



Mapping our progress

Annual Report 2016/17



health
professional
solutions

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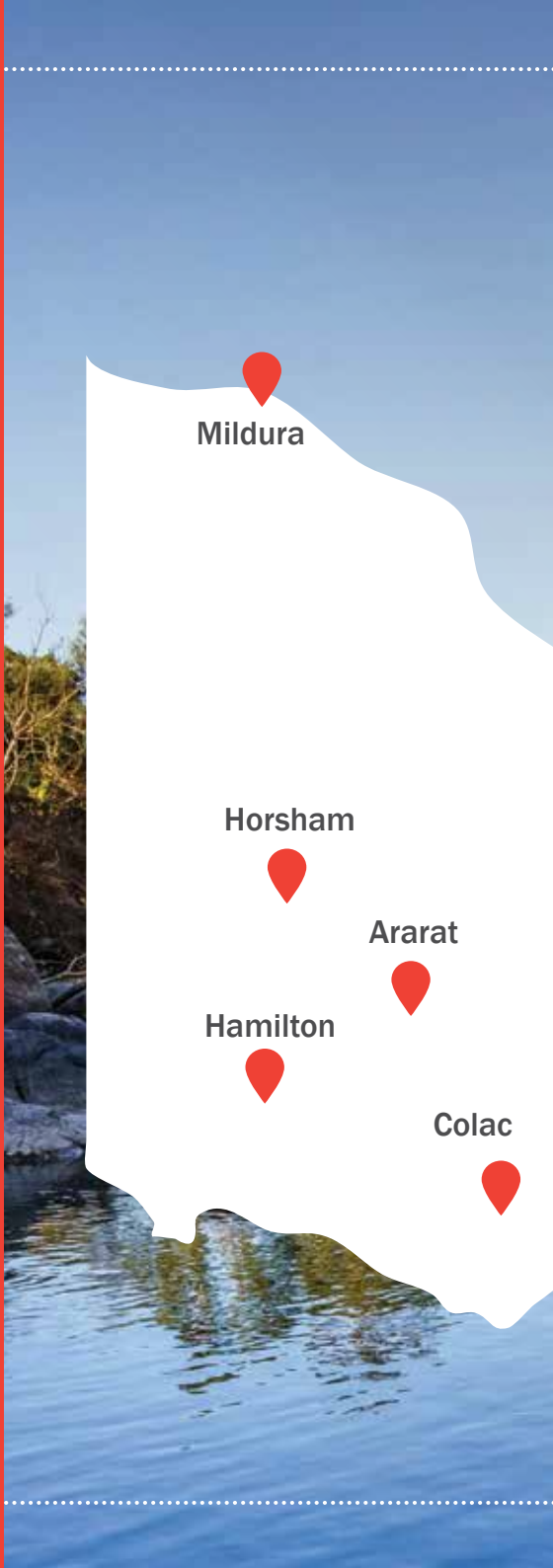
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Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) is a non-profit, government-funded organisation that seeks to develop and deliver solutions that enhance access to the health workforce for rural, regional and Aboriginal communities.

RWAV is committed to providing integrated workforce solutions to address current and future workforce needs in rural and regional Victoria.



Echuca



Numurkah

Castlemaine



Mallacoota



Traralgon

Sale



Morwell



RWAV locations of progress 2016/17

About us



Our Vision

Improve health for all in rural, regional and Aboriginal communities





**Our
Values**

Respect
Trust
Accountable
Collaborate
Innovate



**Our
Mission**



**Develop and
deliver solutions
to enhance
rural, regional
and Aboriginal
communities'
access to health
workforce**



**Our
Strategy**

Facilitation of integrated rural health career pathways



- + Support rural secondary school students to obtain a place in a health education course
- + Facilitate health training in rural communities
- + Facilitate rural placement for intern years
- + Facilitate regionalised placements for GP Registrars

Recruitment and retention



- + Attract quality candidates with the right skills
- + Support health professionals to settle into rural communities
- + Provide supportive activities to enable retention of health professionals in rural communities

Build practice capacity and capability



- + Provide professional support for practice staff
- + Provide business support to build practice capacity
- + Promote knowledge sharing

Informed workforce planning



- + Utilise community profiles to inform workforce needs
- + Strategic engagement with stakeholders to inform rural health workforce planning and policy
- + Contribute to evidence-based rural health workforce solutions

Innovative connections



- + Continue to be respected in the rural workforce environment
- + Enhance internal systems to drive efficiency and effectiveness
- + Improve knowledge sharing via internal connections

Message from the Chair



It was an exciting year for RWAV in 2017. There were many success stories for communities in rural and regional Victoria because of our varied programs and services.

RWAV also secured a three-year commitment to funding by the Australia Government Department of Health for its core work as a rural workforce agency.

In recognising the work that rural workforce agencies have accomplished with the GP workforce, the Government has tasked RWAV to undertake jurisdictional health workforce needs assessment, and address health workforce shortages and mal-distribution through the delivery of various programs and services.

These will aim to:

- + Improve access and continuity of access to essential primary healthcare;
- + Build local health workforce capability with a view to ensuring communities can access the right health professional at the right time, and ensuring health practitioners have the right skills and qualifications for their positions
- + Grow the sustainability and supply of the health workforce with a view to strengthening the long-term access to appropriately qualified health professionals

In 2016–17, RWAV continued its efforts to ensure a sustainable health workforce for communities living in rural and regional Victoria. We placed and supported 125 health professionals into rural and regional Victorian communities and provided 4,996 locum relief sessions for GPs.

We continued to provide examination support to doctors, and during 2016–17, 63 successfully obtained their fellowships. Through the business support workshops and provision of information and resources, RWAV continued to support rural practices in building their capacity and sustainability.

Through our VicOutreach services we supported 55,239 patients' access to specialists, and allied health services to communities experiencing high levels of health disadvantage due to rurality and limited access to health services. The program saw successful partnerships built with PHNs, VACCHO, ACCHOs, regional and metro hospitals, health services and others.

This year, we continued to ensure that new training posts were targeted to community needs, and the Rural Medical Workforce program was aligned with other medical workforce initiatives.

Our Future Workforce program continues to engage with and encourage medical, allied health, nursing and secondary school students to explore pathways into rural healthcare in Victoria.

During the year, organisational and governance reviews were undertaken, and these resulted in Constitutional changes to move to a skills-based Board as well as the implementation of the Australian Business Excellence framework.

I extend my thanks to all our funders, stakeholders and collaborators for their continued commitment to rural and regional Victorian communities.

I thank the dedication and commitment of RWAV's CEO Megan Cahill, and her team for their tireless efforts to deliver outcomes to rural Victorian communities.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of long-serving directors Dr Philip Webster and Dr Sue Harrison who are retiring this year and extend a welcome to the new directors who will be appointed.



Dr Yousuf Ahmad
RWAV Chair

Recruitment

108

GP placements

17

Allied health
and nursing
placements



Workforce support

504

General
practices
supported

1,861

GPs and
registrars
supported

311

Doctors being
case managed

28

Aboriginal
Community
Controlled
Health
Organisations

Locum

195

Placements
provided

4,996

Sessions of
locum relief



Education and training

299

Grants processed

18

Training sessions held



Outreach services

322

Services supported

4,099

Number of visits

55,239

Number of patients supported



Assessments

314

PESCI assessments

Facilitation of integrated rural health career pathways

An aerial photograph of a coastal waterway, possibly a harbor or inlet, with a boat in the center and a pier on the left. The water is a deep blue, and the surrounding land is covered in green vegetation. The sky is clear and blue.

1

RWAV's future workforce program supports and encourages medical, allied health, nursing and secondary school students to explore pathways into rural healthcare in Victoria.

RWAV's rural ambassadors engage with students and communities across Victoria, highlighting the benefits of working rurally and the amount of support available.

Emily Glover

Rural Ambassador,
optometry student



As a Rural Ambassador of RWAV, Emily aims “to raise awareness about the exciting opportunities in rural healthcare to Victorian secondary and tertiary students”. She is the Interdisciplinary Health Officer and the Optometry Representative of the Outlook Rural Health Club at the University of Melbourne. She has hosted many rural-themed lecture events, and promoted RWAV initiatives and services while encouraging interdisciplinary networking.

“RWAV has been a medium for me to learn about the Future Workforce Initiatives, RWAV services and grant opportunities offered to graduating health professionals”, Emily said. She added that she had “received constant support and encouragement from

RWAV to be that extra link between health students and RWAV”, and this has helped her to inspire optometry students and given her the passion to continue into the future.

Emily’s interest in rural health has grown as she has developed an understanding of “what a vital role health practitioners play in a patient’s quality of life, particularly in rural areas where it is harder to access health services”. It is “pretty special”, she said, “when you can be a part of someone’s life in managing their health, making it such a positive experience that they want to continue coming back to see you, and also encouraging their family to come and see you, as their family doctor”.



“RWAV has been a medium for me to learn about the Future Workforce initiatives, RWAV services and grant opportunities offered to graduating health professionals.”

Throughout the year, RWAV undertook many activities and events that promoted rural health careers and the benefits of a rural lifestyle. These included supporting rural health clubs, attending careers expos, organising a rural experience day out and rural clinical placement grants.

Ryan Toohey

Rural Clinical Placement
Grant recipient



Ryan Toohey, a Physiotherapy student at La Trobe University, was awarded a Rural Clinical Placement Grant to assist with the costs of his five-week clinical placement at Western District Health service in Hamilton. RWAV, through the Future Workforce Program, provided 18 grants to medical, nursing and allied health students to complete their clinical placements in rural Victoria in 2016.

Ryan's clinical placement enabled him to learn about assessment and treatment of acute and post-acute stroke patients and the difficulties they face living in regional areas such as Hamilton. He also had the opportunity to work at the Hamilton Special School, where he interacted with children with special needs and broadened his understanding of neurological disorders and syndromes. He was able to provide them with

treatments that were effective. Ryan had the opportunity to be part of an allied health team on an acute hospital ward where he liaised with a variety of health professionals to problem solve management for patients. He said it helped him "realise the importance of discharge planning for patients at a regional health service, due to the lengthy distance that each patient may have to travel to go home to their family, or to another health service, depending on their current state of health".

Ryan found his placement rewarding and said he felt like his treatment "contributed to the improvement of patients' quality of life, which is a great feeling to have". His advice to fellow students is to take on a rural clinical placement because they would "enjoy the close-knit community that will support and guide" them. He also

**“enjoy the close-knit
community that will
support and guide you”**



recommended learning about nearby towns and other medical services in the area as it will help when developing discharge plans for patients.

Ryan is happy to have completed his seven years of university study and is looking forward to pursuing his passion of travelling for a short time in South America and Europe. On his return, Ryan will be excited to commence his career in Physiotherapy and said he would “really enjoy the experience if he found an opportunity in rural Victoria”.



Facilitation of integrated rural health career pathways

Our rural medical workforce programs provide training and skills maintenance pathways to doctors with advanced procedural or speciality skills who will (or currently) work as general practitioners to meet the needs of communities in regional and rural Victoria.

RWAV took over administration of the programs in July 2016.

The advanced training posts will continue to expand to include additional specialty areas (for example, mental health, palliative care and aged care) and increase awareness of the programs to a broader range of medical practitioners, such as fellowed rural general practitioners and International Medical Graduate (IMG) doctors, already working in rural and regional health services in Victoria.



Saif Abdulrahman

General Practitioner

Dr. Saif Abdulrahman was born and raised in Iraq where he completed his medical degree. He immigrated to Australia in 2009 and commenced his first job as a resident in the Emergency Department in Ballarat Base Hospital. He went on to complete training in General Practice and achieved Fellowship in 2017, through the RVTS program while working at the Colac Medical Centre. During his training in a rural area, he realised the need for doctors with advanced knowledge and skills in different aspects of medicine.



Dr Abdulrahman was inspired to apply for the Rural Extended and Advanced Procedural Skills (REAPS) post in Anaesthetics at Ballarat Health because he wanted to meet the needs and requirements of his community.

He said it was “rewarding to see the community’s appreciation when you are able to offer them medical treatment and procedures in their own town without travelling long distances, particularly considering population groups such as the elderly and the logistics involved.” In addition “many of the existing procedural GPs in town are close to retiring and the continuity of providing vital services, such as anaesthesia, for patients is fundamental for an expanding population.” He is looking forward to the training as he is keen to learn and advance his skills.

Working in Colac, “you become part of the community and one makes every effort to solve their problems” he said. “People in Colac appreciate the family GP a lot, and by default some families consider their GP part of their family. I can see the happiness in my patients’ eyes when I mention to them that most of their elective procedures can be done here in Colac without having to travel”.

“you become part of the community and one makes every effort possible to try to solve their problems”

Recruitment and retention



2



RWAV's recruitment services address workforce shortages in rural and regional Victoria by attracting appropriately trained health professionals to work in rural general practice and primary healthcare.

Whether you are an Australian-trained doctor, international medical graduate, allied health professional or nurse, RWAV is able to assist you to find a rewarding placement in rural and regional Victoria.

This year, RWAV placed 108 GPs and 17 allied health professionals in rural practices and at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs).

Kamal Jeet Singh

General Practitioner

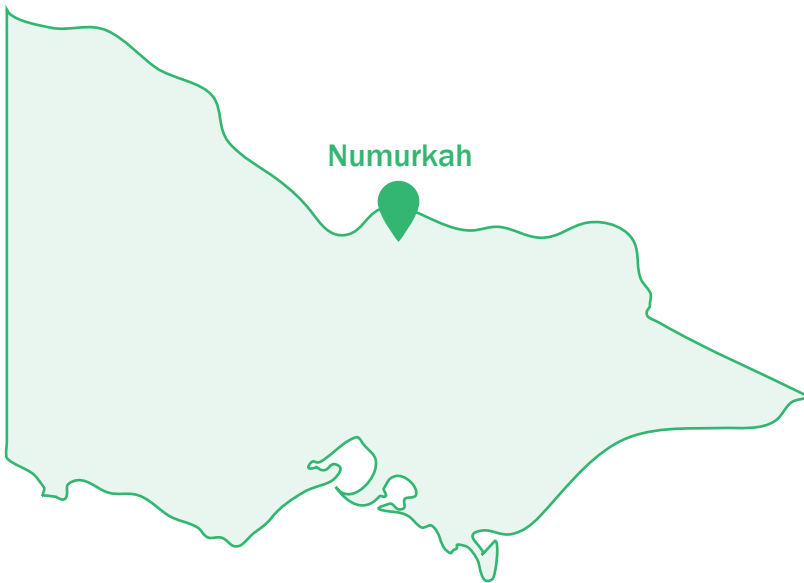


Dr Kamal Jeet Singh started his career as a GP in India at the age of 23. While managing his own practice, he attained Fellowship of the College of General Practitioners of India in 1992. With over 30 years' experience in general practice, Dr Singh decided to move to Australia in 2013 with his wife to be with their children who were studying in Australia. He said it had been an "eventful journey getting through all the stages of AMC assessments and exams", and is "glad to be working in country Victoria and hoping to have a pleasant voyage ahead".

Dr Singh lives in Numurkah with his wife, a retired mathematics teacher and three children. His elder daughter Mani is a Dentist, working for Bendigo Health. Manleen, his younger daughter is pursuing Doctor of Optometry at

The University of Melbourne and his son Abhinoor, who he said, is the "youngest and cheekiest of all" is in year 12.

Dr Singh is grateful for the support from the community and said though his "journey was very strenuous" he was "able to sail through with good support from the community". He is very appreciative of "the guidance and motivation provided by the people" around him. Dr Singh's "experience in rural Victoria has been rich and gratifying". He is thrilled to be continuing in his profession here in Australia. He said "working as a part of a close knit team", he enjoys "providing healthcare services to the warm and welcoming community of Numurkah".



“My advice to aspiring rural GPs is to seek guidance from RWAV, which provides comprehensive support and assistance at all times. Believe in yourself, do your best and you will succeed.”

“My advice to aspiring rural GPs is to seek guidance from RWAV, which provides comprehensive support and assistance at all times. Believe in yourself, do your best and you will succeed.”

“I have a fantastic relationship with RWAV. The wonderful RWAV team, Ben, Kate, and Gavin to name a few, have been immensely supportive and helpful throughout my journey, guiding me

through the process of job hunting and eventually securing a good position for me. Just keep it up.”

Dr Singh hopes to “strive to provide the best possible healthcare services to the community.”

Recruitment and retention

RWAV's Outreach programs significantly improve the range of health services available to rural, regional and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They enable access to health professionals in areas where they cannot be attracted, or it is not viable to sustain a local service provider.

Priorities during 2016–17 included increasing access to:

- + Maternal, paediatric and mental healthcare
- + Chronic disease management
- + Primary ear and eye care services
- + Enhanced Nutrition programs and activities

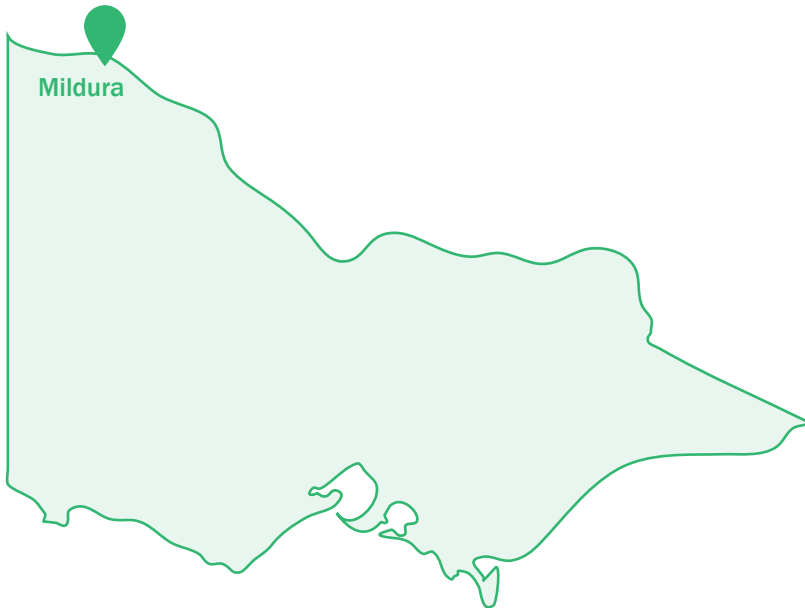


Michael Marks

Paediatrician

Through RWAV's VicOutreach program Associate Professor Michael Marks has provided Paediatric services to the community of Mildura since April 2016. A/Prof Marks is a senior Paediatrician in the Department of General Medicine, Royal Children's Hospital, and a Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Paediatrics, University of Melbourne.

Ms Nina Woulfe, Director of In Leaps & Bounds in Mildura said "RWAV's



contribution to the local Mildura community has been immeasurable.” Prior to the involvement of RWAV, there was a three to six-month waiting list to secure an appointment with a local Paediatrician. Some families had to travel long distances to Melbourne, or Adelaide, to access a Paediatrician.

A/Prof Marks is “part of our family now and he loves coming to Mildura – it really has been a great success for the community of Mildura”. Having access to A/Prof Marks has been extremely well received in the local community by parents and health professionals alike. They are very appreciative of being able to see a Paediatrician close to their homes regularly. There have been positive outcomes for children in the local community, including a number of

children identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder, where A/Prof Marks has ensured they receive the support they require to achieve the best possible outcomes for them to thrive.

Ms Woulfe rates RWAV a “10 out of 10” and said that “the communication is exceptional and feel like we are truly being supported with the needs of the local community. I could not speak highly enough of the personnel that we are involved with at RWAV.”

“RWAV’s contribution to the local Mildura community has been immeasurable.”

Darius

Surgical patient



RWAV was instrumental in changing the lives of nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from Mildura and Echuca when it enabled them to undergo ENT surgery after being on wait lists for years.

The children underwent surgery in January 2017 performed by renowned ENT surgeon, Professor O’Leary at The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. RWAV worked closely with Professor O’Leary, The Victorian Royal Eye and Ear Hospital and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations – Njernda Aboriginal Cooperative, Echuca, Mallee District Aboriginal Services, Mildura and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Fitzroy to ensure these children received their much needed surgery.

Bright young Darius had ongoing hearing problems over the past five years and had

been struggling in school his father, Keith, said. Darius excels in maths and reading, but due to hearing difficulties, his speech and education have suffered significantly. He has ongoing ear aches and had to miss school at times. “He has been receiving speech therapy for two years and still his pronunciation isn’t clear” Keith said. A beaming Keith said RWAV had been a godsend and looking at to his youngest son he added “his life is going to be so different from now on.”

The single father, who lost his wife two years ago, said he “couldn’t believe” that they were “able to get help for his son so soon, knowing waiting lists for surgery were well over three years”. They both now look forward to a speedy recovery and enjoying their future.



“his life is going to be so different from now on.”

Recruitment is more than placing a health professional in a position. It includes activities that aim to retain health professionals in rural and regional locations for longer periods of time.

RWAV appropriately matches candidates to clinics and communities and supports them throughout their journey through orientation and regular contact. Its retention support extends to the health professional’s family to ensure a smooth transition into their new community, various professional development opportunities and locum relief.

RWAV’s locum program achieved 195 locum placements, which provided 4,996 sessions covering 500 weeks of locum

relief to GPs for holiday, sickness and continuing professional development (CPD) for solo, group practices and ACCHOs throughout Victoria.

The success of the program in securing locum placements saw locum requests for 2016–17 increase by 24%. RWAV was able to fill 92% of locum requests either through RWAV – employed GP locum or through our locum brokerage service.

Phillip Jolly

General Practitioner



Dr Phillip Jolly has been providing locum services for numerous years as a procedural GP, with anaesthetic, and accident and emergency roles. Having always worked in rural areas due to the level of comfort it has provided him and his family, Dr Jolly said his chosen career path “was a smart decision in terms of your self-esteem, and your ultimate contribution to society”.

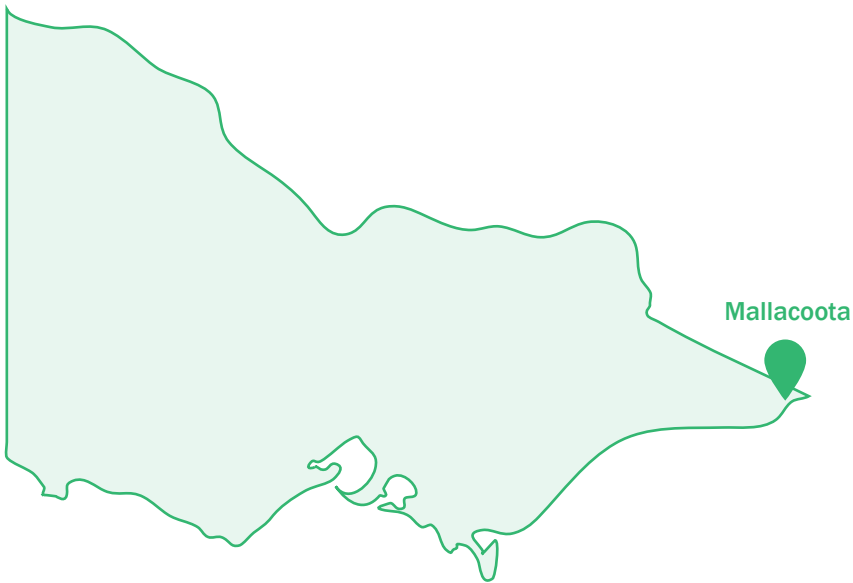
“I do believe that services provided in rural areas are of more value”, he said. “You only live once, and I feel I have more opportunity to help people as a rural practitioner.”

Recently, Dr Jolly, accompanied by his wife, two border collies and his eldest daughter’s pet parrot, completed a locum placement through RWAV in Mallacoota, located in the East Gippsland region of Victoria.

“It’s a spectacular region” he said of the small town that which he chose because of its isolation and need for medical resources. Part of a locum’s responsibilities are to provide relief for holiday, sickness and education leave for sporadic periods of time. In this instance, Dr Jolly was assisting a solo practitioner working in general practice. “The practice is staffed by people who are warm, hospitable, and try very hard to provide a good service to the community”, Dr Jolly said. “I would recommend Mallacoota to anyone as a place to live or just to help out”.

As for three items you should never visit Mallacoota without? “A tinny, rods and surfboard” he added.

Working as a GP locum has many perks, such as frequent travelling and sightseeing, but Dr Jolly says “every town and practice



is different”, which can present challenges. “Some towns are really struggling with socio-economic disadvantage. In some extreme cases illicit drug use, and the consequences of this are the most challenging issues”. He said these issues propose far greater risk than headlines we’ve seen in the news recently.

Such challenges should not deter those wanting to work as a locum Dr Jolly said because locals really make the experience worthwhile. “I do feel lucky that I can move around Australia, see the country and really connect with the locals. Every town has a story, amazing people to meet and things to see”, he added.

“You only live once, and I feel I have more opportunity to help people as a rural practitioner.”



Build practice capacity and capability



3



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Build practice capacity and capability



Business Support Workshops



ABCs of Practice Sustainability is a two-day workshop designed specifically for Practice Managers and owners who wish to expand their knowledge of business trends. They aim to give a greater understanding in areas such as Human Resources, Finance and Risk Management.

During 2016–17, workshops were held in Gisborne, Collingwood, Melbourne, Traralgon, Morwell, Sale, Horsham, Mildura, Castlemaine, Portland, Bairnsdale, Geelong, Marysville, Ararat and Echuca.



Informed workforce planning



4



Numurkah

District Health Service



The Numurkah community has high levels of socio-economic disadvantage and a significant ageing population. The community has high rates of diabetes, avoidable deaths including cancer, and cardiovascular and respiratory disease, teenage pregnancy and obesity. The community has experienced significant stress in recent years with changing climate conditions, dairy industry crisis, fire and flood.

Through the Outreach program, RWAV has been instrumental in supporting the Numurkah community in accessing a variety of outreach health professionals to deliver a comprehensive and integrated range of primary health services through Numurkah District Health Service.

The services include on-site visits from a visiting psychiatrist, psychologist and mental health nurse, as well as a telehealth psychiatry clinic twice a month. With the support from RWAV the community now has access to a geriatrician. With a multidisciplinary approach, it has improved health outcomes for the elderly population. Local women have access to gynaecology services, which have improved women's health in the area. All of the RWAV services delivered to the community of Numurkah are bulk billed and accessible for everybody in the area.



Sarah Finlayson, Manager of Quality, Numurkah District Health Service said “RWAV support has enabled our health service to offer a wide range of additional services to our local community. These services were not previously accessible locally.”

Finlayson added that “RWAV’s Outreach services are critically important to our local community and have brought significant benefits to our local community, saving them long travel times, additional costs and much longer waiting times.” She goes on to say that they find “RWAV very responsive and supportive to our local community needs.”

The community of Numurkah can now access the right service at the right time.

“RWAV’s Outreach services are critically important to our local community”

Innovative connections



5

This year, we've continued to work with other organisations including the Primary Health Networks, regional training organisations and rural clinical schools to deliver enhanced programs and collectively build on the activity and knowledge of one another.

RWAV, together with the Murray, Gippsland and Western Victoria Primary Health Networks, launched the Eye Health Pathways at the RWAV office on World Sight Day. The Eye Health Pathways is a free web-based portal designed for use during consultations to assist clinicians to navigate patients through a complex primary, community and acute health care system. This will enable a more seamless patient journey and ensure rural Victorians obtain the most effective care at the right time in the most appropriate setting.

In 2016, more than 453,000 Australians were living with vision impairment or blindness. It is estimated that almost 85 per cent of all vision impairment is among those aged 50 years and over and that the growing diabetes epidemic is also expected to dramatically impact Australians' eye health. Importantly, 90 per cent of blindness or vision impairment is preventable or treatable.



Access to eye health is one of the key issues for rural communities. We have 1.4 million people living in rural Victoria and some regions have very poor access to ophthalmologists, optometrists and eye surgery.

The Chair of RWAV, Dr Ahmad says “as a GP based in Sale for over 14 years and working closely with rural patients to diagnose and seek treatment for various eye conditions, the Eye Health Pathways for doctors working in rural and regional communities is an invaluable resource”. It is intended to support GPs with diagnosis and most importantly provide access to information on local referral pathways. Having this information available online helps doctors to have this resource at their fingertips.

Innovative connections

Annual Rural Doctors Conference

RWAV and the Rural Doctors Association Victoria convened the annual Rural Doctors Conference. The conference was held at Marysville with Christine Nixon, the keynote speaker, addressing the theme of regeneration. The purpose of the conference was to encourage association of rural doctors and their families, practice nurses, practice managers and medical students to develop a sense of rural medical community and provide learning opportunities.



2017 Victorian Rural Health Awards

The 2017 Victorian Rural Health Awards organised by RWAV were presented as part of the conference dinner.

The awards recognise the dedication, commitment and outstanding

contribution from rural healthcare professionals in Victoria's rural and regional communities. Eighteen dedicated health professionals received awards for their achievements.



Financials

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2017

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Revenue from continuing operations	17,031,218	11,906,234
Projects and grants expense	(11,304,409)	(6,579,358)
Employee benefits expense	(2,646,977)	(2,559,880)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(84,253)	(84,453)
Other expenses	(1,392,189)	(1,392,189)
Surplus for the year	1,603,390	1,271,300
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	1,603,390	1,271,300

Financials

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2017

	2017 \$	2016 \$
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	7,606,056	5,519,626
Trade and other receivables	133,470	196,779
Total current assets	7,739,526	5,716,405
Non-current assets		
Receivables	161,730	131,482
Property, plant and equipment	156,379	233,746
Total non-current assets	318,109	365,228
Total assets	8,057,635	6,081,633
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	1,221,233	852,979
Deferred revenue	306,318	307,500
Provisions	124,066	124,865
Total current liabilities	1,651,617	1,285,344
Non-current liabilities		
Provisions	33,916	27,577
Total non-current liabilities	33,916	27,577
Total liabilities	1,685,533	1,312,921
Net assets	6,372,102	4,768,712
EQUITY		
Retained earnings	6,372,102	4,768,712
Total equity	6,372,102	4,768,712

Our Board

- + Dr Yousuf Ahmed
- + Dr Suzanne Harrison
- + Mr Anthony Graham
- + Mr Bruce McDonald
- + Dr Philip Webster
- + Ms Kay Knight
- + Assoc Prof Alastair Mah
- + Ms Danielle Walker
- + Assoc Prof Morton Rawlin

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