presenter expressed any concerns prior to the session regarding the use of videoconferencing.

When asked whether they had adapted their style of presentation to the medium, the experienced presenter said that they had not. Of the other two presenters, one commented that he used a more descriptive style and avoided pointing to the slides as he would normally have done. This presenter felt that if he had had a better understanding of how the videoconferencing equipment worked that this might have relieved his anxiety during the presentation. This presenter commented that prior to presenting through this medium again he would become more familiar with the technology. The other presenter directed his presentation to the live audience and reported finding it strange that the set-up did not provide the presenter with any feedback from the remote sites. He reported that he had no idea what the remote audience were seeing during his presentation. When asked whether he would do anything different if presenting by videoconference again, this presenter cited clarifying who was on the link, whether they were successfully connected and how they were experiencing the presentation.

Other comments offered included noting the difficulty in keeping the session running to time, and questioning whether the technology was being used to its full potential. One speaker wondered whether they might have been linked by telephone to give their presentation.

3.4 Organisers' survey

All five Trainee Public Health Officers who assisted with the organisation of the session completed a questionnaire.

Time required to organise Bug Breakfast

Four Officers spent less than half a day each in organising the session while one person spent about a day. The liaison with the remote sites and with the Telehealth Coordinator took the greatest amount of time.

Adequacy of training provided

Overall the trainees felt that the training they received to support Bug Breakfast prepared them for their roles. They also acknowledged the value of the of detailed instructions with which they are provided, particularly as the trainees take turns in performing the different roles. One trainee has expanded the instructions that supported her role to reflect the experience of overcoming particular difficulties.

The support of the Telehealth Coordinator was considered to be particularly important.

Effect on learning

The trainees considered that the experience of helping to organise Bug Breakfast had a largely positive affect on their learning. They cited specific skills gained such as mastering the technical tasks associated with setting up and running the videoconference and a knowledge of the network of public health units attained through liasing with the different sites. A trainee commented that it provided an insight into the behind-the-scenes work required for the delivery of high quality training.

One trainee cited a negative affect on their learning. The person managing the camera during the session found that this role distracted from listening to the speakers.