



S·A·R·R·A·H
Services for Australian
Rural and Remote Allied Health

Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions - An overview

What is an allied health rural generalist?

The term *allied health rural generalist* refers to a service, or to a position or practitioner delivering the service, that responds to the broad range of healthcare needs of a rural or remote community. This includes delivering services for people:

- with a wide range of clinical presentations,
- across the age spectrum, and
- in a variety of clinical settings (inpatient, ambulatory care, community)

The primary aim of generalist service models is to deliver high quality, safe, effective and efficient services as close to the client's community as possible.

To meet this aim, teams and individual health professionals need to implement strategies that maximise local service access and quality. The primary strategies are:

- telehealth,
- delegation to support workers (e.g. allied health assistants),
- extended scope of practice including skill sharing (trans-professional practice), and
- partnerships supporting the implementation of a 'generalist scope' for complex or low frequency clinical presentations, (including rural-urban, cross-agency and cross-sectoral partnerships that use shared care or collaborative practice models).

Rural generalists practice under the regulatory instruments of their specific allied health profession and the policies of their employer.

A rural generalist is not a "generic allied health worker" that does not have a primary health professional qualification. There is no such worker in Australia and this is not an output of the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway.

Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions (AHRG Training Positions)

To support early career professionals in the development of generalist capabilities, Queensland Health trialled the implementation of eleven supernumerary Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions (AHRG Training Positions) in 2014-2016.

To be considered an AHRG Training Position, and use this title, the position should include the following components:

1. Dedicated **development and supervision time** of at least 0.1 FTE.

2. Participation in the allied health **Rural Generalist Program** through James Cook University (refer to <https://www.jcu.edu.au/division-of-tropical-health-and-medicine/research/rural-generalist-program-rgp>).
3. A formal **development plan** aligned with the Level 1 and/or Level 2 allied health Rural Generalist Program relevant to the profession (where available) and requirements of the employing service.
4. **Development funding** to support participation in the Rural Generalist Program.
5. Regular formal supervision with a collocated or highly accessible **profession-specific local supervisor**.
6. Contribution to rural generalist **service development strategies** that improve client care and service outcomes.

Intended benefits of AHRG Training Positions

The implementation of AHRG Training Positions is intended to achieve the following benefits:

- improve attraction and recruitment to the rural or remote health service,
- support for workforce sustainability and succession planning through an “own grown” approach,
- foster an allied health workforce that is “fit for purpose” in a rural or remote setting,
- development of supervision, training and peer support skills of senior professionals in the team,
- greater service improvement, evaluation and reporting skills of senior professionals in the team,
- support health service sustainability through implementing strategies that achieve greater service outcomes from the available resources, and
- the successful introduction and expansion of rural generalist service models that enhance and demonstrate the value of generalist allied health services for the local community.

These intended benefits are informed by the outcomes of an evaluation of the Queensland Health trial of AHRG Training Positions which demonstrated a range of benefits to the community, health services, and health professionals, including AHRG Training Position incumbents and their colleagues.¹ Further details are provided in the information sheet www.sarrah.org.au

Allied Health Rural Generalist Program

The Allied Health Professions Office of Queensland (AHPOQ) Department of Health Queensland, in consultation with health sector partners in other states and territories has formed an agreement with James Cook University (JCU) in collaboration with QUT to progress development of the Rural Generalist Program. Level 1 of the program will be available for enrolment from April 2017, and Level 2 in early 2018. The program will be trialed as a component of allied health rural generalist training positions across a number of jurisdictions between April 2017 and December 2019. The Rural Generalist Program will be integrated into the AHRG Training Position incumbent’s *development plan*. The *service development strategy* implemented by the work unit will be a primary learning activity for the Rural Generalist Program participant.

The Rural Generalist Program is a two-level, university delivered program, encompassing rural generalist practice development for seven professions: medical imaging, nutrition and dietetics, occupational therapy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, and speech pathology.

¹ Queensland Health Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions Evaluation Report (2015) at <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/ahwac/html/rural-remote>

- **Level 1** is tailored to early career professionals and those new to rural and remote practice. Over a period of up to 24 months, participants complete a program of 12 modules, covering clinical and non-clinical topics. The program has a strong focus on workplace integrated learning with significant involvement of local supervisors and managers.
- **Level 2** is targeted at professionals with more experience. Over a period of 18 months to 2 years (part-time study load) participants complete a Graduate Diploma in Rural Generalist Practice. The program supports progression from early career to proficient rural generalist practitioner.

Detailed information about the Rural Generalist Program is available from <https://www.jcu.edu.au/division-of-tropical-health-and-medicine/research/rural-generalist-program-rgp>

Development of AHRG Training Positions in health services

Health services, commissioning agencies, and health workforce bodies have the opportunity to collaborate with SARRAH to participate in the 2017-2019 evaluated trial of the Rural Generalist Program.

The trial will evaluate the implementation of AHRG Training Positions in participating health services nationally, including use of the first formal rural generalist education program available to the allied health professions in Australia. Trial sites will have a role in guiding the development of this key strategy that will support rural and remote workforce growth and sustainability, and improve access for rural and remote communities to allied health services.

Health services interested in participating will develop or designate an AHRG Training Position in their workforce that meets the core role requirements outlined above, including supported participation in the Level 1 and/or Level 2 Rural Generalist Program. Beyond these prescribed requirements, each organisation can use a local implementation model that meets the needs of their community and responds to the circumstances of their workforce and service. Positions are managed and funded by the organisation.

Healthcare commissioning and health workforce funding agencies can be involved through collaborative partnerships with AHRG Training Position employers.

How to become involved

Graduates and early career professionals

Recruitment to AHRG Training Positions is managed by the health services implementing the roles. Positions will be advertised using the usual processes for these organisations including open advertising or centralised graduate recruitment.

Health services and commissioning agencies

Health services and commissioning agencies developing and implementing AHRG Training Positions are a collaborative of independent organisations linked by the objectives of developing and trialing the AHRG workforce and service models. There is no centralised funding available and there are no formal reporting requirements. Participating organisations are responsible for their own implementation activities associated with AHRG Training Positions and can tailor the strategy to meet their own needs and challenges, as long as the core components of the AHRG Training Positions are implemented.

SARRAH can provide information and advice, as well as facilitate collaboration and networking.

Sites will be encouraged to participate in emerging networks of services implementing training positions and to contribute to the evaluation of the Rural Generalist Program.

Acknowledgment

The Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway is a collaborative initiative of the Allied Health Professions' Office of Queensland (AHPOQ), Northern Territory Department of Health, Western Australia Country Health Services and Department of Health Western Australia, Country Health South Australia and Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH).

For more information

Resources relevant to AHRG Training Positions and the Rural Generalist Program are available through SARRAH at www.sarrah.org.au

SARRAH can provide advice to healthcare providers, commissioning agencies and other stakeholders to support scoping, development and implementation of Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions.

E-mail: sarrah@sarrah.org.au

Phone: 02 6285 4960

1800 338 061

www: www.sarrah.org.au