

# **The National Rural Health Student Network 2025 Business Plan**

**The Future of Rural  
Health!**

*the future of rural health*

# About Us

## The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN)

The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN) represents the future of rural health in Australia. It has over 7,000 current student members and an additional 37,000 alumni members who belong to 28 university Rural Health Clubs (RHCs) from all states and territories in Australia.

The NRHSN is Australia's only multidisciplinary student health network bringing together those studying medicine, nursing, paramedicine, midwifery and allied health, and encouraging them to pursue rural health careers.

The NRHSN aims to:

- Instill culturally safe practices regarding First Nations peoples within the future regional, rural and remote health workforce.
- Promote health careers to students who are interested in practicing in regional, rural and remote settings.
- Advocate for the future regional, rural and remote health workforce in both state and federal policy discussions and development.
- Support and promote the work of stakeholders who are working to improve the working conditions for rural clinicians, and access to healthcare for regional, rural and remote communities.

The NRHSN executive is strategically structured to facilitate the seamless flow of information from grassroots levels within our RHCs to external advocacy. This ensures a comprehensive and well-informed approach to addressing rural healthcare challenges.

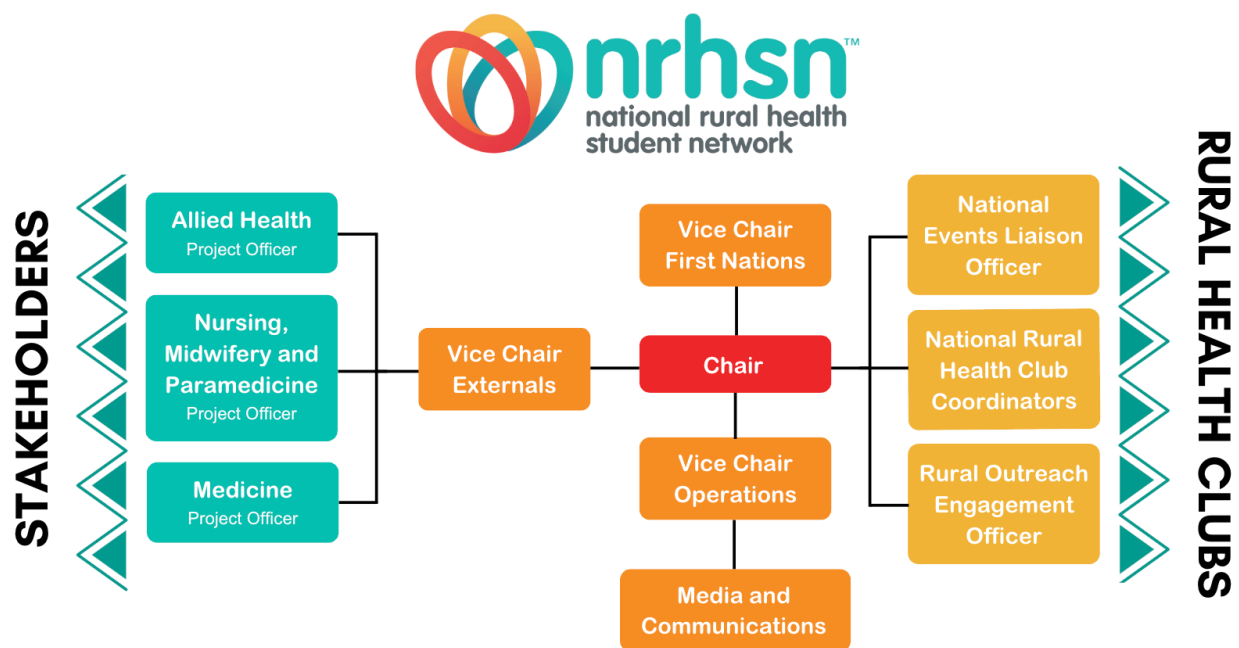
The RHCs are the foundation of our organisation and are essential to achieving the NRHSN's mission of shaping the future of rural health through collaboration, leadership, and advocacy. These clubs operate at a local level providing leadership, rural immersion programs, career information sessions and rural outreach visits to secondary school students for university cohorts. Additionally, RHCs foster a sense of community by connecting students interested in rural health careers and those undertaking rural health placements.

The NRHSN supports RHCs through mentorship, training, and professional development for RHC presidents, facilitated by our Internals Team. These efforts enhance awareness of rural health careers, deepen understanding of First Nations health, and inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals to pursue opportunities in rural and remote communities.

The NRHSN also advocates at a State and Federal level for all members of the future rural health workforce, especially regarding rural placement support and training opportunities. The NRHSN External team strategically plans and drives these efforts.

Some changes have been made for 2025 to the structure of the NRHSN executive. To create a more streamlined chain of command and better support the External Team, we have returned to a single Chair position with a Vice Chair Internal and Vice Chair External overseeing each of the teams. The Vice Chair First Nations, Vice Chair Operations and Media and Communications Officer roles remain unchanged.

The revised structure of the NRHSN executive for 2025 is depicted in the graphic below.



You can find the 2025 NRHSN Executive Committee and the RHCs that we represent on our [website](#).

## Rural Workforce Agencies

The NRHSN is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC), administered by the Consortium of Rural Workforce Agencies (RWAs). The 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 regional, rural and remote Australia. RWAs do this through a range of programs, services and initiatives that attract, recruit, retain and support GPs, nurses, midwives, paramedics and allied health professionals in regional, rural and remote communities.

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## Acronyms

<b>DoHAC</b>	Department of Health and Aged Care
<b>FNFRHPP</b>	First Nations Future Rural Health Professionals Program
<b>NRHSN</b>	National Rural Health Student Network
<b>RDN</b>	Rural Doctors Network
<b>RHC</b>	Rural Health Clubs that form the Network
<b>RHSV</b>	Rural High School Visits
<b>Rural</b>	In this business plan, the term 'rural' encompasses <a href="#">MM2-MM7</a> areas
<b>RWAs</b>	Rural Workforce Agencies
<b>RWAN</b>	Rural Workforce Agency Network

# Background

## Vision

To be the future of rural health!

## Mission

The NRHSN is committed to fostering a vibrant, multidisciplinary student network that connects, inspires, and empowers Australian healthcare students to drive meaningful change. We seek to achieve equitable health outcomes for regional, rural, remote and First Nations communities across Australia. Through a grassroots approach, the NRHSN aims to empower the next generation of healthcare professionals to become leaders and advocates in the rural health space. By fostering a deep understanding and appreciation of the unique challenges and opportunities in these communities, the NRHSN aims to build a resilient, responsive, and culturally safe healthcare system that ensures equitable access to quality care for all Australians.

## Goals and Strategic Priorities

The goals of the NRHSN for 2025 include:

- Continuing our 2024 mantra of 'Becoming the voice' for students who want to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those in regional, rural and remote communities.
- Supporting RHCs and the important work they do in promoting rural health careers and opportunities to Australian students, including primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational students across Australia.
- Utilise evidence-based research to inform, plan and evaluate current and future initiatives, policies and legislation, both government and non-government.
- Advocate for our members' views to inform and influence national rural health workforce priorities
- Represent the NRHSN with consistent communication to external organisations and stakeholders.
- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with organisations and stakeholders within the rural health and First Nations health sectors that align with the NRHSN's values, working collaboratively to improve health outcomes for regional, rural, remote, and First Nations Australians.

The NRHSN's goals for 2025 will be met through five key strategic priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Equity in First Nations Healthcare
- **Priority 2:** Rural Health Club Support
- **Priority 3:** Attraction, Recruitment and Support of the Future Rural Health Workforce
- **Priority 4:** Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration with Stakeholders
- **Priority 5:** Sustainability of the NRHSN

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

- Raises awareness and increases knowledge around First Nations health and wellbeing and supports the implementation of culturally safe practice in rural healthcare.
- Supports students from rural backgrounds and/or interested in pursuing a career in rural health and empowers the RHCs to succeed.
- Develops interest and engagement in rural healthcare and assists in the facilitation of positive rural placement experiences.
- Is visible and present in all conversations at all levels concerning regional, rural and remote health.
- Ensures the NRHSN's sustainability and ongoing positive contributions beyond 2025.

### **Key activities**

- Provide governance and support to all RHCs in Australia.
- Conduct an election for the NRHSN Executive Committee each year.
- Maintain a national member database for all RHCs.
- Relay information between our members and key stakeholders, including the DoHAC and the RWAs.
- Undertake two National Councils for RHC executive leaders each year.
- Engage with external stakeholders regarding rural health and First Nations health matters in Australia.
- Work with the NRHSN's administrator, the Rural Doctors Network, to realise a shared vision.

# Strategic Priority 1: Equity in First Nations Healthcare

Goal	Strategies to achieve this goal
<p>To raise awareness and deepen understanding of First Nations health and wellbeing while supporting the integration of culturally safe practices in the delivery of rural healthcare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise, support and promote the advocacy and initiatives led by the Vice Chair First Nations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Execution of the NRHSN's First Nations Future Rural Health Professionals Program (FNFRHPP).</li> <li>- Provide support for First Nations representatives from each RHC.</li> <li>- Strengthen existing external partnerships and continually pursue new collaborations to advance First Nations health priorities and advocacy efforts.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Deliver and ensure the ongoing sustainability of the FNFRHPP (refer to the addendum for our 2024 Pilot Proposal and post-event Chair's Address and Summary).</li> <li>• Incorporate and promote education and cultural awareness initiatives that empower healthcare students with the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary to deliver culturally safe care to First Nations communities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome to Country at each national Council.</li> <li>- Keynote addresses by First Nations leaders and health professionals.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support RHCs to plan and execute meaningful and engaging First Nations-focused events, through the National Events Liaison Officer and Vice Chair First Nations.</li> <li>• Connect and support First Nations students studying health-related degrees to facilitate peer support, information sharing, and provide opportunities for networking with First Nations clinicians and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Disseminate information and resources from First Nations stakeholders and advocates to the NRHSN's members.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcase the work of organisations and stakeholders advancing First Nations health through the NRHSN's social media channels, amplifying their impact and raising awareness among members.</li> <li>• Continue advocating for the inclusion of First Nations perspectives in state and federal healthcare policies and programs.</li> </ul>
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## Strategic Priority 2: Rural Health Club Support

Goal	Strategies to achieve this goal
To support students interested in pursuing careers in rural health and empower the success of RHCs through collaboration, mentorship, and advocacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide mentorship and support for RHCs through regular check-ins and ad hoc executive contact.</li> <li>• Strengthen inter-club relationships and promote collaborative events between RHCs by facilitating structured engagement opportunities. This includes monthly state-based meetings and a centralised network for all RHC executive members to share resources, initiate collaboration and build camaraderie.</li> <li>• Provide advocacy and operational support to RHCs to ensure optimal functioning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate conversations between RHCs and their administrators and/or universities to develop and maintain a positive relationship and support their access to funding.</li> <li>- Assist in the mediation and resolution of RHC conflicts or challenges, and escalate to the RDN for input when required.</li> <li>- Offer operational support across all aspects of club functioning including financial management, event planning and execution, and member disciplinary interventions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Strategic Priority 3: Attraction, Recruitment and Support of the Future Rural Health Workforce

Goal	Strategies to achieve this goal
To foster interest and develop engagement in rural healthcare, advocate for supports to facilitate positive rural placement experiences, and support the wellbeing of rurally-focused students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position students as key advocates to address rural health workforce challenges.</li> <li>• Assist in addressing workforce shortages by encouraging university students to undertake placements and immersion opportunities in rural areas, and advocating for changes to ensure positive rural placement experiences.</li> <li>• Disseminate information and resources to RHCs regarding rural healthcare opportunities, placements, and careers, including financial assistance and incentives available for rural health pathways.</li> <li>• Inspire students to pursue rural health careers by promoting available opportunities and showcasing role models to our members via our social media channels and events.</li> <li>• Support RHCs to ensure they successfully execute a minimum of two rural high school visits (RHSVs) each year which showcase the benefits, challenges and opportunities in rural health care. These school engagements provide high school students with relatable role models, and seek to combat the concept of “you can’t be what you can’t see”.</li> <li>• Provide a social network, and advocate for financial and wellbeing support systems, for students facing challenges whilst in rural clinical settings.</li> </ul>

## Strategic Priority 4: Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration with Stakeholders

Goal	Strategies to achieve this goal
To ensure the NRHSN is a leading voice in rural and First Nations health discussions, and support the advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a Stakeholder Engagement and Management Plan to guide consistent and meaningful interactions.</li> <li>• Support our Externals Team to develop and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders who share the NRHSN's passion for improving rural and First Nation's</li> </ul>

and initiatives of partnering organisations.	<p>healthcare - seeking to provide benefit to our members, and assist partnering organisations in their endeavors through these connections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct regular meetings with the DoHAC to enhance collaboration, cohesion and achievement of shared goals.</li> <li>• Meet quarterly with the RWA's to ensure our actions and reach remain national.</li> <li>• Conduct monthly meetings as an executive with the RDN to identify and pursue opportunities for stakeholder engagement.</li> <li>• Monitor media for topics relevant to the NRHSN's mission and prepare public statements to contribute to key discussions.</li> <li>• Participate in high-level policy discussions with the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner and other government bodies to advocate for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equitable health outcomes for rural communities.</li> <li>- Improved health outcomes for First Nations peoples.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## Strategic Priority 5: Sustainability of the NRHSN

Goal	Strategies to achieve this goal
To ensure the NRHSN remains sustainable and continues to make meaningful contributions to rural and First Nations health beyond 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and implementation of short-, mid- and long-term strategic plans for the NRHSN. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short-term plans (3 – 6 months) to address immediate priorities and opportunities.</li> <li>- Mid-term plans (1 – 2 years) to align with current goals and stakeholder expectations.</li> <li>- Long-term plans (3 – 5 years) to ensure sustained growth, relevance, and impact.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop a comprehensive succession plan for the NRHSN for 2026 to ensure a smooth transition of leadership and continuity of the NRHSN's mission and operations.</li> <li>• Identify, mentor and nurture future NRHSN executive members to improve continuity between terms.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uphold and enhance the reputation and value of the NRHSN as a leading organisation in rural and First Nations health, attracting motivated and passionate students.</li> <li>• Foster an engaging and inclusive internal culture within the NRHSN which is enjoyable to be a part of.</li> <li>• Continue to achieve all annual KPIs relating to ongoing DoHAC funding.</li> </ul>
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## Addendum: First Nations Future Rural Health Professionals Program (FNFRHPP)

Please see the attached documents:

- 2024 Pilot Proposal
- Post-event Chair's Address and Summary

## Projects and Position Papers (2024)

The Allied Health Officer position paper titled “The Student Perspective of the 2023 NDIS Review” is in the final stages of editing, having been delayed due to challenges in data collection. We are seeking to have this published in the near future.

The 2024 Medicine Officer position paper seeking to determine the student perspective on the HELP-Debt Recovery Scheme was chosen to be extended to a 2-year project to develop a stronger body of evidence to reflect our opinion on this topic.

## Reporting

- Executive members report to the NRHSN Executive Team on activities throughout the year. This will include:
  - Registry of external and internal meetings.
  - Internal reporting through line management channels.
  - Reporting to the DoHAC and the RDN as per requirements of the funding agreement.