



Strengthening Primary Care – Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program infrastructure

Improving access to health services in small rural communities is a priority for the Australian Government. A strong rural health workforce is central to this improvement.

This Budget provides funding for infrastructure to strengthen and develop a critical element of the rural training pipeline, the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program (RHMT).

This expands the network of 16 University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) delivered under the RHMT Program. UDRHs provide training to students across a range of health disciplines, including nursing and allied health. They also offer a range of innovative learning opportunities in aged care, disability and rehabilitation, childcare, education, community facilities, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) settings.

Expansion of the program will deliver four key elements: funding a new UDRH; increasing training in five remote communities through existing UDRHs (including student accommodation); funding five projects to enhance aged care training; and a feasibility study to identify best approaches to increase dental training in regional locations.

The RHMT program recently underwent a program evaluation, and Government will continue to consult with the sector on implementation of the remaining recommendations.

Why is this important?

Having more medical professionals undertake their training in rural and remote settings is integral to the Government's rural workforce strategy. Evidence shows when students train in rural settings they are more likely to live and work in the regions. The RHMT program provides important rural training opportunities that help grow the rural health workforce.

Capital investment to expand the UDRH training network will directly benefit rural communities and local jobs both in construction and through the future health workforce.

The program has been operating successfully for more than 20 years, directly benefiting local communities and regional economies, and providing important infrastructure for health students and academics to live, work, and train in small rural communities.

Increasing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce will support the provision of culturally appropriate health care and increase employment opportunities.

Who will benefit?

Australians living in rural and remote areas will benefit from a stronger health workforce and the economic benefits of construction and university presence of local UDRHs. Students participating in the program will benefit from high quality infrastructure in new rural training locations.

How much will this cost?

This will cost \$50.3 million from 2020–21 to 2023–24.