



# Media Release

## Connecting the Docs



Date of Submission	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2025
Contact Name	Lauren Byrne, Connecting the Docs
Contact Details	Email: <a href="mailto:connectingthedocs@erh.org.au">connectingthedocs@erh.org.au</a> / <a href="mailto:lbyrne@erh.org.au">lbyrne@erh.org.au</a>
Website Information	<a href="https://connectingthedocs.au">https://connectingthedocs.au</a> .
About Us	<p>The Connecting the Docs program was established in 2022 to address the ongoing medical workforce crisis in regional and rural Victoria; specifically in the Loddon Mallee Region.</p> <p>The organisation was formed in response to specific requests and feedback from local doctors who were struggling to navigate the healthcare system. The aim of the partnership is to connect doctors with key healthcare organisations; support their transition into communities and; provide skilled case management to help doctors navigate the healthcare system with flexibility.</p>
Social Media URL's	<a href="#">Facebook</a> : <a href="#">Linkedin</a> <a href="#">Instagram</a>
Link to YouTube Clip	<a href="#">Connecting the Docs - YouTube</a>



## Connecting the Docs Regional Round-Up in Swan Hill: A Landmark Moment for the Future of Regional Medicine in Victoria



In a powerful display of unity, innovation, and commitment to regional healthcare; Connecting the Docs hosted its most successful event to date in collaboration with Murray PHN, RACGP, GPSA, RWAV, and the Victorian Rural Generalist Program (VRGP).

Held in Swan Hill on 10 and 11<sup>th</sup> April, the *Regional Round-Up* networking event brought together a passionate mix of medical students, junior doctors, GP registrars, GP supervisors, health leaders, and their families. Over two days of inspiring discussions, immersive experiences, and genuine community connection, the event shone a spotlight on the unique rewards and opportunities available in medicine across north regional Victoria.

*Connecting the Docs* was founded in the Loddon Mallee region in response to a critical need: not just to attract and recruit doctors to rural areas—but to retain them. The collaborative model is built around community connection, mentorship, and a better way to onboard doctors and their families into rural life. The program addresses the missing links to successfully integrating doctors and their families to rural and regional locations and provides ongoing career pathways and connections to streamline what has been a complex, fragmented and somewhat confusing experience.

“We created *Connecting the Docs* because we were seeing the same pattern again and again—great doctors coming to rural placements and leaving because the vision of what the future may present was lacking. There was no streamlined plan for support, integration, or connection,” said Dr. Annemarie Newth, founding member and Executive Sponsor of the program.

“Now, we’re seeing the difference. Participants tell us they feel seen, supported, and inspired to stay. That’s a huge shift—and it’s working.”

Dr Newth also reflected on what the Swan Hill event represented. “There was this beautiful moment where a junior doctor turned to me and said they didn’t realise rural medicine could look like this. That’s what this is all about—breaking down assumptions and showing people what’s possible when they feel genuinely welcomed.”

More hospitals and health services across Victoria are now looking to get involved with *Connecting the Docs*, eager to unify their approach to addressing workforce recruitment and retention challenges.

“Connecting the Docs isn’t just a program—it’s a new way of thinking about how we support our medical workforce,” said Kellie Byron-Gray, founding member and Chair of *Connecting the Docs*.

“We’re not only connecting doctors to jobs—we’re connecting them to lifestyle, to purpose, to place. And when communities come together to support our medical doctors, the results speak for themselves.”

Founding member Trevor Adem reflected that about the interest from other services across Victoria. Everyone’s asking, ‘How can we do this too?’ That’s the future we’re building with this program. One where health services unite to offer a seamless, welcoming experience for every doctor who chooses to live and work in regional Victoria.”

Currently, *Connecting the Docs* proudly partners with several forward-thinking health services across the region, including Echuca Regional Health, East Wimmera Health Service, Kerang District Health, Mallee District Aboriginal Health, Mildura Base Public Hospital, Northern District Community Health, and Swan Hill District Health. “We are Directors of Medical Services and Chief Executive Officers with a passion and commitment to making a difference by leading a new, coordinated approach to recruitment and retention—one that places people and community at the centre” Associate Prof. Rex Prabhu, founding member said.

The Regional Round-Up was not only a celebration—it was a catalyst. With more events planned, more communities coming on board, and stronger collaboration across health partners, *Connecting the Docs* is shaping the future of rural medicine—one meaningful connection at a time.







**Picture 1 (from Left to Right)**

**Trevor Adem**, Chief Executive Officer, East Wimmera Healthcare

**Kellie Byron-Gray**, Chief Executive Officer, Kerang District Health

**Dr Annemarie Newth**, Executive Director Medical Services & Chief Medical Officer, Echuca Regional Health

**Associate Prof. Rex Prabhu**, Executive Director of Medical Services, Swan Hill District Health

*Absent Founding Members*

**Perlin Simon**, Chief Executive Officer, Mallee District Aboriginal Service

**Dr Nabrees Sinnalebbe**, Executive Director of Medical Services/Chief Medical Officer, Mildura Base Public Hospital

**Penny Wilkinson**, Chief Executive Officer, Northern District Community Health



**Picture 2**

Founding Members, Sponsors and Medical Professionals



**Picture 3**

Dr Rex Prabhu MC for the eventing