



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

**School of
Rural Health**
Strategic plan
2017-22



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The University of Sydney

School of Rural Health

2017–22 Strategic Plan

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The School of Rural Health (SRH) is a rural clinical school of the University of Sydney with campuses in Dubbo and Orange. The SRH was established in 2001 with the dual aims of providing medical education in a rural setting, and addressing rural medical workforce shortages.

Students can spend up to one year of their four year degree being taught by health practitioners throughout the Central West and Western NSW. The SRH delivers Stage 3 of the Sydney Medical Program (SMP) at both the Dubbo and Orange Campuses. Recruitment to the rural clinical school takes place during Stage 2 of the SMP.

Both Dubbo and Orange are located within the Western NSW Local Health District. Orange (population 40,100) is a large regional centre located approximately 250km west of Sydney. Orange Hospital – also known as Orange Health Service – is a large regional hospital with 520 beds, offering a comprehensive range of specialist medical services.

Dubbo is located approximately 145 km to the north-north-west of Orange, and is at the intersection of highways to Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Newcastle. It is the major referral centre for healthcare in central and western NSW, serving a catchment population of 130,000. The facilities of Dubbo Hospital are currently being upgraded including the planned development of an Integrated Cancer Care Centre. On completion, the Dubbo Hospital will provide 240 beds.

Within the SRH catchment there is a strong network of general practices providing primary care in their communities, and visiting medical officer services to District Hospitals and Multipurpose Health Services. In addition, there is a vibrant Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service sector. These services are members of Bila Muuji, a regional body established to identify and address shared issues impacting the health and social needs of Aboriginal communities in western NSW.

Although the population dynamics of Orange and Dubbo differ, both serve ageing communities and significant Indigenous populations with resultant increasing healthcare needs, in the context of increasing expectations of health and health service outcomes.

The University of Sydney Medical School recognises that people living in rural areas are often disadvantaged in accessing health services. They have fewer services, less access and choice in health services, with a smaller, dispersed population and limited access to public transport. This is why it is important to encourage the recruitment and retention of rural and remote health professionals, including doctors.

Rural placements provide great exposure to clinical practice in the country and the SRH continues to develop partnerships with health care providers to offer a raft of clinical experience in primary and secondary care settings to medical students. Regardless of where doctors ultimately decide to practice, the rural experience enhances understanding of what it is like to live, train and work within a rural community.

Along with improving the rural health workforce and gaining substantial educational benefits, there is also the lifestyle benefits that come with living in a rural location.

The SRH is funded under the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program which funds the delivery of rural clinical training to medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health students. It supports a network of rural clinical schools, university departments of rural health and dental

faculties supporting extended rural placements. The SRH, the Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health and the University Centre of Rural Health Northern Rivers, are under the umbrella of the University of Sydney.

In 2017, the SRH secured funding for a Regional Training Hub that will build on the rural training network established through the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. This will enable the development of an integrated rural medical training pipeline in western NSW offering training across the continuum from medical student to a vocationally trained medical practitioner. The objectives of the regional training hubs are to:

- Improve the coordination of the stages of medical training to enable students intending to practise rurally to complete as much of their medical training as possible within regional and rural areas;
- Identify students with an interest in practising rurally and facilitate access to networked rural training opportunities at an early stage in their careers;
- Develop regional training capacity by supporting current supervisors of clinical training, assisting health services in obtaining accreditation for new training positions, and supporting local medical practitioners to become clinical supervisors;
- Strengthen existing, and develop new, connections with key stakeholders to improve the continuity of training for medical students/trainees within their region; and
- Identify regional medical workforce needs and use this information to prioritise activity.

This Strategic Plan has been developed to set the direction for the SRH for the next five years in responding to our core business of providing medical education in a rural setting, and addressing rural medical workforce shortages.

The School of Rural Health Strategic Plan is intended to focus the School's work in the local community while operating within the broader principles of The University of Sydney's Strategic Plan.

Strategic intent

Contribute to the development of the rural medical workforce by providing training in an environment that delivers medical graduates and doctors with the aptitude, knowledge and skills to provide quality care for rural, regional and remote Australia.

Goals

Our strategic goals for 2017-22 focus are

We value

These are demonstrated by our actions/behaviours

Goal 1

Graduate highly competent and informed health professionals with culturally relevant skills, aptitude and interest to work in a rural context

Goal 2

Develop an integrated rural training pipeline for medicine

Goal 3

Engage with and contribute to our local communities

Goal 4

Strengthen research, evaluation and quality improvement capacity and capability

Goal 5

School of Rural Health is an innovative and accountable organisation

Goal 6

Strengthen and grow relationships with University of Sydney, Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health and University Centre for Rural Health Northern Rivers

- Capability
- Practicality

- Respect
- Reliability
- Integrity

- Humility
- Generosity

- Working Collaboratively
- Cultural Competency

- Frank and Transparent Communication

- Social Justice

Strategic goals 2017-22

Goal 1

Graduate highly competent and informed health professionals with culturally relevant skills, aptitude and interest to work in a rural context.

Training medical students in accordance with the University of Sydney medical curriculum is core business for the SRH. Within the scope of that curriculum the SRH aims to have a particular focus on ensuring that students develop an understanding of the health, cultural and social needs of rural communities and the context in which health services are delivered, and to cultivate interest in practising in rural areas. This will involve collaborative partnerships with service providers and organisations to strengthen our teaching capacity and capability and offer real world learning experiences.

Strategies

- Ensure the SRH experience supports students to develop knowledge and understanding of health and social issues in rural communities and the delivery of health care in this context
- Ensure the SRH experience supports students to develop knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and delivery of culturally secure health care
- Improve the cultural competence of staff, clinical educators and students of the SRH
- Strengthen our teaching through:
 - Improved recruitment and orientation
 - Developing and enhancing partnerships with service providers and organisations to facilitate joint appointments and placements
 - Supporting academics, tutors and affiliates from a variety of professional disciplines to provide high quality teaching
 - Ongoing monitoring and review of teaching capacity and performance
- Improve the delivery of inter-professional education
- Improve cross campus collaboration in the planning and delivery of the curriculum
- Foster the development of sound professional identity





Goal 2

Develop an integrated rural training pipeline for medicine.

The identification of the SRH as a regional training hub provides the impetus and opportunity to work closely with the Western NSW Local Health District, general practice and specialist colleges, post graduate medical councils, regional training organisations, the rural workforce agency and the local medical community to develop a workforce plan and build longer term workforce solutions for the region. The pipeline will build on existing strategies and activities to expand and enhance medical training capacity across the training continuum resulting in increased GP, rural generalist and specialist workforce with the skills, knowledge and capacity to work effectively in rural, regional and remote communities.

Strategies

- Strengthen organisational linkages and partnerships to facilitate the development of the integrated rural training pipeline
- Contribute to identification and implementation of a medical workforce plan for health services in the Western NSW Local Health District
- Formulate pathways to meet identified workforce needs including specialist and rural generalist training programs
- Provide training and support for supervisors, mentors and trainees
- Increase and enhance clinical placements and accredited training posts for students and junior doctors in Dubbo, Orange and rural centres
- Promote training pathways to new students, junior doctors and other stakeholders
- Identify university level medical students with an interest in rural practice and provide them with support including assistance with career planning, placement opportunities and access to mentoring to facilitate their rural pathway



Goal 3

Engage with and contribute to our local communities.

The SRH is a part of the health infrastructure of the Western NSW community and we aim to take an active role in contributing to the health and well being of our community. We will work across a number of fronts to promote health careers to rural people and use our expertise and experience to contribute to health initiatives.

Strategies

- Contribute to the development and promotion of pathways into health careers in collaboration with health services, education providers and other stakeholders
- Support medical students to experience and contribute to community activities and programs
- Encourage academic staff to live in rural areas as part of their local community
- Encourage local health professionals and community members to mentor and support students on long term placements
- Explore and implement appropriate mechanisms to raise the profile of the SRH in local communities and the wider university network



Goal 4

Strengthen research, evaluation and quality improvement capacity and capability.

The SRH aims to enhance the health of our respective local populations by creating a community of practice to conduct locally relevant and internationally significant research. Through the nurturing of research capacity, support, expansion of existing internal and external multidisciplinary relationships and the development of new partnerships, the dissemination and implementation of our research will reduce population health inequities and promote the rural health workforce.

Strategies

- Conduct high quality research relevant to our community.
- Enhance research capacity
- Translate research findings into policy and practice
- Collaborate as a research community
- Contribute to our local communities through:
 - improved use of relevant data to support local health initiatives
 - using research and evaluation expertise to support local programs and projects



Goal 5

SRH is an innovative and accountable organisation.

The work of the SRH will be underpinned by a strong and accountable organisation that has the capacity to innovate, lead and adapt to change, implement best practice governance and management, and support and develop its workforce.

Strategies

- Maintain effective corporate governance and financial management
- Ensure an alignment of SRH activity with developments at University of Sydney
- Foster organisational identity across the two campuses
- Support a productive and safe workplace including:
 - Orientation across campuses (Dubbo, Orange, Sydney)
 - Staff wellbeing
- Ensure the SRH workforce is appropriately trained, focussed and flexible including:
 - Clear role definition
 - Staff training and development
 - Responsive to changing requirements
- Embed evaluation and quality improvement in all SRH activities
- Recognise and act on opportunities where innovation will improve service delivery and streamline processes



Goal 6

Strengthen and grow relationships with University of Sydney, Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health and University Centre for Rural Health Northern Rivers.

Strategies

- Create a platform to share innovation, expertise and knowledge
- Identify and collaborate on common areas of interest
- Advocate as a voice for rural interest in the Faculty of Medicine and Health



Contact us

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