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About us

National Rural Health Student Network

The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN) represents the future of rural health in Australia. It has more than 11,000 members who belong to 29 university Rural Health Clubs from all states and territories.

The NRHSN is Australia's only multi-disciplinary student health network, bringing together people studying medicine, nursing and allied health, encouraging them to pursue rural health careers.

The NRHSN aims to:

- provide a voice for students who are interested in improving health outcomes for rural and remote Australians
- promote rural health careers to students and encourage students who are interested in practising in rural health care.

The NRHSN and its Rural Health Clubs offer rural experience weekends, career information sessions and professional development activities; and provide a social base for students at university and when on rural placement.

The student network leaders also advocate on behalf of health students of all disciplines - including opportunities for more rural placements and training support.

You can find the 2022 NRHSN Executive Committee and the Rural Health Clubs that we represent here. For more information about the NRHSN you can visit our website here.

Rural Workforce Agencies

The NRHSN is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health, administered by the Consortium of Rural Workforce Agencies (RWAs). The NSW Rural Doctors Network (RDN) is the RWA managing the NRHSN on behalf of the Consortium.

Each Australian State and the Northern Territory is served by a government-designated RWA that works to improve access to high-quality healthcare for people in remote, regional and rural Australia. RWAs do this through a range of programs, services and initiatives that attract, recruit, retain and support GPs, nurses and allied health professionals in rural and remote communities.

Contact us

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Acronyms

NRHSN	National Rural Health Student Network
RWAN	Rural Workforce Agency Network
RWAs	Rural Workforce Agencies
RDN	NSW Rural Doctors Network
RHCs	Rural Health Clubs that form the Network
Rural	In this business plan the term 'rural' encompasses all areas MM2-MM7

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Background

Vision

To be the future of rural health!

Mission

To be a vibrant professional network that connects, inspires and empowers Australian healthcare students to effect change towards rural health equity

Our key goals in 2022 are to improve the health of rural and regional Australians through:

- Providing a voice for students who want to improve health outcomes for rural and remote Australians
- Promoting rural health careers to students and encouraging students who are interested in practicing in rural health care
- Work with RHCs to complement their on-the-ground knowledge and experiences
- Support the RHCs to deliver the aims on time, within budget and to an exemplary standard
- Utilise evidence-based research to inform, plan and evaluate
- Advocate our members' views to inform and influence national rural health workforce priorities
- Represent the NRHSN with consistent messages to external organisations and stakeholders

To achieve these goals, we have 5 key strategic priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Relationships with RHCs
- **Priority 2:** Engaging all Health students
- **Priority 3:** External visibility of the NRHSN
- **Priority 4:** Rural Advocacy
- **Priority 5:** Executive Governance

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In pursuing these strategic priorities, we hope to achieve a National Rural health Student Network that, overall:

- Creates a community that is engaging and relevant to the RHCs
- Focuses on engaging students from diverse backgrounds to benefit the rural community
- Visible and present in all conversations and at all levels
- Adds value to Rural, Regional and Remote Australia
- Ensures its sustainability and future outlook

Priority 1: Relationships with RHCs

Overall: The NRHSN creates a community that is engaging and relevant to the RHCs	
Key area/goal	**Strategies to achieve this**
1.1 Effective representation The NRHSN ensures the accurate representation of the views of RHCs and their members	• *Anonymous submission form for ideas, concerns, feedback to best represent clubs at stakeholder meetings* • *Standing Meetings for clubs* • *Monthly Bulletin distributed to clubs* • *Regular, NRHSN initiated communications* • *Upskilling clubs with regular training sessions Examples: YouTube Playlist of RSHV, Regular training (bi-monthly), Indigenous Officer Collective* • *Engaging club administrators to best support RHCs to achieve their goals* • *Encourage communication by project officers as well as central communication* • *Facebook Group for clubs* • *Council: Selection of workshop interests as a quick poll for training delivery to give RHCs what they want* • *Initial early contact with RHCs to make initial relationships*

1.2 Upskilling and support The NRHSN provides valuable opportunities for RHCs to grow and develop	• *Provide training in RHSVs to upskill clubs on RHSV delivery* • *Council* • *YouTube Playlist of RHSV.* • *President's Induction at the commencement of the year to orientate them to 2022.* • *Indigenous person to present at Council to participate / encourage Indigenous Community Engagement Workshop* • *NRHSN Indigenous officer to form an 'Indigenous Officers Collective' (Facebook group) with all RHC Indigenous Officers – creating a platform that provides support and enables students to bounce ideas off each other for events, ask questions and connect in general* • *Sharing Indigenous Events and Engagement Workshops, specifically through RHC Indigenous Officers Collective* • *Database of Ideas for RHSV structure* • *Having a shared events database to share ideas and inspiration for RHCs and foster collaboration* • *Sharing ideas of events on Website as a page to aid RHCs in event planning* • *Interactive map showcasing the school that have had RHSVs in the past on our website* • *Facebook Group* • *In-person coffees for more informal catch ups – Grab a coffee with the NRHSN.* • *Working Groups to aid in delivery of objectives i.e. Youtube Playlist and Training Workshops* • *Facilitating opportunities for RHC members to have informal discussions and form relationships* • *Having opportunities for open discussions at Council – eg. Yarning groups to incorporate the Indigenous Health aspect* • *But if we are delivering website – distributing that as a zoom link to the representatives applicable, as a parallel opportunity.* • *Interactive activities*

	- *Guest speakers* - *Workshops* - *Appropriate use of beakouts – in person or zoom -> foster relationships with clubs and between clubs* - *Engaging via social media – during council* - *Getting feedback* - *Open discussion to understand what our rural health club members want from us!*
1.3 Not just a network but a community The NRHSN enables interactions and collaboration between RHCs and celebrates achievements	- *More regular structured communication to best communicate our achievements and seek feedback from clubs. This will enable sharing of events and promotion of their work on our socials.* - *Displaying a culturally-sensitive attitude towards everything that we do, particularly showing support for important annual Indigenous events such as, NAIDOC Week, National Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week etc., as RHCs are likely to follow. This can be done simply through social media posts that show NRHSN casting their support behind such events.* - *Throughout the year, RHC's have a significant number of volunteers. As such, acknowledging these members would be appropriate. Chairs of RHC's make a significant contribution annually and an Acknowledgement / Recognition of Experience / Participation / Involvement from the Department of Health or RWAN would be appropriate.* - *Further to this at our final council of the year, RHC members could be nominated for an award – NRHSN Rural Health Club Member of the Year award. We could seek sponsorship from our external stakeholders who may support this award – making it the ACRRM or NRHA NRHSN RHC Member of the Year Award.*

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Priority 2: Engaging all Health Students

Overall: The NRHSN focuses on engaging students from diverse backgrounds to benefit the rural community	
Key Area	**Strategies to achieve this**
2.1 Promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health careers The NRHSN promotes health careers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all aspects of health	• *Providing Indigenous health professionals as speakers and role models to Indigenous students and regular social media posts that highlight careers in Indigenous health* • *NRHSN to continue showing cultural-sensitivity and support for Indigenous events throughout the year* • *Creating the Indigenous Officers Collective between NRHSN's Indigenous Officer and RHCs Indigenous Officers in the form of a Facebook group – providing the opportunity to connect, educate each other and brainstorm ideas for Indigenous-based events that advocate for rural and Indigenous health* • *Helping them to build relationships with local on the ground stakeholders (AIDA, NACCHO, IAHA, CATSINaM) and local Aboriginal Medical Services* • *Partner with grass roots organisations to build external stakeholder relationships to grow internal opportunities for students.* • *Council 1: Advocacy Training will contribute to improving health education curriculum delivery using a case study of ARMS for example.* • *Indigenous Health Webinar is a great way to educate students around the health inequities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and further, come to terms with understanding WHY this is the case. Then proceed to provide students with helpful tips on providing culturally-sensitive care to Indigenous peoples* • *Cultural Competency Guide* • *Indigenous Health Webinar to further educate students on solely Indigenous health, particularly those of non-Indigenous backgrounds -> looking to educate and advocate* • *Social media advocacy for Indigenous health events and initiatives* • *Casting our support behind important Indigenous events to encourage RHCs to follow – broadening the scope of our audience* • *RHCs Indigenous Officers Collective Facebook Group*

	• *Cultural Competency Guide focusing on interacting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - for medical and allied health students* • *Create an online event open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in allied health and medical degrees across Australia -> incorporate Indigenous health-based guest speakers in a range of fields as role models to students and promoting Indigenous Health careers. Also keep the event casual in between speakers by allowing students to yarn and connect with each other!*
2.2 Engaging Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health students The NRHSN will engage with and promote the work and achievements of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health students and professionals	• *Working to get a nursing and midwifery officer and allied health officer at each RHC as appropriate* • *Creating more opportunities for nursing and midwifery & AH students and sharing student experiences in AH and N&M* • *Being visible at O-week and create an O-week package to assist RHCs promote the NRHSN* • *Showcasing nursing and midwifery students and professionals such as ensuring councils and COOEE feature all health professionals* • *Advertising allied health and nursing events* • *'Spotlight on nursing and midwifery and AH' e.g., in COOEE!* • *Having open discussions and asking N&M and AH students where the NRHSN can help them.* • *Projects and position papers that are dedicated to N&M and AH professions.* • *Ensuring RHSVs are AH or N&M specific and engaging.* • *Engage with allied health, nursing and midwifery representatives from each RHC early in the year and ensure regular contact and follow up with allied health, nursing and midwifery representatives throughout the year.*
2.3 Expanding the boundaries of our community The NRHSN will seek to grow its member base to include health students from all backgrounds and courses to represent the modern needs of rural Australia	• *Looking at furthering mentorship opportunities for our students with key players in the rural sphere* • *Communicating with SM and publications officers from Rural Health Clubs to set expectations of mutual sharing of content.* • *More on the ground visibility such as attending events and being present at orientation*

	• *A new shirt design to better represent our brand in professional settings* • *More opportunity for AH and Nursing and midwifery students to get involved and promoting more of our allied health and nursing and midwifery stakeholder events and opportunities* • *Monthly features on our SM pages where we ensure that we are covering medical, AH and nursing &midwifery students and healthcare professionals* • *Feedback opportunity for presidents and council attendees to track NRHSN's success across the year as well as more feedback opportunities for our general members.* • *Increased collaboration within the NRHSN team will allow brainstorm new ideas and way to overcome barriers* • *Excel spreadsheet for RHC to share the events that they have run or will run which will foster collaboration.* • *Sharing more student experiences of rural will contribute to bringing down the barriers many students see in rural.* • *Increased use of social media and featuring people across different media to encourage uptake* • *More events for students – e.g., Indigenous Health webinar – would be a great opportunity to not only provide advocacy for Indigenous health, but educate students about the health inequities Indigenous peoples face and why this has been the case over so many years. Then go on to give a workshop to students on how to be culturally competent and provide culturally-sensitive care, particularly in rural and remote areas of Australia* • *Creating an approachable and welcoming environment with open discussions at council and during the year providing ample opportunity for feedback.*

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Priority 3: External Visibility of the NRHSN

Overall: The NRHSN is visible and present in all conversations and at all levels	
Key Area	**Strategies to achieve this**
3.1 Being an essential stakeholder The NRHSN will continue being a valued stakeholder in Rural conversations	• *Be proactive in our social media engagement* • *COOEE!* • *Cross-promoting stakeholders* • *Christmas cards for all our stakeholders* • *Chair to outline what we have achieved, our business plan, our goals at the beginning of each Council* • *Using research and evidence to promote what we do* • *Submitting abstracts at conferences to increase our presence* • *Publishing position papers and completing projects* • *Engage with stakeholders – be proactive!!* • *Use surveys appropriately to best receive feedback from our members*
3.2 Developing meaningful relationships The NRHSN will develop meaningful partnerships and collaborate with external organisations to impact the rural sphere	• *Rural Health Clubs* • *Rural Workforce Agencies* • *New stakeholders* • *Club Administrators* • *Future handover weekends should include handover between NRHSN committee members and external stakeholders.* • *Committee positions should introduce incoming representatives to external stakeholders.* • *VCExternal to create a cohesive and updated document containing best contact details for external stakeholders.* • *Using Wiki for stakeholders* • *Ensuring a stakeholder section is incorporated into the written and verbal handover* • *Be present and proactive in relationships with external stakeholders.* • *Follow up!!*

3.3 On the ground presence The NRHSN will increase its on the ground presence at events engaging the rural community and promoting health careers	*Attend events* *SM* *COOEE!* *O-week* *Providing RHCs with resources to promote the NRHSN* *Council* *Continually show our support for Indigenous-based events throughout the year* *FB group chat* *Making content that they can share* *Upskilling and assistance – especially at the beginning of their role*

Priority 4: Rural Advocacy

Overall: The NRHSN adds value to Rural, Regional and Remote Australia	
Key Area	Strategies to achieve this
4.1 Promoting clear, supported and sustainable rural training pathways The NRHSN will promote clear, supported and sustainable rural training pathways for all students	*Seeking feedback* *Database of stakeholders, events and possibilities* *Expanding on previously offered opportunities such as the mentorship program at a state-based level and working with our rural workforce agencies* *Featuring health professionals on our socials* *Guest speakers at Council that represent all health fields* *Providing an Indigenous Voice (whether this be through Indigenous guest speakers / health professionals)*
4.2 Productive outputs and value add to Rural Health The NRHSN will contribute to the significant body of work supporting the need for investing in rural health and training	*Guide and mentorship from RDN* *Teamwork and assistance from other exec members* *Regular communication that shares NRHSN's stakeholder engagement and advocacy work regularly. Within this, will be an opportunity to reply directly or anonymously with contributions.*

	• *Reactive Advocacy opportunities may be identified through monthly standing meetings, monthly bulletins and NRHSN Executive's monthly meetings (Rural Health News Update opportunity)*
4.3 Engaging use of various media The NRHSN will continue its focus on promoting the activities of the network and stakeholders by engaging various platforms	• *Starting our presence across new media such as YouTube and Tik Tok and possibly LinkedIn and twitter to reach a more professional audience.* • *Having a good social media calendar* • *Build our narrative and utilise platforms to showcase our story* • *Sharing our position papers* • *Endorse committee members on LinkedIn* • *Promote the work of Indigenous health professionals in rural health as it is important to have these role models for our students* • *Research and data shared across.* • *Repurpose COOEE!, position papers to generate new content* • *Upskilling webinar at Presidents Induction, Council* • *Monthly bulletins to be incorporated into the website* • *Drive more traffic to website event sign up etc* • *Note from the Chair to put on the website* • *Resources section for RHCs*

Priority 5: Executive Governance

Overall: The NRHSN ensures its sustainability and future outlook	
Key Area	**Strategies to achieve this**
5.1 A rewarding experience for executives The NRHSN will become a rewarding and sought-after experience for its executive members	• *On the ground visibility* • *More opportunities for students to get involved in events* • *Being up to date with Indigenous health knowledge and competent with skills in providing culturally-sensitive care* • *Recognising student achievements* • *PDP & PMPs implemented to ensure a better experience for all involved*

	- *Allocating time in meetings for social catchups and life updates* - *Creating opportunities at our events (e.g., council) to socialise as a team* - *Merchandise* - *Awards* - *Templates that once generated are shared with RHCs* - *Having clearer Portfolio descriptions to ensure better transparency on what is being achieved.* - *Improving election processes to ensure all applicants are given a chance to apply.* - *External speakers at council* - *Sharing 10 implemented within our meetings.* - *Formal upskilling workshops with professionals as introduced at handover.* - *Attending relevant conferences when the member is presenting* - *Consideration of best use of the alumni network* - *Provide opportunities at each online meeting for team members to flag wellbeing issues by using systems such as traffic light system* - *Create a safe space through 'yarning' opportunities* - *Create a wellbeing policy and strategy* - *Team leaders to take responsibility for modelling positive wellbeing behaviours* - *Having open discussions about wellbeing* - *Burnout buddy implementation.*
5.2 Well established processes The NRHSN will establish robust processes and internal policies	- *Ensure a full use of the resources such as platforms and shared drives that are organised adequately* - *Establishment of the Portfolio Management Plan (PMP) and personal Development Plan (PDP) system and reviews to ensure continued participation by all executives* - *Ensure adequate handovers are written and given to new executive members to establish sustainable processes*

	• *Improve election processes to ensure a wide variety of applicants are represented across the roles* • *Improve the NRHSN's transparency through improved communication with RHC Presidents at Council, stand up meetings and monthly Bulletins* • *Implement Quarterly Reviews* • *Provide opportunities for feedback from the executive team and the RHCs we represent*
5.3 Future proofing The NRHSN will future proof its existence by establishing long term strategies and goals for future committees	• *Where are you now? Featured in COOEE!, Key note speakers promoted through socials* • *Establish a strategic plan 2022-2025* • *Implement Quarterly Reviews* • *Maintaining appropriate meeting minutes* • *Implement a rolling handover system* • *Supporting RHCs with their handover process* • *Writing internal policies* • *Ensuring handover weekend is as relevant as possible to incoming executives* • *Clear documentation of communication and work with RHCs and other stakeholders* • *Something about administrators- e.g., revamping administrators guide + effective communication to RHC from the begging of the year at Presidents induction and Council*

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Executive Oversight and Delivery:

Person Responsible	Strategic priorities allocated
Chair (Jean-Baptiste Philibert)	Assists with/oversee all
Vice-Chair External (Maddy Brown)	2.2, 2.3, 3.1-3.3, 4.1, 4.2
Vice-Chair Internal (Nicola Murphy)	1.1-1.3, 2.1, 2.3, 4.2
Vice Chair of Operations (Baneen Alrubayi)	1.2, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3, 5.1-5.3

Monitor and advocate

We will continue to monitor and advocate in the following areas in 2022:

- Rural community health outcomes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes
- National Rural Generalist Pathway for Medicine and Allied Health
- We will continue to provide our member views to consultations on relevant government reforms and reviews, such as:
  - Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Programme
  - The Bonded Return of Service System (BRoSS)
  - Educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- We will engage with and monitor the outcome of the Regional Training Organisations to ensure clear and supported rural training pathways
- Our Rural Health Clubs will further our engagement with local Primary Health Networks and Rural Workforce Agencies as an integral part of the planning of education policy and future health workforce. We continue to engage with our universities as the future trainers of our rural health colleagues
- We will continue to work with government and others in progressing the development and integration of new innovative models in health service delivery, including extended scopes of practice, emerging health professions, multidisciplinary models and eHealth
- We will continue to advocate for mental health training for all health students and provide resources to support our members through their rural training, such as our Mental Health Guide and Rural Placements Guide
- We will engage with the Regional Training Hubs which are a component of the Integrated Rural Training Pipeline for Medicine (IRTP), an Australian Federal Government initiative.

2022 Projects

Project Updates and Development

Rural High School Visit Video Information Series | *Project Lead: Natasha Polzin*

Aim: Create a series of short YouTube videos and accompanying documents to support the RHC's in running their RHSV.

Why: COVID has meant most clubs have not run a RHSV in 2 years, creating the series will support them with practical knowledge and advice on how to run an affective RHSV as well as provide a long-term data base of workshop and school visit ideas that can be built on in the future.

Impact: The project will support the RHCs long term to deliver an effective RHSV program and promote rural health

Allied Health Employment Guide | Project Lead: Hayley Johns

Aim: To provide a helpful resource to undergraduate students completing an allied health degree and seeking employment in rural and remote Australia.

Why: To inform of allied health registration requirements, advice from NRHSN Alumni and other info to successfully transition from university study to employment.

Impact: Ultimately assisting health students in a smoother transition from university to employment, which may encourage more long-term rural and remote experience/placement/careers.

Cultural Competency Guide - working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples | Project Lead: Emily Thomson

Aim: To provide a comprehensive guide that includes current resources focusing on cultural awareness in healthcare, input from key stakeholders like AIDA and IAHA, educational aspects focusing on Indigenous history and health inequities, as well as contacts of local Indigenous peoples and elders in rural and remote Australia.

Why: Creating a guide that focuses specifically on improving cultural awareness skills in the medical and allied health care setting, particularly when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, is integral to current students and future healthcare workers providing appropriate, patient-centred care.

Impact: To not only build upon medical and allied health students' cultural sensitivity skills as future members of the rural health workforce, but provide a universal cultural appropriacy guide that current rural health workers can also use.

Speaking from Experience – a personal overview of what life looks like as a nurse/midwife practicing in Rural Australia |

Project Lead: Jordan Thomas

Aim: To provide a detailed poster outlining the professional and personal opportunities practicing nurses and midwives have been able to experience due to providing care in remote locations.

pursue opportunities within rural healthcare, for both personal and professional benefits. By including feedback from nurses and midwives who have first-hand experience in this industry will hopefully increase students trust in this resource (in turn inspiring them to further explore rural health).

Impact: To challenge the perspective of what some students may assume rural health care consists of. In turn encouraging them to explore beyond what they know, inspiring them to pursue clinical placements and career opportunities within remote settings.

Rural Medicine as a Career for Women | Project lead: Debra Lee
Aim: to speak to women currently working in rural healthcare and to gain perspective and insight into what they find to be the advantages and disadvantages. The end product will be an article to be submitted to our various stakeholders for distribution.
Why: To inform students and other young doctors about what to expect working in rural health

Impact: To encourage more individuals to consider a career in rural health.

Reporting

Executive members report to the NRHSN Executive Team on activities throughout the year, this will include:

- Quarterly review meetings
- Meetings with Chair and Vice-Chairs
- Creating and following up with a Personal Development Plan (PDP)
- Creating and following up with a Portfolio Management Plan (PMP)
- The Executive reporting template can be used to report at Quarterly Reviews meetings with the Chair