

Pandemic influenza: Developing a model to enhance preparedness in the business sector. A pilot study to assess economic preparedness

Peter Thompson

At the beginning of the scholarship Yuna and I started work on a pilot study with the aim of developing a questionnaire obtaining information from small and medium sized business owners regarding characteristics of their business that may influence survival in the event of Pandemic Influenza. However, this specific task was not completed, as our supervisor, Aileen Plant, was particularly busy with overseas commitments. As a result we began researching the broad topic the "State of play of business preparedness for Pandemic Influenza." As expected, the topic was defined further as our research progressed and Yuna's line of research and my own started to become more distinct. My research was looking at the resources available to prepare Australian small and medium sized businesses for Pandemic Influenza. At the same time I also collected survey data on trends in business continuity, to shed light on the state of business preparedness for PI. A review article on the same topic was co-authored by Yuna and a number of other senior staff at the AB-CRC. The article was submitted to the Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government.

While I have completed 5 years of university already, the projects still introduced me to new ideas and ways of approaching research. The topics I was researching were an interesting blend of science, health and business, relevant to my university studies. The experience has been invaluable and will hopefully aid the gaining of further employment in this field. I found the guidance and support offered by Aileen Plant and Rochelle Watkins, my direct supervisors, was excellent. Indeed, there are some great personalities at the AB-CRC and everyone I met was really friendly. I recommend the vacation scholarship to any student wishing to pursue research in infectious disease, epidemiology, genetics, and in some cases business as well.