



NRHSN 2026 Business Plan

**Ratified by the 2026 NRHSN General Committee, February 15th 2026 at
NRHSN 2026 Council #**

The 2026 Committee

Chair: Campbell Barnes

Vice-Chair (Internal): Constance McIntosh

Vice-Chair (External): Ysabel Preller

Vice-Chair (First Nations): Brooklyn Nannup

Vice-Chair (Operations): Jessica Adams

National Rural Health Club Coordinators: Luka Marshall & James Joseph

Rural Outreach & Engagement Officer: Katie Arthur

National Event Liaison Officer: Brianna Jeffery

Media & Communication Officer: Alyssa Weir

Nursing, Midwifery & Paramedicine Officer: Isaac Stewart

Allied Health Officer: Shristi Naicker

Medicine Officer: Eloise Delaney

About Us

The National Rural Health Student Network (NRHSN) represents the future of rural health in Australia. It has over 7,000 current student members who belong to 29 university Rural Health Clubs (RHCs) from all states and territories in Australia, with an additional 50,000 strong alumni base.

The NRHSN is Australia's only multidisciplinary student health network bringing together those studying medicine, nursing, paramedicine, midwifery and allied health degrees.

The NRHSN aims to:

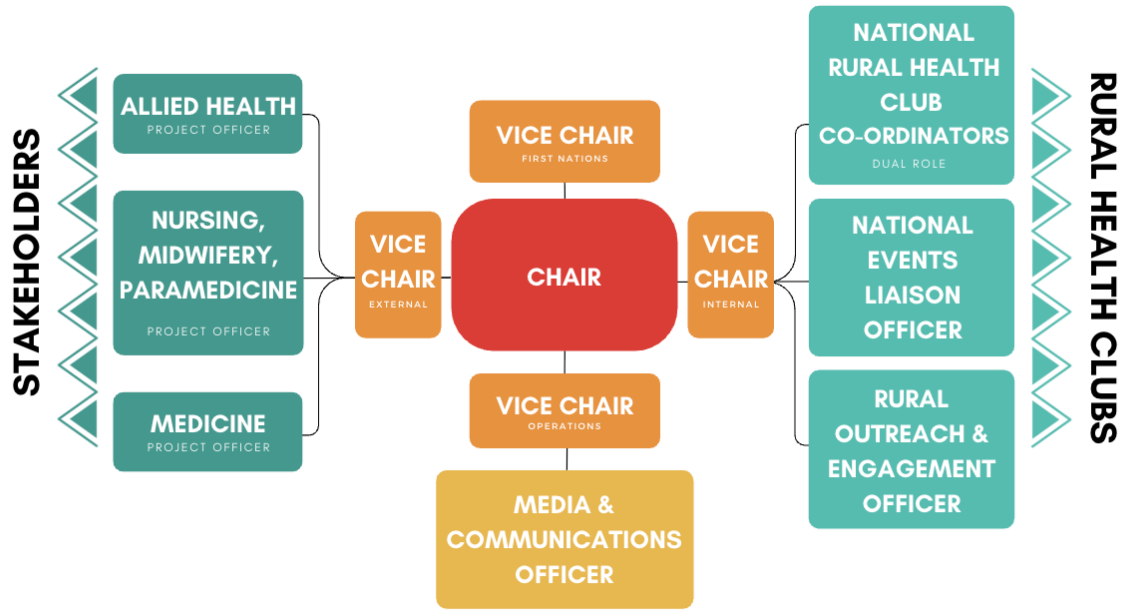
- Instill culturally safe practices regarding First Nations peoples within the future regional, rural and remote health workforce.
- Promote health careers to students who are interested in practicing in regional, rural, and remote settings.
- Advocate for the future regional, rural, and remote health workforce at State and Federal levels, including policy and project implementation.
- Support and promote 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.

The structure of the NRHSN executive is shown below:



You can find the 2026 NRHSN Executive Committee and the RHCs that we represent on our website, nrhsn.org.au.

Rural Workforce Agencies

The NRHSN is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Aging (DoHDA), 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.

Contact Us

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Acronyms

DoHDA	Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
FNFRHPP	First Nations Future Rural Health Professionals Program
NRHSN	National Rural Health Student Network
RDN	New South Wales Rural Doctors Network
RHC	Rural Health Club
RHSV	Rural High School Visits
Rural	In this business plan, the term 'rural' encompasses MM2-MM7 areas
RWAs	Rural Workforce Agencies
RWAN	Rural Workforce Agency Network

Background

Vision

We strive to support the development of a thriving Rural and First Nations health workforce that delivers equitable and culturally safe multidisciplinary care across Australia.

Mission

The NRHSN is committed to fostering a vibrant, multidisciplinary student network that connects, inspires, and empowers Australian healthcare students to drive meaningful change. Representing all health students with an interest in rural health, 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

The goals of the NRHSN for 2026 are:

- Contribute to the ongoing work of improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through strong partnerships, advocacy, and empowering students to become leaders in their communities. This includes creating opportunities to strengthen cultural awareness and reflective practice among the next generation of clinicians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to support the delivery of culturally safe care that meets the health and well-being needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Supporting RHCs and the important work they do in promoting rural health careers and opportunities to Australian students at all levels of education.
- 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 through novel data collection from our annual NRHSN survey.
- Maintain strong partnerships with external organisations and stakeholders within the rural health and First Nations health sectors that align with the NRHSN's vision and mission.

Key Activities

An executive summary of activities we will undertake to meet our goals:

- 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 DoHDA 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 NSW Rural Doctors Network, to realise a shared vision.

Strategic Priorities

The NRHSN’s goals for 2026 will be met through five key strategic priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Promote Equity in First Nations Healthcare
- **Priority 2:** Support Rural Health Clubs and Increase Multidisciplinary Collaboration
- **Priority 3:** Support the Development of Future Rural Health Professionals
- **Priority 4:** Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration with Stakeholders
- **Priority 5:** Ensure the Sustainability of the NRHSN

Strategic Priority 1

Promote Equity in First Nations Healthcare

Overview	Strategies to achieve this priority
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise, support and promote the advocacy and initiatives led by the Vice-Chair First Nations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide support for First Nations representatives from each RHC. - Strengthen existing external partnerships and continually pursue new collaborations to advance First Nations health priorities and advocacy efforts. • Incorporate and promote education and cultural awareness initiatives that empower healthcare students with the knowledge, skills, and understanding

	<p>necessary to deliver culturally safe care to First Nations communities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome to Country at each national Council. - Keynote addresses by First Nations leaders and health professionals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support RHCs to plan and execute meaningful and engaging First Nations-focused events, through the National Events Liaison Officer and Vice Chair First Nations. • 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. • Share information and resources from First Nations stakeholders and advocates to NRHSN members. • 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. • Continue advocating for the inclusion of First Nations perspectives in state and federal healthcare policies and programs.
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Strategic Priority 2

Support Rural Health Clubs and Increase Multidisciplinary Collaboration

Overview	Strategies to achieve this priority
<p>To support students interested in pursuing careers in rural health and empower the success of RHCs through collaboration, mentorship, and advocacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide mentorship and support for RHCs through regular check-ins and ad hoc executive contact. • 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. • Provide advocacy and operational support to RHCs to ensure optimal functioning, including:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate conversations between RHCs and their administrators and/or universities to develop and maintain a positive relationship and support their access to funding. - Assist in the mediation and resolution of RHC conflicts and/or challenges and escalate to the RDN for input when required. - Offer operational support across all aspects of club functioning, including financial management, event planning and execution, and member disciplinary interventions. • Facilitate RHCs to engage all health disciplines represented at their university and foster a culture of multidisciplinary collaboration
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Strategic Priority 3

Support the Development of Future Rural Health Professionals

Overview	Strategies to achieve this priority
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position students as key advocates to address rural health workforce challenges. • 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. • Disseminate information and resources to RHCs regarding rural healthcare opportunities, placements, and careers, including financial assistance and incentives available for rural health pathways. • 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. • Embody the concept of “You can’t be what you can’t see”, by supporting RHCs to ensure they successfully execute a minimum of two rural high school visits (RHSVs). These trips display the benefits, challenges

	<p>and opportunities in rural health care, and help rural students understand that they can be an agent of change in their own communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a social network and advocate for financial and wellbeing support systems for students facing challenges whilst in rural clinical settings.
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Strategic Priority 4

Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration with Stakeholders

Overview	Strategies to achieve this priority
<p>To ensure the NRHSN is a leading voice in rural and First Nations health discussions, and support the advocacy and initiatives of partnering organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a Stakeholder Engagement and Management Plan to guide consistent and meaningful interactions. • 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 healthcare - seeking to provide benefit to our members, and assist partnering organisations in their endeavors through these connections. • Conduct regular meetings with the DoHDA to enhance collaboration, cohesion, and achievement of shared goals. • Conduct monthly meetings as an executive with the RDN to identify and pursue opportunities for stakeholder engagement. • Monitor media for topics relevant to the NRHSN’s mission and prepare public statements to contribute to key discussions. • 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"> - Equitable health outcomes for rural communities. - Improved health outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Strategic Priority 5

Ensure the Sustainability of the NRHSN

Overview	Strategies to achieve this priority
<p>To ensure the NRHSN remains sustainable and continues to make meaningful contributions to rural and First Nations health beyond 2026.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually evaluate our short-, medium-, and long-term plans for the NRHSN against our KPIs, Vision, Mission, Goals, and Strategic Priorities. • Develop a comprehensive succession plan for the NRHSN for 2027 to ensure a smooth transition of leadership and continuity of the NRHSN’s mission and operations. • Mentor and nurture future NRHSN executive members to improve continuity between terms. • 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. • Foster an engaging and inclusive internal culture within the NRHSN which is enjoyable to be a part of. • Continue to achieve all annual KPIs relating to ongoing DoHDA funding.