

## RESOURCE 1: ALLIED HEALTH RURAL GENERALIST TRAINING POSITIONS: AN OVERVIEW

### WHAT IS A RURAL GENERALIST IN AN ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSION?

The term rural generalist refers to a service, or to a position or practitioner delivering services, that respond to the broad range of healthcare needs of a rural or remote community. This includes delivering services to people with a wide range of clinical presentations from across the age spectrum and in a variety of clinical settings (inpatient, ambulatory care, community). The primary aim of rural generalist service models is to deliver high quality, safe, effective and efficient services as close to the client's community as possible.

#### Rural Generalist Service Strategies

There are a range of rural generalist service strategies that can be implemented by teams and individual allied health professionals to maximise local service access and quality. Training position incumbents will develop experience with one or more of these strategies whilst they are also adopted by experienced practitioners. The primary strategies comprise:

- Telehealth.
- Delegation to clinical support workers (for example allied health assistants).
- Extended scope of practice including skill sharing (trans-professional practice).
- 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" without 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.

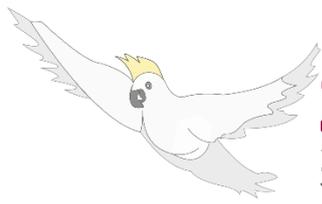
### ALLIED HEALTH RURAL GENERALIST TRAINING POSITIONS (AHRG TRAINING POSITIONS)

Since 2014 a number of jurisdictions have trialled and evaluated the implementation of Allied Health Rural Generalist Training Positions (AHRG Training Positions) with the aim of supporting early career professionals in the development of generalist capabilities. Queensland lead this early work with the trial of twenty-two supernumerary AHRG Training Positions between 2014 and 2018.

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

- 1) Dedicated development and supervision time of at least 0.1 FTE (approximately 4 hours per week).
- 2) Participation in a formal, post-graduate allied health rural generalist education program such as the Rural Generalist Program offered by James Cook University in collaboration with Queensland University of Technology.
- 3) A formal development plan aligned with a level 1 or level 2 allied health rural generalist program relevant to the profession (where available) and the requirements of the employing service.
- 4) Funding to support participation in the relevant post-graduate rural generalist education program.
- 5) Profession-specific supervisor, which for graduates (0-2 years professional experience) should be co-located.
- 6) Contribution to rural generalist service development strategies that improve client care and service outcomes.

Variations to the above components will need to be formally trialled and evaluated in order for any position based on those varied components to be considered an AHRG Training Position.



## INTENDED BENEFITS OF AHRG TRAINING POSITIONS

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

- Improve attraction and recruitment to the rural or remote health service.
- Support 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.
- Successful introduction and expansion of rural generalist service models that enhance and demonstrate the value of generalist allied health services for the local community.
- Potential increase in revenue through the delivery of additional services.

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<sup>1</sup>.

## ALLIED HEALTH RURAL GENERALIST EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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 a Rural Generalist Program. This is currently the only program developed to align to the Allied Health Rural Generalist Education Framework and includes clinical and professional content relevant to an early career rural generalist. Participation in these programs can satisfy the training position requirements detailed above.

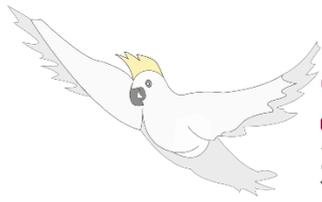
The level 1 Rural Generalist Program has been available since April 2017 with the Graduate Diploma of Rural Generalist Practice available from early 2018. Either program is integrated into the development plan of the AHRG Training Position incumbent. The service development strategy implemented by the work unit will be a primary learning activity for the AHRG Training Position incumbent.

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.

- 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 with each taking six weeks to complete, covering clinical and non-clinical topics. The program has a strong focus on workplace integrated learning with significant involvement of locally based profession-specific 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 comprising 8 units. 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> and information about the Graduate Diploma of Rural Generalist Practice is available from <https://www.jcu.edu.au/courses-and-study/courses/graduate-diploma-of-rural-generalist-practice>

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



# SARRAH

Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health

## 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 collaboration of independent organisations linked by the objectives of developing and trailing the AHRG workforce and service models.

Healthcare 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.

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

SARRAH can provide information and advice, as well as facilitate collaboration and networking, between organisations and different segments of the healthcare sector. Organisations are encouraged to participate in emerging networks of services implementing training positions and to contribute to the evaluation of the Rural Generalist Program.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway is a collaborative initiative comprising a range of organisations across the Australian and New Zealand healthcare sectors. The full list of organisations is available on the SARRAH website at [www.sarrah.org.au](http://www.sarrah.org.au).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Resources relevant to AHRG Training Positions and the Rural Generalist Program are available through SARRAH at [www.sarrah.org.au](http://www.sarrah.org.au). SARRAH can provide advice to healthcare providers, commissioning agencies and other stakeholders to support scoping, development and implementation of the AHRGP.