



## Pathways to Progress: Healthcare Access in Rural Victoria

Sustainability: Building a Thriving  
Rural Health Future

# Abstract title: Supporting and Connecting Rural Doctors to Sustain the Rural Health Workforce

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Medical professionals are required in regional communities to meet the health needs of Victorians. With high demand of medical professionals in regional areas of Victoria, it is more important to attract, develop and retain medical professionals to regional areas to build the pipeline channels towards a thriving rural health future.

This case study will highlight a collaborative hybrid mentoring program developed in regional Victoria. Stakeholders across regional Victoria developed the platform to address the outcomes identified in the State and National Medical Workforce strategies:

- Increase the number of regional doctors in training.
- Reduce barriers for doctors to work and train rurally.
- Support coordinate and visible “end-to-end” training pathways.
- Support the regional trainee and medical workforce including in ATSI health settings for population parity.
- Support broader education and experience of generalist skills, and rural and remote clinical practice, during medical school and on training programs.
- Support informed decision making for regional medical career pathways.
- Implement and leverage innovation from the National Rural Generalist Pathway.

The mentoring program is free for users, and they can join online any time in their medical career from medical student to fellowship, providing end-to-end support from the beginning. Participants are able to focus on skill development, career progression, work and life balance, general guidance and support or personal development. Participants can connect, share resources and schedule meetings.

The mentoring relationship is beneficial to both Mentor and Mentee. Mentors inspire and impact the next generation of medical professionals, whilst improving leadership skills, and receiving recognition for their contribution to the mentoring program. Mentees are able to receive personalised support and gain insight into a future in a regional career and help build a sense of belonging in a new regional community.

Program outcomes indicate mentees experience increased confidence, job satisfaction and retention and commitment to pursuing a career in rural healthcare when supported by a regionally based and experienced medical mentor. These mentee experiences build towards a stronger workforce of medical professionals in regional communities in Victoria.