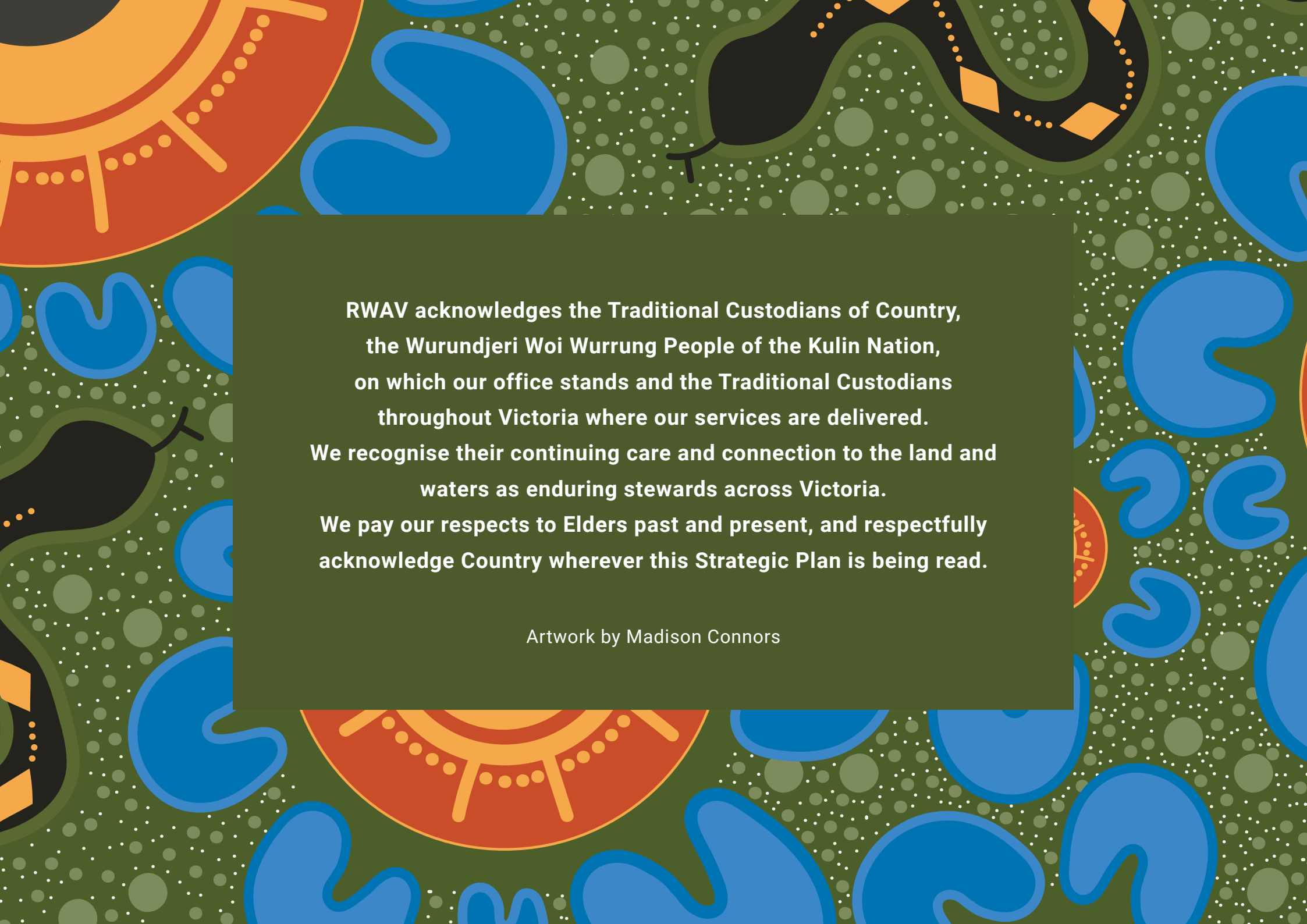




# 2023-2025 **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The background of the page is a vibrant Indigenous Australian artwork. It features a dark green field filled with small white dots. Overlaid on this are several large, stylized elements: a large orange and red sun-like shape in the top left and bottom center, and several blue, wavy shapes representing water. A black, curved shape with orange diamond patterns is visible in the top right. The central text is contained within a dark green rectangular box.

**RWAV acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country,  
the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation,  
on which our office stands and the Traditional Custodians  
throughout Victoria where our services are delivered.  
We recognise their continuing care and connection to the land and  
waters as enduring stewards across Victoria.  
We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and respectfully  
acknowledge Country wherever this Strategic Plan is being read.**

Artwork by Madison Connors

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## Who We Are



Since its inception in 1997, the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) has become a significant and successful non-profit organisation based in Victoria, Australia.

RWAV improves access to quality primary care health services and other health services for rural, regional and First Nations communities across Victoria. We improve health outcomes through

effective and customised health workforce solutions that are informed through partnerships, workforce and population health data, and collaboration with communities.

## What We Do



**RWAV** provides sustainable health workforce solutions for Victorian rural, regional and First Nations communities to enable equitable access to primary healthcare and other community health-facing services by:



Providing health workforce recruitment, locum services, outreach and grant programs.



Influencing key decision-makers through our health workforce data, research and analysis expertise.



Collaborating with others to support a well distributed, high-quality health workforce throughout Victoria.

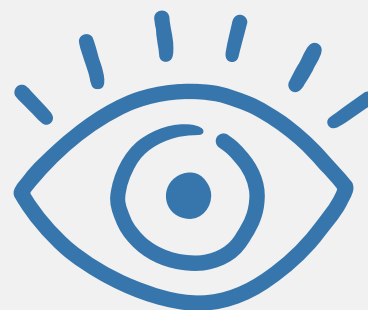
## Our Purpose

Providing effective and customised health workforce solutions for rural and First Nations communities in Victoria.



## Our Vision

All Victorian communities to be supported with equitable access to a high-quality health workforce that promotes positive health outcomes.





## Our Values



### Respect

We treat everyone with dignity, recognising the value and diversity of our communities. We listen to everyone and respect their views and contributions.



### Accountability

We are transparent and accountable to those we work with concerning our services and their delivery.



### Collaboration

We work as a team with our community by building strong relationships. We embrace opportunities to collaborate and partner with communities and organisations to help us achieve our goals.



### Innovation

We embrace change and constantly seek new ways to achieve our goals.



### Resilience

We respond to challenges willingly, with a holistic approach and unwavering resolve.

# Acknowledgements

RWAV would like to thank:

## **Federal and Victorian Departments of Health**

Our core work is funded by Federal and Victorian Departments of Health, and this enables us to facilitate quality health workforce support and outreach programs.

Our programs support registered clinicians, general practitioners (GPs), GP locums, nurses, allied health professionals, medical specialists and health students. This enables Victoria's health workforce to deliver the best possible health services in rural, regional and First Nations communities. We're also able to work with rural and regional medical practices, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and their management teams to help address their healthcare workforce shortages.

## **Our stakeholders and the RWAV team**

RWAV would like to sincerely thank all of our stakeholders, board directors, and staff who engaged in the consultation process.

With their input, we were able to develop a comprehensive plan to guide our strategic priorities for the next three years. Their feedback helped us understand what was working well in our previous plan and what could be improved to refresh our purpose and direction. We look forward to working with all our stakeholders again, so we can collectively improve access to vital healthcare in rural Victoria.

## **The health professionals, health services and ACCHOs we work with**

The work RWAV has been able to do and will continue to progress in this Strategic Plan, would not have been possible without the years of ongoing work that many health professionals and health services in country Victoria and ACCHOs have done to support the health of their patients. Many of these constitute a pillar service within their close-knit communities and have dedicated their entire careers to understanding the health and wellbeing needs and personal lives of their patients.

To all health professionals working to support rural, regional and First Nations communities in Victoria; thank you for your tireless efforts to support quality access to healthcare.



## Foreword from the RWAV Board Chair and CEO

A new Strategic Plan is needed to reflect RWAV's organisational shift over the past five years.

In recent years, we've improved our workforce programs, strengthened and created new relationships with stakeholders and undertaken new (sometimes unplanned) initiatives. We're very proud of our new projects including the Allied Health Strategy, International Medical Graduate Recruitment Strategy, the revamped Victorian Rural Health Census, the Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and the Clinical Governance Framework.

We've also started piloting professional development and workforce retention research projects and had the privilege of commencing administration of the Victorian Department of Health's Regional Incentive Program for the Mental Health Workforce.

We knew that our new Strategic Plan needed to consider the extremely complex healthcare system and policy landscape that continue to affect all aspects of our work in supporting the health workforce, rural, regional and First Nations communities in Victoria.

RWAV has observed longstanding rural health workforce issues escalating as shortages of GPs, allied health professionals, nurses and practice managers within rural Victoria continue to increase. Burnout and feelings of isolation are ongoing and have an impact on health workforce retention.

Due to a myriad of geographical and social factors, it's well known that people living in rural areas often experience worse health outcomes and healthcare access. This disparity in healthcare access has increased over recent years as rural communities in Victoria experienced the brunt of extreme weather events. These events included bushfires and floods that occurred with increased frequency and unprecedented severity. COVID-19 also restricted healthcare workforce deployment into rural regions.

The health and wellbeing outcomes of First Nations communities remain disproportionately worse than other populations and this is due to interrelated factors such as intergenerational trauma, significant under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the health workforce and the lack of culturally safe health services.



*A Prof Dr Morton Rawlin AM*



*Lauren Cordwell*

As the number of rural health professionals moving into retirement rises, there will be an increased need for new employment models in rural Victoria that enable flexible working arrangements and funding models that foster a more viable workforce.

There's a need for more place-based strategies involving local communities to increase access and retention of the health workforce. More needs to be done to support health professionals in delivering healthcare to underserved areas, but we also need to recognise the importance of supporting their families so they feel welcome in their communities.

Through our consultations, we learned the importance of supporting more collaborative and joint advocacy across the health sector in order to highlight health workforce issues and solutions. Stronger advocacy by RWAV, alongside our partner organisations, is required to help voice the obstacles being faced on the ground in the communities we serve. We also need to ensure health professionals, services and community perspectives are involved in critical conversations. Together we need to call for much needed innovative solutions that will support Victoria's health workforce and reform outdated workforce levers and models of care that are no longer effective in rural areas.

Despite the challenges, there is much to be hopeful about. Hope lies in the current health students who are passionate and eager to be a part of the solution. We know there is more to do to support the future workforce pipeline. Collectively, we can work to increase rural student placements, supervision support and capabilities to undertake more specialty training in rural areas.

We're pleased to see a positive appetite throughout the health sector for a Medicare reform agenda, more multi-disciplinary workforce teams, acknowledgement of the crucial role of primary care in supporting hospitals, and the need for new investment and policy commitments to support rural health.

It is our hope that the new Strategic Plan will enable RWAV to make a meaningful contribution in addressing long-standing rural health and workforce issues. The rural health professionals and health services we work with every day, as well as our colleagues in the health sector, ensure we know and understand these challenges well.

A Prof Dr Morton Rawlin AM  
**RWAV Board Chair**

Lauren Cordwell  
**RWAV Chief Executive Officer**

## 2023-25 Goals

## How We Know We've Achieved Our Goals

1

**Promote** the benefits of working in rural healthcare, RWAV's unique workforce support offerings and ability to assist with expertise on health workforce issues and solutions.

- We'll have an effective health workforce attraction campaign in place for rural Victoria, that will promote the benefits of working in rural health to attract more health professionals to fill vacancies and get health students to take up more placements. We would also have effective media and communication strategies that will increase public awareness about RWAV's unique workforce support offerings, and our ability to offer data and evidence-based expertise on health workforce issues and solutions.

2

### **Strengthen our recruitment and workforce support programs**

so the communities we care for have fairer access to an effective and sustainable health workforce.

- We'll have enhanced our recruitment, locum and outreach programs, that will provide more customised and high-quality recruitment and workforce support strategies for practices and communities in priority rural areas. RWAV's clinical governance principles would be embedded throughout all our health workforce programs.
- In collaboration with VACCHO, we would see increased evidence of effective and tailored recruitment and workforce support programs for ACCHOs and First Nations health services. We'll have built upon our programs of support for the rural and ACCHO health workforce to access educational opportunities, support programs and grants for their work needs.
- We would see evidence of increased retention of the health workforce that RWAV facilitates in rural communities and ACCHOs through enhanced workforce retention programs.
- We'll have increased engagement with rural student networks and stakeholders that support the future workforce, working with them on strategies aiming to better support rural health placements, supervision, scholarships and mentorship initiatives.

## 2023-25 Goals

## How We Know We've Achieved Our Goals

3

### **Facilitate rural place-based health workforce solutions**

which cater to the unique health and health workforce needs of communities, and aim to increase workforce access, quality and retention within the area.

- We'll have facilitated more proof-of-concept place-based solutions, partnering with communities to increase the local health workforce and its retention in priority rural areas where communities are experiencing difficulty accessing primary health services. We'll also increase engagement with local communities, organisations, health services and health professionals to collaborate on local solutions.

4

### **Strengthen engagement with First Nations health stakeholders**

to support initiatives that enhance access to culturally safe healthcare.

- We'll have strengthened relationships with First Nations health stakeholders, to support initiatives that prioritise and address the health workforce and holistic health needs of First Nations communities. We'll have increased promotion of working in ACCHOs and supported initiatives aiming to increase the number of health professionals who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in the health workforce.

## 2023-25 Goals

## How We Know We've Achieved Our Goals

5

**Increase advocacy and collaboration** to contribute positively to healthcare reform with others.

- We'll have strengthened stakeholder engagement with partner organisations, key decision-makers, inter-sectoral stakeholders and local stakeholders to collectively influence workforce policy.

6

**Strengthen data and research capabilities** to tell the story of the health workforce, drive change and enhance our ability to provide evidence-based expertise on health workforce issues and solutions.

- We'll have an enhanced data strategy to improve the collection of rural health workforce data to analyse trends, and forecast future workforce risks and opportunities. We'll have collaborated with others on rural health research projects to trial new health workforce recruitment and retention strategies.

## 2023-25 Goals

## How We Know We've Achieved Our Goals

7

**Be a great organisation supporting rural health** by optimising our governance and operations so we can focus on our work goals and always think about those we serve.

- Organisational systems would be more streamlined and integrated to support IT systems and excellent administration of funding contracts, grants, and educational supports. Feedback would demonstrate that stakeholders increasingly see RWAV as a trusted organisation with reliable and responsive service, and that RWAV is an employer of choice with excellent work culture.

8

**Find new funding channels to support health workforce initiatives** that benefit communities and progress RWAV's Purpose.

- RWAV will have proactively sought new opportunities to administer funding that's focused on supporting the health workforce.

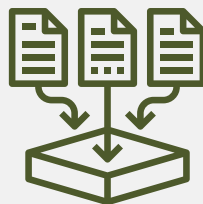


# System Enablers That Will Help RWAV Achieve Its Goals



## Community Partnerships

Successful partnerships with local organisations and communities to facilitate community-driven and customised place-based initiatives.



## Health Workforce Data Capabilities

Appropriate technologies, health workforce planning tools and data sharing agreements to tell the story of the primary health workforce in Victoria.



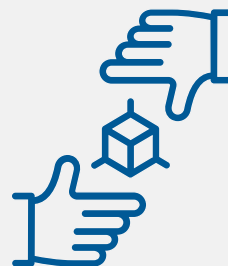
## Sector Collaboration

Effective collaboration across all levels of government, local, intersectoral and publicly funded agencies.



## Effective Technology and Systems

Implementing appropriate technologies to enable integration of our systems and databases, and streamline operational processes and customer experience strategies.



## Health Workforce Perspectives

Genuine engagement with those working in rural healthcare and First Nations health services to enable them to drive improvements to health workforce outcomes.



## Funding

Sustainable and secure funding that enables RWAV to be an ongoing effective, agile, progressive, resilient and innovative organisation.



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