



RWAV
RURAL WORKFORCE
AGENCY VICTORIA

Annual Report

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

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 and Traditional Owners wherever this annual report is being read.

Note of appreciation

We at the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) extend our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated health professionals across rural and regional Victoria. Your unwavering dedication and tireless efforts in serving your local communities are nothing short of extraordinary. Your passion and commitment shine brightly, inspiring us all and making a profound difference in the lives of those you care for. We are deeply committed to supporting you and celebrating the invaluable contributions you make to the health and wellbeing of rural, regional, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians. We thank you for the work you do each and every day.

RWAV would like to acknowledge and thank our funders, the Australian and Victorian governments. RWAV's important work of supporting the provision of healthcare to rural and regional areas across Victoria would not happen without this support.

We would like to thank the talented RWAV team for their photography skills featured in this Annual Report. Our staff live across the state, and their efforts have captured the essence of rural Victoria by showcasing the character of our stunning rural and regional landscapes.



Our Annual Report is produced using recycled paper, contributing to our sustainability efforts.

Front cover artwork: Melinda Solomon, Baljil Art (refer to pg.23).

Front cover photo: Mt Sturgeon, Dunkeld, Allison Roper.

Back cover photo: Fish Creek, South Gippsland, Allison Roper.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document and the RWAV website may contain images or names of people who may have since passed away.

Snapshot of RWAV's achievements

Outreach programs

RWAV's outreach programs collectively supported 291 services, with healthcare professionals completing 3,227 outreach visits. 10,728 First Nations people were among the 47,787 total patients seen across regional and rural Victoria.

RWAV Conference 2024

The RWAV Conference 2024 brought together over 220 health professionals, leaders and policymakers for 2 days of collaboration. The RWAV Conference Outreach Breakfast Gathering brought together 40 outreach stakeholders and healthcare professionals.

Allied health

60 Allied health grants were awarded to individuals for upskilling. 6 Allied health and nursing grants were awarded for the establishment of new services, and 9 grants were awarded for service expansions.

GP Locum health services

108 Locum placements and 2,489 sessions (4 hours) provided by combined locum brokerage and RWAV Employed Locum Programs.

Recruitment

\$185,000+ Awarded in relocation and retention incentives. 109 primary care services received recruitment assistance.

Training in rural Victoria

Rural Link & Learn attracted 251 rural allied health clinicians to 14 events across rural Victoria.

Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census 2023

The Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census 2023 received over 580 responses, a 25% increase from the previous year.

Victorian Rural Health Awards

The Victorian Rural Health Awards received 110 nominations and attracted 229 attendees at the online virtual gala in June 2024.

RWAV Grants

956 Health Workforce Scholarship Program applications were funded, and a further 253 Medical Professional Development applications funded.

Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives

Over \$1.8M in regional mental health workforce incentives awarded to individuals and organisations.

Stakeholder engagements

RWAV participated in 360 stakeholder engagements between 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024.

GP Programs

51 General Practitioners obtained placements on college pathways and training programs or achieved Fellowship.

Future workforce

138 Future workforce grants awarded to students.

About RWAV



RWAV is dedicated and committed to supporting the delivery of high-quality healthcare to rural, regional, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Victoria. Established in 1997, we are a leading non-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring that all Victorians, regardless of location, have equitable access to essential health services. Our work is driven by a clear mission to provide tailored, effective health workforce solutions that meet the unique needs of the communities we serve.

Our approach is multifaceted. We deliver sustainable health workforce solutions through recruitment, locum services, and outreach and grant programs, addressing immediate workforce shortages while building a foundation for long-term healthcare improvements. Informed by strategic partnerships and rigorous workforce and population health data, our initiatives are designed not just to fill gaps but to create lasting, positive change in healthcare access across Victoria.

RWAV's expertise in health workforce data, research and analysis allows us to influence policy decisions that directly benefit rural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We collaborate with partners across the state to develop and maintain a high-quality, well-distributed health workforce, ensuring that even the most remote communities receive the care they need.

Our vision is a future where every Victorian community is supported by a robust health workforce, leading to improved health outcomes for all. Through our commitment to excellence, innovation and collaboration, RWAV continues to make inroads in healthcare delivery in rural and regional Victoria, ensuring that no community is left behind.



RWAV Team attending a picnic, October 2023.

The RWAV approach

RWAV recognises the growing challenges in the rural health workforce, with escalating shortages, burnout and retirement intentions among GPs, allied health professionals, nurses and practice managers in rural Victoria. To better support the 1.6 million people living in these areas, RWAV has reviewed and revamped its strategies and priorities.

We are committed to strengthening our health workforce recruitment and support programs by deeply understanding the needs of health professionals and the factors that attract and retain them in rural settings. Our tailored, place-based workforce strategies, developed in collaboration with local rural communities, aim to ensure a well-supported and sustainable health workforce.

RWAV is dedicated to stronger advocacy efforts, working alongside partner organisations and the rural health network to keep rural healthcare priorities on national and state agendas. Collective advocacy ensures that rural perspectives are heard and considered, leading to more effective health workforce strategies in rural Victoria.

RWAV is excited that a new chapter began this year with the RWAV 2023–25 Strategic Plan, a roadmap for an exciting new series of dynamic rural health initiatives providing tailored and effective health workforce solutions and fostering equitable access to quality primary care services across the state.



Scan to view RWAV's 2023–25 Strategic Plan here.

www.rwav.com.au/rwav-strategic-plan-23-25

2023–2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



RWAV's 2023–25 Strategic Plan 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.
- 2.** Strengthen our recruitment and workforce support programs so the communities we care for have fairer access to an effective and sustainable health workforce.
- 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.
- 4.** Strengthen engagement with First Nations healthcare stakeholders to support initiatives that enhance access to culturally safe healthcare.
- 5.** Increase advocacy and collaboration to contribute positively to healthcare reform with others.
- 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.
- 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.
- 8.** Find new funding channels to support health workforce initiatives that benefit communities and progress RWAV's purpose.

Message from the Board Chair



Since 1997, RWAV has been dedicated to closing the healthcare gap for rural, regional and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria. This year, as we began implementing our 2023–25 Strategic Plan, we have focused on doing things differently to meet the evolving needs of these communities. Our extensive experience, partnerships and insights have guided our efforts to attract and sustain a rural primary care workforce. The RWAV team has worked tirelessly to improve health outcomes by prioritising support programs for rural health professionals and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) in underserved areas.

However, the complexity of the healthcare system and policy landscape continues to challenge our mission. Current health policies intended to create an equitable workforce distribution are increasingly ineffective in attracting and retaining professionals in rural areas. The health sector must move beyond outdated, episodic, fee-for-service care models, which are unsustainable for small rural practices and detrimental to workforce morale.

Without stronger support for rural health professionals and a more robust primary care pipeline, we risk a dwindling, burnt-out and ageing workforce, leading to diminished healthcare access for rural communities. Innovation will be key to addressing these challenges. The health sector's growing demand for Medicare reform, multidisciplinary workforce teams and bold action to advance Closing the Gap is promising. Additionally, there is a clear need for primary healthcare systems to work more cohesively with tertiary services.

RWAV is encouraged by the recognition that change is necessary. We have made significant progress this financial year, driving positive health system change, expanding initiatives and reaching major grant milestones. These achievements are a testament to the dedication and hard work of the RWAV team.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations and thanks to the entire team for their outstanding efforts, which are highlighted in this year's annual report.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a unique and recognizable mark.

Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM

Board Chair

Message from the CEO



This year, we reconfirmed our commitment to supporting access to a sustainable healthcare workforce in rural Victoria. We did this with the launch of our new Strategic Plan. The plan is bold and ambitious and seeks to support rural communities access the healthcare they deserve.

RWAV is a great organisation. It has a smart and dedicated Board and a team of capable, kind and passionate individuals who care deeply about improving healthcare in rural communities.

This year, with ongoing support from the Australian and Victorian governments, we strengthened our recruitment and workforce programs so communities can have fairer access to the healthcare they need. We innovated, developed and streamlined our practices:

- deepening our understanding of the factors that attract overseas health professionals to rural areas.
- initiating joint research with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) to explore best practices for supporting International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in their professional development.
- engaging more with rural organisations, health services, hospitals, health professionals, decision-makers, and members of parliament (MPs) to discuss place-based solutions tailored to local needs.
- strengthening our role as rural health advocates in collaboration with rural health professionals and peak bodies
- embarking on a significant digital technology uplift to improve access to our health workforce support programs, grants, and educational resources.

Alongside these new initiatives, we funded more professional development for health professionals working in healthcare roles in rural Victoria. This funding is assisting health professionals to remain in their communities and to have access to the latest education opportunities.

Our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continues to be our priority. Our partnerships with services and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation are vital for supporting the provision of culturally safe healthcare services where they are needed.

Showcasing exceptional health professionals and leaders working in rural Victoria is a highlight. This year our RWAV Conference in Ballarat and the Victorian Rural Health Awards gave us the opportunity to showcase health professionals doing amazing work and to bring together ideas, celebrate achievements, and drive change in rural healthcare.

Thank you to our partners, colleagues and the Australian and Victorian Governments for supporting us in achieving this essential work. I extend my thanks to the RWAV Board and team for a fabulous year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

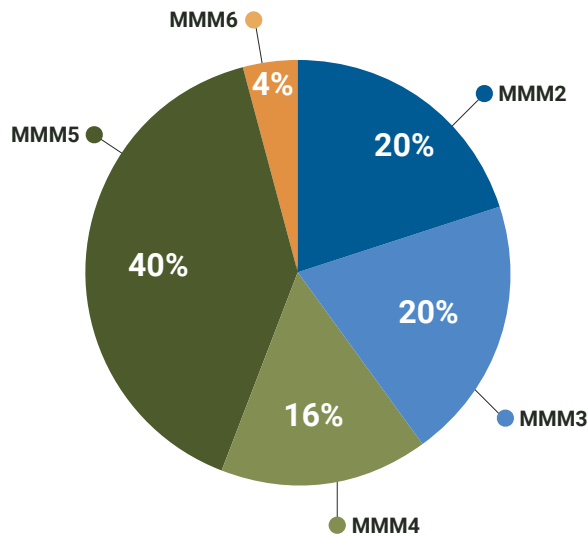
Lauren Cordwell

CEO

Recruitment solutions

RWAV is steadily addressing the persistent workforce shortages in rural and regional Victoria, focusing on the growing demand for permanent GPs. Our recruitment initiatives achieved substantial success during the financial year 2023–24, placing 29 doctors in ongoing roles, reflecting a 66% increase from the previous year. Impressively, 60% of these doctors have been placed in towns classified as Modified Monash Model (MMM) 4 and above, reinforcing RWAV’s commitment to supporting underserved areas (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Doctors commenced in practice by Modified Monash Model 2023–24.



\$185,000+

awarded in relocation and retention incentives.

\$50,000

in subsidies to help cover locum costs related to accommodation and travel.

29 doctors placed into ongoing roles during 2023–24. **66%+** increase from previous years placements.

60% of these doctors have been placed in towns classified as MMM4 and above.

MMM4+

109

primary care services received recruitment assistance.

35

health professionals placed.

31

in priority identified towns.

Our team continuously engages with healthcare practices, community health organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), offering ongoing support to health professionals. In partnership with key stakeholders, such as Primary Health Networks (PHNs), we have delivered tailored recruitment solutions. 109 primary care services received recruitment assistance this year alone, placing 35 health professionals, with 31 in priority towns identified through RWAV’s Health Workforce Needs Assessment.

RWAV’s recruitment services provide a seamless, cost-free process with a personalised approach. This involves assessing candidate skills, experience, cultural needs, family circumstances and career goals to ensure the right fit for each role. By maintaining ongoing engagement beyond placement, we support the successful integration of health professionals into their communities.

We also facilitated financial support, with over \$185,000 awarded in relocation and retention incentives and \$50,000 in subsidies to help cover locum costs related to accommodation and travel.

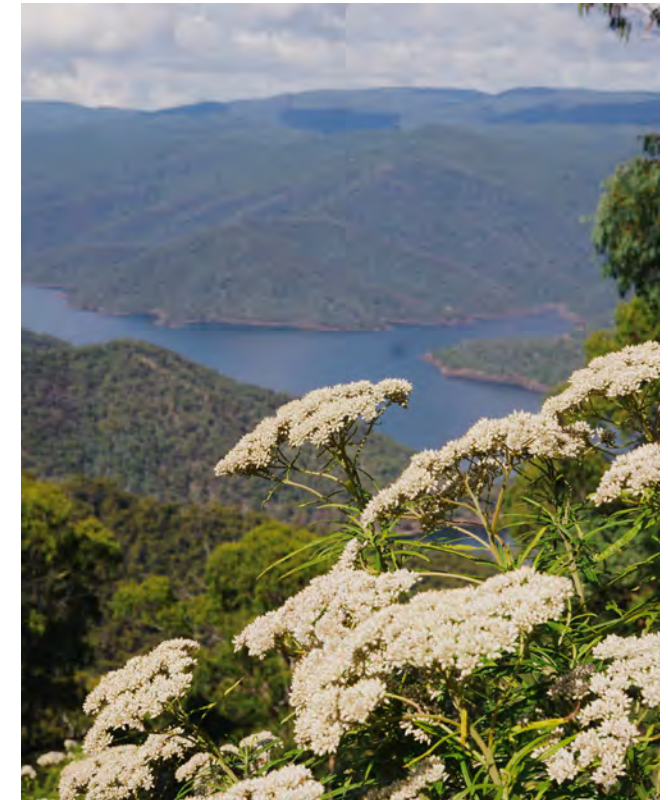


Photo: Cast Iron Point, Thomson, Sarah Zivkovic.

Moreover, our GP Locum Program has made a strong impact, securing 108 placements and delivering 2,489 sessions across rural and regional Victoria. This effort was further enhanced by \$20,000 in new incentives to boost participation. Ten new GP locums were also recruited, improving our capacity to meet the evolving healthcare needs of rural communities.

RWAV remains committed to improving rural healthcare by delivering tailored recruitment services, providing continuous support, and ensuring that health professionals not only find opportunities but thrive in their roles, contributing to the wellbeing of Victoria’s rural and regional communities.

Recruitment solutions

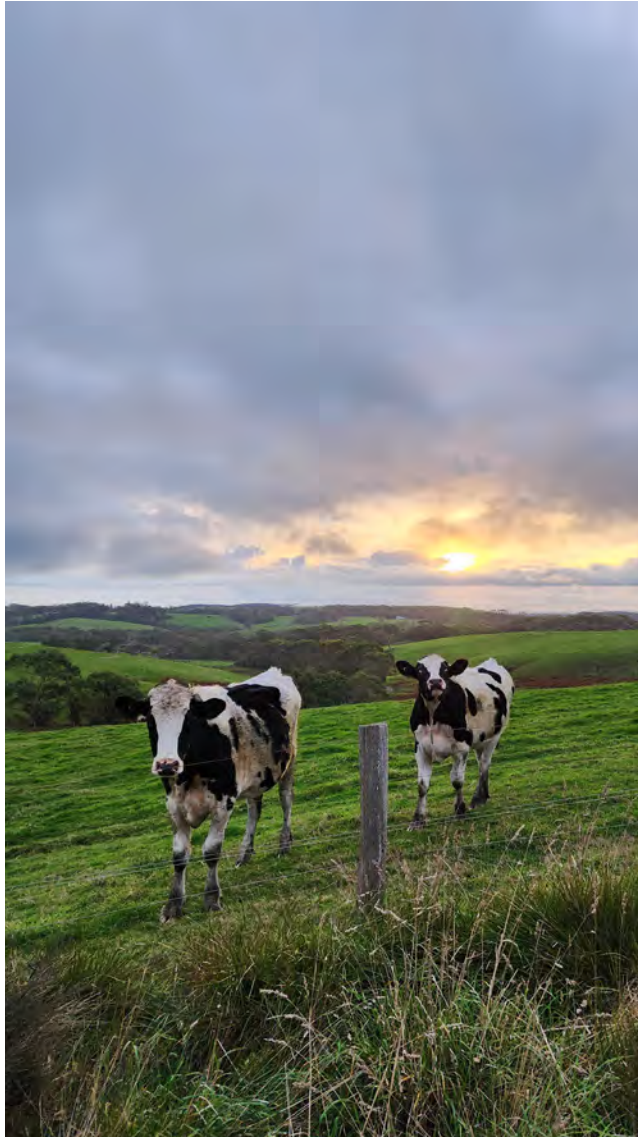
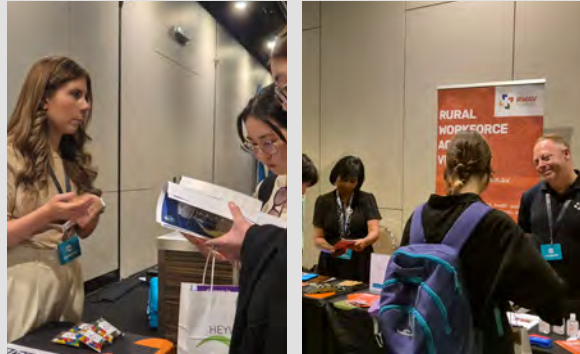


Photo: Fish Creek, South Gippsland, Allison Roper.

Health Care Job Fair

RWAV showcased rural opportunities at the Health Care Job Fair in March. The job fair is Australia's premier recruitment event for medical and allied health professionals. Our team provided career advice and highlighted the benefits of working in rural and regional Victoria.



The RWAV recruitment team discussing rural healthcare opportunities at the Healthcare Job fair in March.



(L-R) Candace Marsden, Senior Program Coordinator, Ben Trewarn, Team Manager, Jo Williatts, General Manager, Service Delivery, Jasmine Mannix, Program Coordinator, and Kas Rajarajan, Locum Coordinator from the RWAV recruitment team.



(L-R) Jasmine Mannix, Program Coordinator, RWAV, Mataala Niuatui, Practice Manager, Kas Rajarajan, Locum Coordinator, RWAV, and Dr Leo Stephen Gnanaraj, Senior General Practitioner, Mallee District Aboriginal Services, Swan Hill.

When I first started researching about opportunities in Australia, I reached out to RWAV and got a prompt reply from Kas & Ben. Kas & Ben arranged a call to discuss my expectations and gave a lot of great insight during the conversation. They came back with opportunities that matched my needs and were there throughout the whole process, from the initial interview to finalising the job offer. They guided us through some of the visa questions and all through the process, I felt I was in great hands. Thank you RWAV for all that you did for me.

Dr Leo Gnanaraj

General Practitioner
Mallee District Aboriginal Health in Swan Hill

Connecting GP locums to health services

RWAV's GP Locum Program, funded by the Australian and Victorian governments, improves healthcare access and supports rural doctor retention by providing critical locum relief for workforce gaps. This program strategically places locums in general practices, community health services (MMM 2–6), and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (MMM 1–6), extending to visiting medical officer (VMO) hospital ward rounds, aged care facilities and emergency on-call duties (Table 1).

RWAV's specialist GP Locum Program includes:

- employed locums: engaged through casual contracts
- brokerage locums: independent GPs who choose their assignments and invoice practices directly.

The program offers comprehensive, no-fee, end-to-end recruitment services that encompass administrative tasks, vacancy briefs, Medicare assistance and credentialing support. Personalised career guidance, placement coordination, grants and ongoing support ensure seamless transitions. The State-wide Locum Program and Locum Brokerage Packages respond to soaring demand, bridging healthcare gaps and providing vital support to practices and communities.

Addressing locum shortages

The demand for GP locum services outstrips supply, especially during holidays, as the shortage of permanent GPs has led to more complex cases and fewer locums willing to take on-call and VMO duties. To address these challenges, RWAV has bolstered recruitment services with subsidies and incentive payments, improving healthcare access and enhancing rural healthcare in Victoria.



Interested in becoming a locum GP?

Scan the QR code for more information.

www.rwav.com.au/gp-locums

Dr Michael Moon, a locum GP with RWAV, provides essential GP, on-call and VMO services in priority locations identified in RWAV's Health Workforce Needs Assessment, including Timboon, Sea Lake, Stratford, Casterton, Omeo, Swan Hill and Walwa. The RWAV Health Access recruitment team welcomed Dr Moon to the RWAV office, where he shared exciting stories about his experiences working as a locum GP in rural and regional Victoria.



(L-R) James Cousins, Program Coordinator, Gordana Kel, Healthcare Access Administrator, Sarah Zivkovic, Program Coordinator, Kas Rajarajan, Locum Coordinator, Dr Michael Moon, locum GP and Ben Trewarn, Team Manager.

Table 1: Locum health services key achievements
1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

94 PLACEMENTS
2,178 SESSIONS

Locum placements and sessions (4 hours) provided by independent locums.

14 PLACEMENTS
311 SESSIONS

Locum placements and sessions (4 hours) provided by the RWAV Employed Locum Program.

10

new GP locums participating in the program.

28

Total number of locums providing VMO and after-hours services between 1 July 22 and 30 June 24.

37

Total number of practices/ACCOs who requested VMO and oncall services between 1 July 22 and 30 June 24.

572

GP locum sessions for ACCOs.

\$50,000

in financial subsidies for accommodation and travel expenses.

\$20,000

in new locum incentives distributed.

GP Programs

More Doctors for Rural Australia Program (MDRAP)

The MDRAP enables non-vocationally registered doctors to gain rural practice experience before pursuing a college fellowship pathway to become specialist GPs. Doctors on the MDRAP received support from RWAV in having access to a Medicare provider number for their time on the program and financial support to enable them to access courses that would increase their skills in the profession.

The Australian Government officially closed the MDRAP as part of the 2023–24 Budget, replacing it with the Pre-Fellowship Program (PFP).

Pre-Fellowship Program (PFP)

The PFP, introduced in the 2023–24 Budget under the Strengthening Medicare Initiative, has replaced the MDRAP.

The purpose of this program is to provide non-vocationally recognised (non-VR) doctors with valuable general practice experience before joining a college-led Fellowship pathway with either the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) or the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) while working in primary care.

PFP applications opened on 2 April 2024 and 9 doctors were approved during the financial year.

Five Year International Medical Graduates (IMG) Recruitment Scheme

RWAV manages the Victorian Five Year International Medical Graduates Recruitment Scheme, which attracts GPs to remote areas, aiding eligible IMGs and Foreign Graduates of Accredited Medical Schools in taking up rural positions. It aims to alleviate GP shortages in underserved regions. Participation reduces the moratorium for IMGs by working in rural Victorian locations.

During the financial year 2023–24, 6 doctors were placed on this scheme.

09 PFP applications were approved during the financial year since 2nd April 2024.

06 general practitioners were placed on the IMG Recruitment Scheme between 2023–2024.

Table 2: 2023–24 MDRAP key results

61

MDRAP applications were approved (closed on 31 March 2024).

51

doctors obtained placements on college pathways and training programs or achieved Fellowship.

60

doctors were supported with MDRAP Learning and Development meetings.

85

doctors were on the MDRAP, as of 30 June 2024.



Photo: Fishing Fleet, Port Albert South Gippsland, Dr Kathy Kirkpatrick.

Outreach programs providing much-needed health services to communities

Through its outreach programs, RWAV plays a pivotal role in ensuring that residents across rural Victoria have access to essential primary healthcare services. These initiatives are designed to bring healthcare directly to communities that otherwise lack access to necessary medical services. By facilitating the travel of healthcare practitioners to these rural and remote areas, RWAV addresses critical healthcare needs while reducing the financial burden on health professionals.

Currently, RWAV oversees more than 290 outreach services, providing specialised healthcare and wellbeing support to rural, regional, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Victoria (Figure 2). The programs also cover travel expenses, accommodation, meals, room hire and administrative support, making it easier for healthcare professionals to deliver much-needed services.

Figure 2: RWAV administered outreach programs for 2023–24.

RWAV administered the following outreach programs:

-  **Coordination of Indigenous Eye Health (CIEH)**
-  **Ear Health Coordination**
-  **Eye and Ear Surgical Support (EESS)**
-  **Healthy Ears – Better Hearing Better Listening Program (HEBHBL)**
-  **Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease Program (MOICDP)**
-  **Rural Health Outreach Fund (RHOF)**
-  **Visiting Optometrists Scheme (VOS)**

RWAV's outreach programs collectively supported 291 services, with healthcare professionals completing 3,227 outreach visits. A diverse range of healthcare needs were met, with 37 health disciplines represented across all programs (Figure 3).

A significant portion of funding was allocated to addressing chronic disease, mental health, maternal and paediatric care, as well as eye and ear health (Figure 4).

Impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

RWAV's outreach services made a significant impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with 10,728 First Nations people among the 47,787 total patients seen across regional and rural Victoria (Figure 5). This demonstrates RWAV's strong commitment to enhancing healthcare access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.

Figure 3: Percentage funding spent across all health disciplines.

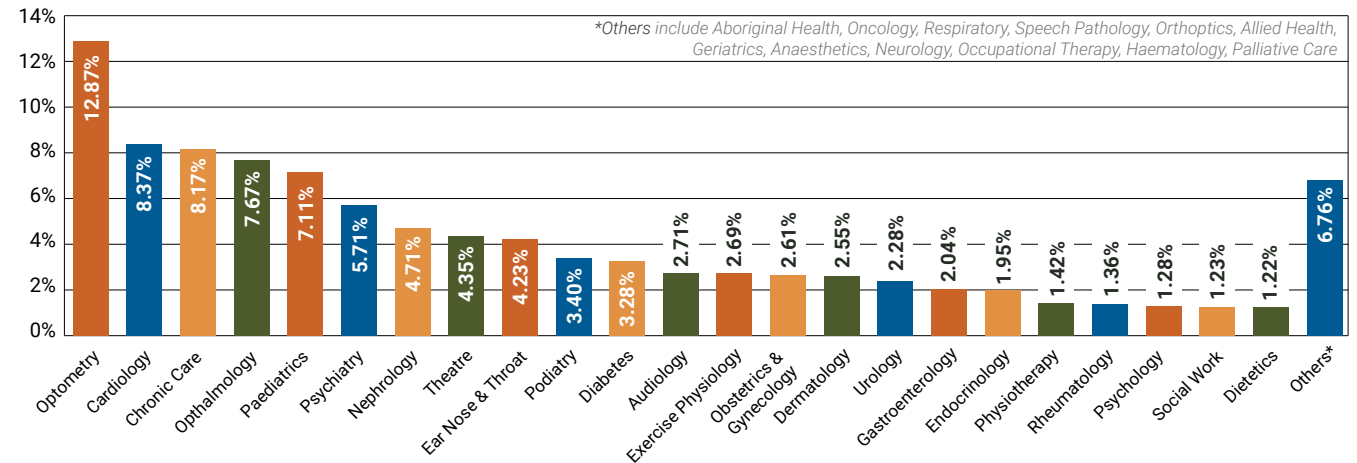


Figure 4: Percentage of funding spent in different healthcare areas.

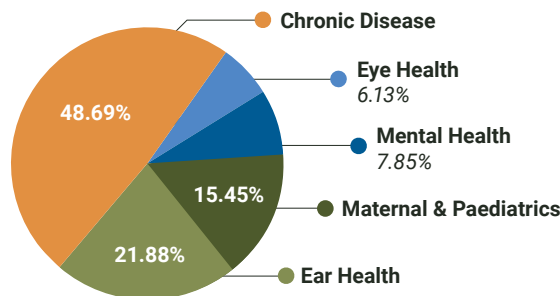
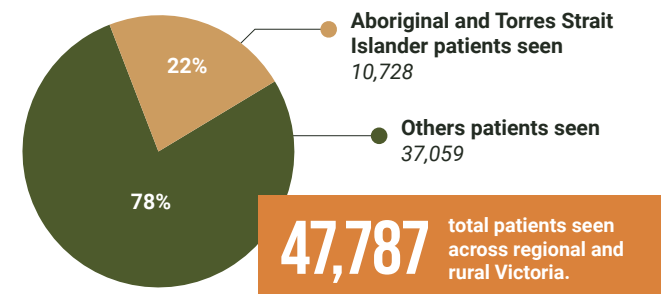


Figure 5: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients seen by outreach services.



Outreach – good news stories

Mallee stakeholder trip

RWAV strengthened connections during visits to healthcare facilities in Mildura, Robinvale, Swan Hill, Sea Lake, Woomelang and Hopetoun. Meetings covered needs assessments, contract management, and local eye and ear referral pathways, deepening relationships with stakeholders.

East Gippsland visit

RWAV visited the Gippsland region to enhance relationships with general practices, ACCHOs, hospitals and health centres. Recognising the need for GPs, allied health and nurses, RWAV is dedicated to supporting the region by improving ENT referral pathways, introducing IMG sponsorship and supervision at Ormeo District Health, and assisting organisations like Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health, Moogji Aboriginal Council and Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.



(L-R) The RWAV Service Delivery Team Sarah Zivkovic, Program Coordinator and Kas Rajarajan, Locum Coordinator, met with Andrew Phillips, Medical Clinic Manager, Orbst Medical Clinic.

Rural Health Outreach Fund program

Since 2014, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Victoria has delivered essential female GP visits to rural and remote communities through the Rural Women's GP (RWGP) service, funded by RWAV and RFDS Victoria donors.

The RWGP service works with clinics or bush nursing centres in towns with only male GPs (either permanent or locum) or no GP at all. By covering costs like equipment and travel, RFDS ensures that patients can access care without financial strain. The program facilitates high-quality and consistent care, early diagnoses and interventions, and education of women and other patients on preventative health strategies.

Dr Susan Lewis, a consistent presence in Hopetoun (MMM 6), sees patients from surrounding areas who often carpool to appointments. The Listening to Women's Voices report found that 50% of women experience period-related conditions, and 30% experience perimenopause or menopause symptoms to a degree that impacts their health. Recognising the need for better local knowledge of women's health, Dr Lewis, with local volunteers, organised an education session that attracted over 60 women. The positive response has inspired plans for future talks, further empowering the community.

Elizabeth Wood

Team Leader – GP, Specialist and Allied Health,
Royal Flying Doctor Service



The Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria supported by RWAV in delivering essential female GP visits to rural and remote communities.

Medical Outreach Indigenous Chronic Disease program

The Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service outreach van is a mobile GP clinic that visits Wangaratta and Benalla weekly, providing free, drop-in GP services. Staffed by a GP, nurse, dietitian and trainee Aboriginal health practitioner, the van also offers health checks, chronic disease care and immunisations.

A unique feature of the service is the community lunch prepared by the dietitian, transforming the clinic into a vibrant community gathering, drawing up to 40 people on some days for lunch and a GP check if needed.

Attendance has grown to 25–30 regular attendees. Through these relationships, a homeless client with severe liver disease was identified and linked to necessary care.

This innovative service reflects the power of meeting people where they are, both physically and culturally, and has become a model of community-centred care.

Lauren Blatchford

Clinic Manager,
Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service

Eye and Ear Surgical Support program

Last month, a mother approached me about her 6-year-old daughter, who needed to see an ENT specialist for severe adenoids, swollen tonsils and fluid in her ears. The initial appointment was going to cost \$200, which the family couldn't afford.

The RWAV EESS Program covered all costs, including consultation, surgery and travel. She was booked for surgery in 2 weeks, and her mother was amazed at how quickly everything was arranged.

Three weeks after surgery, she is now sleeping well and is a happy, healthy little girl. Her mother and I are deeply grateful for the support from RWAV. I shared this success at our recent Aboriginal Health Workers Gathering. Thanks to RWAV, her future looks bright.

Tina Wright

Aboriginal Health Worker Practitioner,
Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation

Prioritising support for allied health

Allied health professionals are vital to rural and regional Victoria. They offer essential services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology and psychology to enhance community health and contribute to preventive care, rehabilitation and chronic disease management.

RWAV has long supported the attraction and retention of skilled practitioners, improving service delivery and ensuring equitable healthcare access for rural and regional communities.

Allied Health New Service Grant

The Allied Health New Service Grant provides up to \$10,000 to establish or expand services in MMM 3–6 areas. In 2023–24, 76 applications requested over \$745,000 in funds. Applications were evaluated based on eligibility, Health Workforce Needs Assessment demand, implementation viability and statewide distribution. Fifteen recipients were selected – across psychology, speech pathology, counselling and social work, podiatry, osteopathy, physiotherapy, chiropractic and occupational therapy – supporting the establishment of 6 services and the expansion of 9 (Figure 6).

Allied Health Assistant Grant

The RWAV Allied Health Assistant Grant supports practices in training staff to become certified Allied Health Assistants, offering up to \$2,000 per student for course fees. This grant encourages practices to ‘grow their own’ assistants from within (e.g. as an administrator or reception staff member). The grant this year supported a Wangaratta-based allied health assistant in training.

Allied Health and Nursing Upskilling Grant

RWAV’s Allied Health and Nursing Upskilling Grant provides up to \$1,000 to allied health practitioners and nurses in MMM 2 regional centres for professional development.

In 2023–24, 158 applications were received, and 60 grants were awarded for training in areas such as paediatric physiotherapy, podiatry ultrasound, cognitive behavioural therapy, and assessment and treatment of eating disorders.



Allied Health Position Paper
 RWAV refreshed its 2022 position paper on allied health as part of its enhanced suite of advocacy resources. See page 29 for more information.
www.rwav.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Allied-Health-Position-Paper.pdf

Figure 6: Locations of the 2023–24 Allied Health New Service Grant



Quotes from new grantees included:

- Having the right tools to be able to do this has been instrumental, so thank you.*
- I've felt supported by those who work at RWAV.*
- The grant is straightforward, exciting and motivating.*
- The communication from RWAV was super supportive and helpful.*
- Experience applying for this grant has been wonderful.*

The mental health initiative

Following the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, RWAV and the Victorian Department of Health manage the Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives program. This 4-year initiative strengthens the mental health and alcohol and other drugs workforce in rural and regional Victoria, aiding the relocation, retention and recruitment of professionals to support communities effectively.

At the 2-year milestone of administering the scheme, RWAV had supported the placement of 160 healthcare workers into regional and rural mental health positions, awarding over \$1.8 million in grants to individuals and organisations. We have financed accommodation for incoming mental health workers, home deposits, vehicle purchases, rent and bond payments and many more items that assisted in relocation to these regions.

Due to the program's success, the Victorian Department of Health has doubled the funding RWAV is administering to \$3.2 million until 30 June 2025. They have also expanded the program to create a funding stream to support Mental Health Locals and Forensicare, the state statutory authority overseeing forensic mental health.

This partnership aims to sustain vital mental health and wellbeing services to much-needed local communities.

160 Mental Health workers placements supported.

OVER \$1.8M in grants awarded to individuals and organisations.

I wanted to express my gratitude for the exceptional support I received from Vivian, who went above and beyond in helping me find suitable accommodation and providing valuable insights that made my relocation to regional Victoria a seamless experience. Additionally, the relocation allowance from RWAV was a welcome surprise that significantly alleviated the financial strain of moving, ultimately giving me the confidence to make the right decision in pursuing my new role.

Vivian's assistance and the relocation allowance combined made a huge difference in my transition, and I'm truly appreciative of the support I received.

Apoorva Subramaniam

Mental Health Clinician,
Wangaratta CCT Team, Albury Wodonga Health



Mental health clinician Apoorva Subramaniam (left) with Vivian Ive (right), Regional Workforce Relocation and Integration Navigator, Albury Wodonga Health.

I found an expression of interest advertisement for mental health careers at Albury Wodonga Health, it seemed like a promising opportunity for us to relocate. During the interview, I learned about the relocation assistance of approximately \$20,000 offered by RWAV. This additional support further solidified our decision to move. I received a call informing me that I had been successful and was offered the position. I eagerly accepted the offer and was thrilled to share the news with my family.

In the months leading up to my start date, Vivian, the Mental Health Navigator, reached out a number of times. She provided valuable information on settling in the region and a support letter to secure rental accommodation, which has been incredibly helpful. I am deeply grateful for the support I have received throughout this journey and look forward to this new chapter. Thank you all for your support.

Henry Hogo

Mental Health Clinician at Albury Wodonga Health



Photo: Woolshed Falls, Beechworth, Allison Roper.

Empowering rural and regional healthcare for tomorrow

Rural ambassadors

RWAV's Rural Ambassador Program inspires students to pursue rural health careers. University ambassadors represent RWAV at career expos and rural health events across Victoria, promoting these careers.

Currently, 31 ambassadors are active, with 11 having presented at schools and the RWAV Conference, sharing their experiences and inspiring future health professionals.

Rural Ambassadors

- **Yahya Al-Badri:** Staffed the trade table at the 2023 Ngar-wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference.
- **Jemma Abraham:** Presented at the RWAV Conference 2024.
- **Nakita Clements:** Presented at Daylesford Secondary College.
- **Stacy Doan:** Presented at the RWAV Conference 2024 and at high schools.
- **Emma Gunn:** Presented at the RWAV Conference 2024, health camps and high schools.
- **Tarsha Hawley:** Staffed the trade table at the Victorian Rural Health Conference with RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell.
- **Tayla Jackson:** Presented at high schools and the RWAV Conference 2024.
- **James Liang:** Staffed the trade table at the 2023 Ngar-wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference.
- **Georgia Maroske:** Presented at Horsham College.
- **Mitchell Roberts:** Attended the RWAV Conference 2024, presented at a high school and staffed a trade table at the Rural Doctors Association Victoria (RDAV) Conference with the RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell.
- **Jeffrey Xu:** Staffed the trade table at the 2023 Ngar-wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference.

Highlight

RWAV participated in the Ngar-wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference in Shepparton on 11 October 2023. At the event, RWAV showcased our grants and support services and sponsored 3 RWAV rural ambassadors to attend. This provided a valuable opportunity for them to gain insights into the health challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

DrJuMP

DR JuMP is a coordinated mentoring program for medical students, junior doctors and registrars in regional Victoria. It connects regional medical professionals, offering mentoring, education, events and networking opportunities. Managed by a consortium of stakeholders, the program aims to strengthen and expand Victoria's rural and regional health workforce.

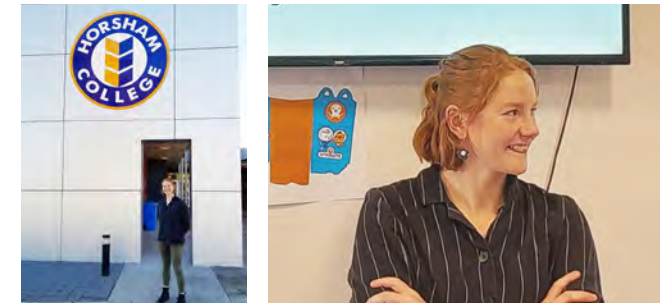
RWAV acts as the auspice agency for the program, which currently supports 249 participants and continues to grow.



Future Workforce Program

Highlights this year included:

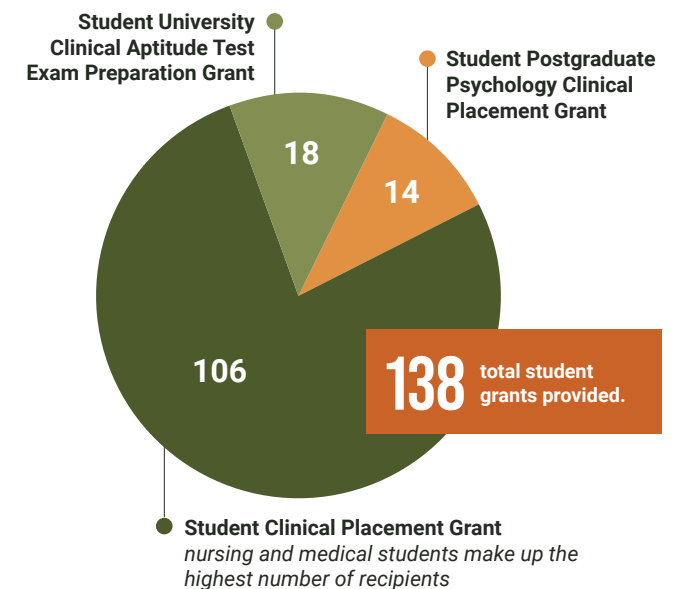
- Eleven students were supported to attend the 2024 RWAV Conference, with many participating on panels.
- RWAV sponsored the Baw Baw Inspiring Young People Health Camp, engaging 70 Gippsland students in a 3-day experience at Federation University, Churchill.
- RWAV contributed to Monash University's 'Doctor What? Doctor Where?' podcast episode on the Bonded Medical Program.
- RWAV showcased grants and support services at the Monash University Medical Students Society Fair on 7 September 2023.
- RWAV sponsored Monash University's Rural Training Pathways Congress on 24 November 2023, with RWAV's Medical Advisor, Dr Kathy Kirkpatrick, participating on a panel.
- RWAV sponsored the Allied Health Come and Try Day in Bendigo, providing hands-on industry experience to over 120 local students.



RWAV's Rural Ambassador Georgia Maroske visited and presented at Horsham College.

RWAV awarded a total of 138 student grants, providing valuable support for both undergraduate and postgraduate students (Figure 7). These grants included assistance for clinical placements and exam preparation, helping students advance their education and careers.

Figure 7: Number of Future Workforce Grants provided



Scholarships and awards

East Gippsland Medical Scholarship

Monash University awarded the RWAV-sponsored East Gippsland Medical Scholarship to medical students Thomas Esler in 2023 and Daniel Patchett in 2024. The scholarship recognises students committed to improving health in the Wellington and East Gippsland Shire, offering support for living expenses, community leadership opportunities and experiences that integrate them into the local area. These scholarships help address regional workforce shortages by supporting the educational ambitions of promising local-origin students.



Thomas Esler recipient of the RWAV-sponsored East Gippsland Medical Scholarship 2023.



Receiving this scholarship has been very helpful for the last 2 years of my university journey. It's provided a significant boost, especially in tackling the financial burdens associated with clinical placements, covering essentials like accommodation and transportation costs. With those financial worries eased, I've found myself with more mental space to fully immerse myself in my placements and studies. This has translated into more meaningful interactions, deeper learning experiences, and a greater sense of personal fulfillment. Beyond just the monetary support, this scholarship has opened up doors for me to explore and make the most out of my educational opportunities. My academic achievements include:

- *Winning the Carl Wood Prize for getting the highest mark in the MED4200 Women's Health exam*
- *Receiving a commendation for being in the top 1% of the 2023 Year 4C student cohort based on WAM*

I am currently in the process of applying for internships and am looking forward to starting work as a junior doctor next year! Thank you, this scholarship has been most helpful!

Thomas Esler

Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine, fifth year



Daniel Patchett recipient of the RWAV-sponsored East Gippsland Medical Scholarship 2024.



My career ambitions have been shaped by a goal to live and work rurally, likely in Gippsland. The scholarship will help me by allowing me to pursue opportunities that I would otherwise miss. I usually work over the university breaks, but now I'm hoping to instead obtain additional experience in anaesthetics and perhaps participate in a research project over the summer. In other words, the scholarship will allow me to better prepare myself for a career working as a rural doctor. This year, I hope to develop more independence as a medical practitioner and gain more experience in my areas of interest: Rural General Practice and Anaesthetics. My clinical placement in East Gippsland will hopefully help facilitate this.

Thank you for your support, it means a lot. Also, thank you for your commitment to rural healthcare in East Gippsland.

Daniel Patchett

Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine, fourth year

Scholarships and awards

RWAV Award with the RACGP

RWAV was a proud sponsor of a new annual award for the RACGP Victoria faculty that was presented at the 2023 RACGP Victoria Annual Fellowship and Awards. The RWAV Award was presented to a GP living and working in rural Victoria in an MMM 3–6 location who achieved the highest marks in the 3 fellowship exams attempted in the same cycle.

RWAV supports the delivery of quality healthcare, serving the essential health workforce needs of rural and regional Victoria and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

RWAV was delighted to honour the accomplishments of:

- Semester 2 2022 RWAV Award recipient, Dr Roberta Castorani
- Semester 1 2023 RWAV Award recipient, Dr Adele Bowles (*in absentia*)

These achievements reflect their passion for serving the community and contribute significantly to improving healthcare in rural and regional Victoria.



Dr Roberta Castorani (centre) receiving the RWAV Award at the 2023 RACGP Victoria Annual Fellowship Ceremony from Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM (right), RWAV Board Chair and RACGP Victoria Council Member, and Dr Nicole Higgins (left), RACGP President.



The Minister for Health, the Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP (left) and Lauren Cordwell (right), CEO, RWAV, caught up on rural health issues at the RACGP Victoria Annual Fellowship ceremony.

RWAV's engagement activities

Allied Health Stakeholder Group

RWAV's Allied Health Stakeholder Group, with refreshed and expanded membership, met regularly in 2023–24, including practitioners and PHNs. This group brings together stakeholders across the sector to drive strategic planning, optimise rural allied health service delivery and share insights. Quarterly discussions covered RWAV's allied health activities, key industry reforms including the Health Workforce Scope of Practice Review, and advocacy priorities, focusing on clinical supervision skills and building professional networks for rural practitioners.

Wodonga Round Table

The Wodonga Round Table, held in July 2023, brought together 12 key stakeholders to address healthcare challenges in Wodonga and the surrounding region. Representatives from various health organisations, including RWAV, Murray PHN, ACCRM and local health services, engaged in productive discussions with the Wodonga Parliamentary Office of Dr Helen Haines MP, focusing on improving service access, fostering cross-sector partnerships and aligning workforce data. RWAV presented services like the Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives Program and outreach initiatives, while participants discussed the Health Workforce Needs Assessment and urgent needs in neurology, rheumatology and paediatric psychology.

Key themes included workforce shortages, cross-border service complexities, and the need for innovative supervision. Priorities focused on attracting and retaining healthcare professionals, supporting IMGs, recruiting specialists, and creating sustainable supervision and flexible cross-border funding models.



Wodonga Round Table Attendees included (standing L-R): Susan Stokes (Flex Out Physiotherapy), Lauren Cordwell (RWAV CEO), Michael Harding (Murray PHN), Shane Boyer (Murray PHN), Chiquita Walsh (Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service), Sharon Edmondson (Corryong Health), Zoe Neumayer (Dr Helen Haines MP - Wodonga Parliamentary Office), Kate Temby (RWAV), (seated L-R): Chris Rogers (Wodonga City Council), Sophie Bond (Murray PHN), Joanne Zamperoni (Gateway Health), Dr Angela Stratton (ACRRM), Dr Niranjana Sarjapuram (Sarkon Medical, Wodonga Priority Primary Care Centre), Simon Donohoe (Gateway Health) and Dr Monika Jones (RWAV).

Bairnsdale Regional Health Services and Diabetes Educators providing RWAV support Services

Lauren Cordwell, RWAV CEO, met with leaders and healthcare professionals at Bairnsdale Regional Health Services (BRHS) and diabetes educators providing outreach services. BRHS, supported by RWAV, delivers an extensive range of outreach services, spanning rheumatology, gastroenterology, paediatric (theatre), anaesthetics, obstetrics & gynaecology, nephrology, cardiology and urology. RWAV was delighted to collaborate with our partners to improve access to the rural health workforce in the region.



Lauren Cordwell, CEO, RWAV (left) with BRHS diabetes educators Lesley Wilcox, Julie Moncrieff and Kim Turner.



2024



Behind the scenes filming with RWAV CEO Lauren Cordwell and MC Kate Meade.

The Victorian Rural Health Awards (VRHA) is a prestigious annual event celebrating exceptional contributions to rural healthcare. It unites healthcare professionals, stakeholders and supporters to promote excellence and honours a diverse range of professionals, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, Aboriginal health workers, practice managers and consumer advocates in rural and regional Victoria.

RWAV proudly hosted the 19th VRHA, supported by the Victorian and Australian governments. The 2024 online virtual gala, held on 20 June, attracted 229 attendees, marking a significant increase in participation from the previous year.

RWAV launched award nominations on 15 February during the RWAV Conference, which also celebrated the previous year's winners. A record 110 nominations were received, and 25 key sector representatives were on the judging panel.

The inaugural Outstanding Contribution by a Mentor or Supervisor Award recognised a rural mentor or supervisor who has shown commitment and dedication to supporting the next generation of health professionals. The award quickly gained popularity, attracting 35 nominations.

The VRHA winners expressed overwhelming gratitude for the widespread congratulations from peers, organisations, media and the public, thanking RWAV for enabling this recognition. Heartfelt messages during the event – including *'Congratulations to all the amazing GPs who have served their rural communities for so many years!'* and *'You saved my son's life 13 years ago, thank you for your dedication'* – highlighted the impact of these award winners on their communities.

Attendees praised the event's organisation and inclusivity, noting the comprehensive recognition of awardees.

RWAV was thrilled to engage Kate Meade as MC. A successful radio host and producer, Kate grew up in Simpson, Victoria, and now resides in Warrnambool. She shared a personal note of appreciation in the awards video for the healthcare professionals who supported her family during a critical time.

This year's video prominently featured past winners, showcasing their significant contributions to rural communities. Considerable effort was invested in featuring both past and current winners, making the event relevant and memorable.

The 2024 VRHA successfully honoured the dedication and impact of rural healthcare professionals, reinforcing the significance of their contributions to the health and well-being of regional and rural communities across Victoria.

I have had so many messages and congratulations from folk near and far. It has been quite amazing – especially for someone totally unused to such a situation.

The enormous pleasure on the faces of the Mansfield District Hospital Executive, Board members, Committee members and staff has been heart-warming; so many hugs. It has certainly given a bright moment to our hospital team, at a time when everyone is focused on working to retain Mansfield District Hospital in its present form, fighting proposed amalgamation.

So, a sincere thank you to you, to those adjudicating and your team who helped me with the Award Night preparation. It is wonderful to be surrounded by such support.

Nola Andrews

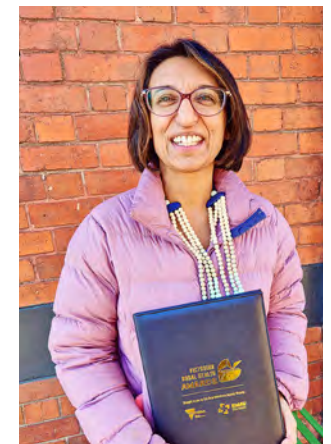
Volunteer Consumer Advocate, Mansfield District Hospital
Winner of the Outstanding Contribution by a Rural Health Consumer Advocate Award



Nola Andrews receives the Outstanding Contribution by a Rural Health Consumer Advocate Award.



Winners Robyn Butler and A/Prof Shabna Rajapaksa show off their awards.



2024 Victorian Rural Health Awards

Award winners



Outstanding Contribution by a Rural Medical Specialist

Dr Adam Straub

Addiction Medicine Physician, Grampians Health Service, Ballarat, and Ballarat Community Health, Lucas



Outstanding Contribution to Rural Outreach Provision

Dr Stephen Tudge

Visiting ENT Surgeon, East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative, Bairnsdale and Ramahyuck Aboriginal Cooperative, Sale



Outstanding Contribution by a Mentor or Supervisor

A/Prof Shabna Rajapaksa

Co-Head of Paediatrics and General Paediatrician, Grampians Health, Ballarat, St John of God Health Care, Paediatrics, Ballarat, University of Melbourne, Ballarat Base Hospital, Ballarat Rural Clinical School



Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Ms Shannon Balfour

Manager, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, Mooroopna



Outstanding Contribution to Rural Practice Management

Ms Merinda Harrison-Drake OAM

Clinical Practice Manager, Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, Mooroopna

Recipients for 35+ years of service

Dr Clare Mooney

Hopkins Medical Centre, Warrnambool

Dr Michael Pring

Bellarine Medical Group

Dr Peter Stevens

Heyfield Medical Centre

Dr Robert Brun

Kyabram Regional Clinic

Dr Christopher Lourensz

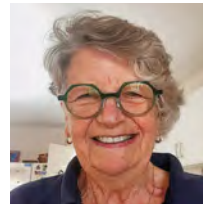
Coster Street Medical Practice, Benalla



Outstanding Contribution by a Rising Star

Dr Felix Ritson

GP Registrar, Lister House Clinic, Horsham



Outstanding Contribution by a Rural Health Consumer Advocate

Ms Nola Andrews

Volunteer Consumer Advocate, Mansfield District Hospital



Outstanding Contribution by a Rural Multidisciplinary Health Team

PACE Team

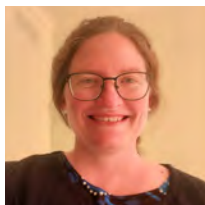
Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation team, Alpine Health, Alpine Shire and 3 partner private practices (Myrtleford, Bright, Mount Beauty)



Outstanding Contribution by a Rural Primary Care Nurse or Midwife

Ms Robyn Butler

Clinical Nurse Manager, Inverloch Healthcare



Outstanding Contribution to Rural Allied Health

Ms Jessica Moller

Lead Clinician Occupational Therapy – Community Team, Gippsland Lakes Complete Health, East Gippsland



Outstanding Contribution by a Rural GP or Rural Generalist

Dr David Wilson

GP Specialist, Lister House Medical Clinic, Horsham

Scan Here To Watch Now



www.rwav.com.au/victorian-rural-health-awards-2024

Kate Meade hosting the 2024 Victorian Rural Health Awards.

RWAV grants and incentives

RWAV provides various grants to professionals in the medical, nursing and allied health fields, as well as to practice managers, staff and students aspiring to pursue careers in rural and regional healthcare in Victoria.

These government-funded grants administered by RWAV are designed to enhance clinical skills, support professional development and advance postgraduate education. They also assist in the growth of healthcare businesses and inspire students to pursue careers in rural and regional healthcare.

Health Workforce Scholarship Program

This program provides financial support for doctors, nurses and allied health professionals working in primary care in MMM 3–7 locations in Victoria to undertake clinical upskilling and postgraduate tertiary studies.

RWAV funded 956 applications to a total value of \$1,948,714 over the 8-month period for which the grant was open. This represents 100% of the available funds.

The course is now 4 weeks in, it's a lot of content that is very challenging to keep up with, but I am already seeing the difference in my overall knowledge making me a better doctor for the community and a dramatic improvement in my exam question answering technique which gives me much more confidence in my ability to pass the exam come July. Thank you again for your assistance, it is greatly appreciated.

Dr Jack Williams



Medical Professional Development

This program provides financial support for doctors working in primary care in MMM 2–7 locations in Victoria to undertake continuing professional development. Up to \$5,000 was available per applicant over the year.

RWAV funded 253 applications, totalling \$350,000, over the 9-month period during which the grant was open. This represents 100% of the available funds.



Grants offered

Grants open to professions or practices in 2023–24 (Table 3).

RWAV administered 10 grants during 2023–24 which were funded by either the Australian or Victorian Departments of Health (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Grant distribution by Grantee

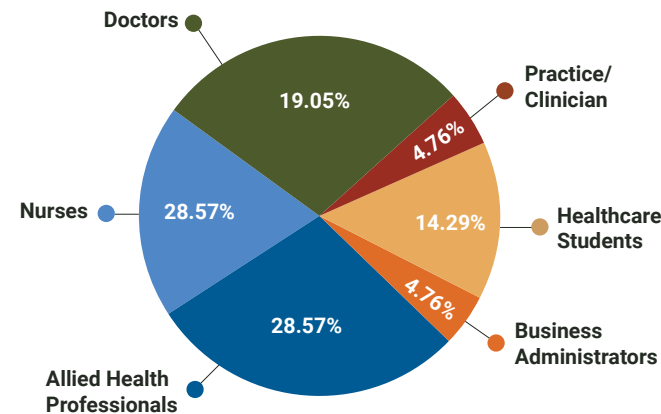
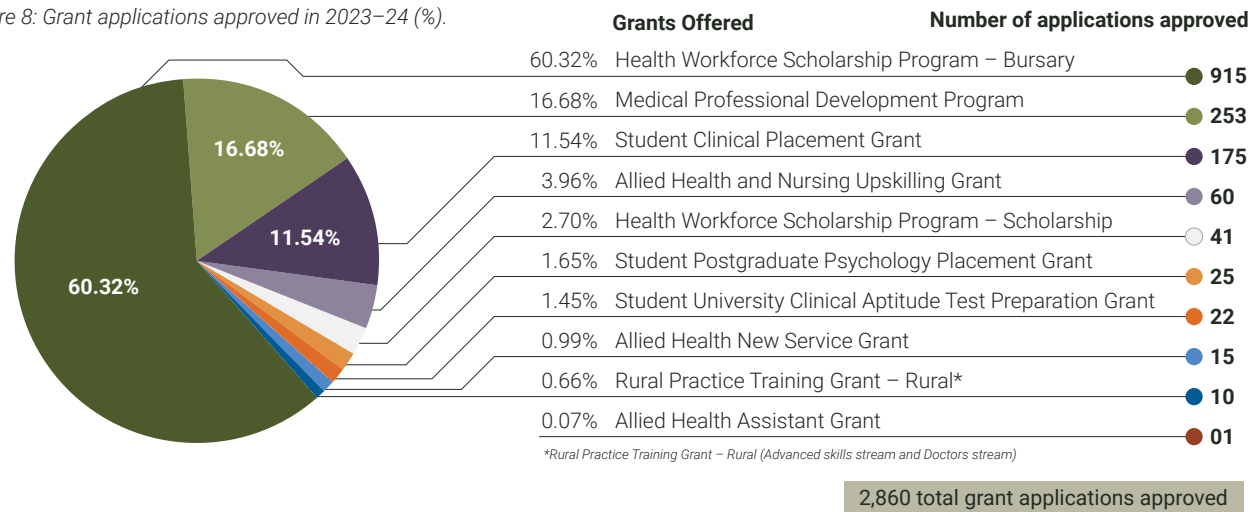


Photo: Give Way Sign, Albury Wodonga, Candace Marsden.

Table 3: RWAV-administered grants 2023–24, funded by either the Australian or Victorian Departments of Health

Grants Offered	Grantee type
Health Workforce Scholarship Program – Bursary	● ● ●
Health Workforce Scholarship Program – Scholarship	● ● ●
Health Workforce Scholarship Program – Locums	● ● ●
Medical Professional Development Program	●
Allied Health New Service Grant	●
Allied Health and Nursing Upskilling Grant	● ● ●
Student Ambassador Grant	●
Student Postgraduate Psychology Placement Grant	●
Student Clinical Placement Grant	●
Student University Clinical Aptitude Test Preparation Grant	●
Rural Practice Training Grant	●
Workforce Incentive Program	● ●

Figure 8: Grant applications approved in 2023–24 (%).



Cultural Safety Training

RWAV and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) collaboratively offer online Cultural Safety Training workshops to eligible healthcare providers in rural and regional Victoria. These workshops offer attendees the chance to build a foundational understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, identities and cultures while learning the essentials of cultural safety and practical ways to apply it.

Facilitated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander instructors from VACCHO, these sessions enrich learning by sharing cultural insights and lived experiences in a supportive environment where participants are encouraged to ask questions.

This year, 4 workshops were held with 43 attendees.

77 doctors, Aboriginal health workers and practitioners from ACCOs across the state received support through the Health Workforce Scholarship Program grant funding to attend training programs in 2023–24.



Artist Melinda Solomon shared the deeper meaning woven into the gum leaf artwork gifted to RWAV. The large circle embodies the essence of the RWAV Conference—a gathering place, a focal point of shared purpose. The smaller circles radiate outward, symbolising the interconnected health services that align with RWAV, expanding the circle of care. The dots and lines trace the pathways of people and relationships, representing the vibrant connections and collaborative spirit that breathe life into the work that RWAV does.



Melinda Solomon Baljil Art

RWAV was delighted to be presented with a gum leaf artwork by First Nations artist Melinda Solomon at the RWAV Conference 2024 in Ballarat, Victoria. Baljil Art, Melinda’s creative venture, was a partner at the conference.

Based in Shepparton, Victoria, Melinda established Baljil Art to share her vibrant and culturally rich artworks with a broader audience. Melinda Solomon is an Aboriginal artist from the Eastern Kuku Yalanji and Girramay Peoples of Far North Queensland.

Her art is a heartfelt expression of her heritage and connection to the Australian landscape. She uses a variety of mediums and vivid colours to bring her pieces to life. Her works are inspired by family stories and the natural beauty of rainforests, bushlands, oceans, and rivers, as well

as the native animals that inhabit these areas. By blending traditional and cultural symbols with intricate contemporary designs, Melinda creates stunning, colourful artworks that celebrate her cultural roots and the environment.

At the RWAV Conference, Melinda produced her artistic creations live, allowing attendees to witness her creative journey in real-time. This was a powerful way to connect, as attendees got to see the techniques, skills, and inspiration that go into the art.

Baljil Art serves as a platform to promote and preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture. Through her business, Melinda aims to inspire others and foster a deeper appreciation for the rich artistic traditions of Australia’s First Nations Peoples.

RWAV's research initiatives

GP Registrar training research project: enhancing rural training for sustainability

RWAV, in collaboration with Swan Hill District Health (SHDH) Service and Charles Sturt University, led a 12-month registrar training research project focused on improving rural registrar training and retention. This project explored the effects of a tailored suite of interventions for late-year registrars.

The research revealed that whilst financial incentives was appreciated by registrar participants, it was not the sole major factor influencing registrars' decision to stay in rural locations. Instead, retention was shaped by a complex mix of factors, aligning with previous research that highlighted the significant role of the life stage. Registrars raising families and seeking stability were more inclined to stay. The study emphasised the importance of offering career development opportunities and ensuring adequate community resources.

Participants also suggested implementing GP registrar clinical rotations to enhance professional growth, broaden clinical experience, and further develop skills.

This project was funded by an Education Research Grant from the ACCRRM.



A/Prof Rex Prabhu (SHDH), Dr Dan Wilson (RDAV), project participants and the RWAV Education Research Grant team.

Increasing Personal and Professional Support for International Medical Graduates Project (IPPS-IMG).

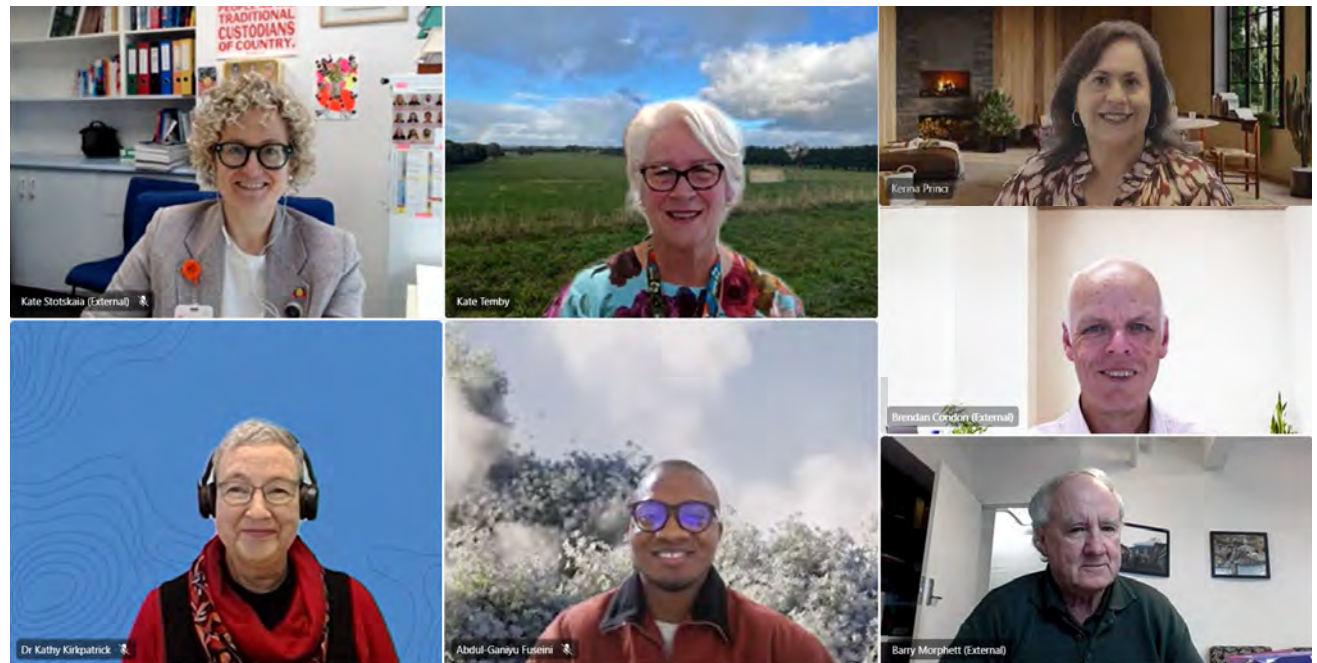
The IPPS-IMG project, a collaboration between RWAV, Deakin University and South West Healthcare, is funded by the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACCRM) Education Research Grant.

The project will evaluate the impact of Individual Learning Plans, mentoring and support measures focused on the professional and personal wellbeing of IMGs at South West Healthcare.

The project develops customised Individual Learning Plans for each IMG, offers weekly clinical coaching, and provides targeted training in areas such as communication skills and emergency management. It also helps IMGs to access local support services if required, and participate in the DR JuMP medical mentoring program.

The project aims to identify barriers to IMG retention, assess the influence of Individual Learning Plans and other interventions on their decision to stay in rural areas and evaluate the impact of these interventions on their clinical practices and wellbeing. It also seeks to develop evidence-based recommendations for implementing the program in other health services.

Data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews and surveys with IMGs and their supervisors and analysed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics to ensure a thorough understanding of the outcomes.



(Clockwise, from top left) Dr Kate Stotskaia, Senior Lecturer Deakin University, Rural Clinical Schools, Kate Temby, General Manager, Strategy & Partnerships, RWAV, Kerina Princi, Manager, Strategy & Partnerships, RWAV, Dr Brendan Condon, Deputy Director Of Clinical Studies, Deakin University, School of Medicine, A/Prof Barry Morphett, Director of Clinical Studies Deakin University, Rural Clinical Schools, Abdul-Ganiyu Fuseini, Research Project Officer, RWAV and Dr Kathy Kirkpatrick, Medical Advisor, RWAV.

Supporting training in rural Victoria

Innovation project: Rural Link and Learn

The Rural Link and Learn Project, funded by Rural Health Workforce Australia and developed by RWAV, addressed the isolation of rural Victorian allied health professionals through in-person training and networking workshops. These workshops, held in regional centres, targeted priority professions such as speech pathologists, psychologists and occupational therapists.

The project successfully hosted 14 events, including 12 training days and 2 networking dinners, attracting 251 rural allied health clinicians across Victoria. The events provided high-quality clinical education and fostered professional connections in a supportive environment.

Attendees highlighted their appreciation and the importance of continuing such events in the future, as well as the quality of training, practical skills gained, and the importance of networking and local delivery. The project has informed RWAV's understanding of clinical skill gaps and the demand for further professional development and has laid a strong foundation for future initiatives aimed at enhancing rural allied health services in Victoria.

Comments from Rural Link and Learn training event attendees:

The aspect of the day that I liked the most was the opportunity to attend high-quality face-to-face professional development locally, with the chance to network with other professionals in our area who work in similar rural/regional settings, however getting together like this and having the opportunity to network is quite rare.

We need more experiences like this in the places we work so that we can put our best feet forward in servicing the communities we work and live in, providing psychological services.

What a wonderful opportunity for professionals who often work without a team around them to catch up with other speech pathologists and feel less alone.

Thank you for providing this opportunity. It would be amazing for this to become a regular event!

It was a real highlight for me professionally if I was to think about the last few years. It would be a struggle to think of many other such rewarding and affirming professional experiences of the last few years.



Speech pathologists at the Rural Link and Learn speech pathology training event in Traralgon.

RWAV Innovation Grant

RWAV supported allied health professionals' participation in the 2024 RWAV Conference. This funding allowed rural health practitioners to enhance their clinical skills and knowledge in neurodiversity while networking with peers from across the state. The neurodiversity-affirming practice workshops, held on each day of the conference, provided an overview of tools for delivering safe, quality care.

RACGP & RWAV Focused Psychological Strategies Skills Training Scholarship for rural GPs (FPS ST)

Building on the success of the 2023 Rural Online Focused Psychological Strategies Skills Training (FPSST), RWAV has continued its partnership with the RACGP to support doctors in enhancing their mental health skills. The FPSST program equips GPs with the training needed to deliver Focused Psychological Strategies to their patients. Eligible doctors received support through the Health Workforce Scholarship Program, with the FPSST training expected to conclude in the next financial year.

RACGP dermatology workshops: Bendigo and Warrnambool

The Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census identified clinical upskilling in the domain of dermatology as a priority. In response to this need, RWAV partnered with the RACGP to deliver two Dermatology Surgery Workshops in Bendigo in July 2023 and Warrnambool in May 2024. Participants were guided by a team of experienced dermatological specialists with hands-on training on cryotherapy, biopsies, curettage, intralesional steroid injection, suturing, flaps and skin grafts. The Health Workforce Scholarship Program supported 47 eligible doctors to attend the workshops.



RWAV's Board Chair, Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM conducted the workshop training.

The Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census

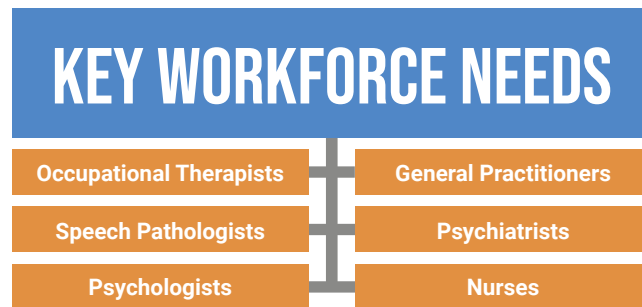
Reference: RWAV. (2023). Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census. Victoria: RWAV.

The Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census, conducted by RWAV, is a crucial tool for gathering insights from health professionals and organisations to guide decision-making and enhance healthcare equity in rural and regional Victoria, including in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The 2023 census received over 580 responses, a 25% increase from the previous year. There was broad geographic representation across PHN regions: Gippsland (22%), Murray (38%) and Western Victoria (30%). Strong participation was seen from Allied Health professionals (41%), GPs (25%), and Nurses (19%).

The most pressing needs identified were for mental health professionals, general practitioners, especially rural generalists, and nurses. In allied health, there is a growing demand for physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech pathologists (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Key health workforce occupations most in need across rural and regional Victoria.

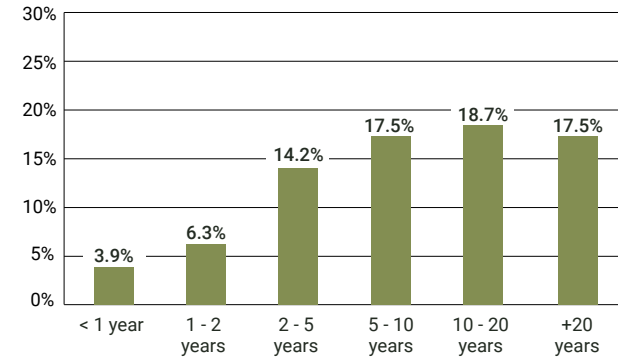


The Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census has identified that to fulfill community needs, five extra key skills are needed (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Five additional skills are most required to meet community needs.

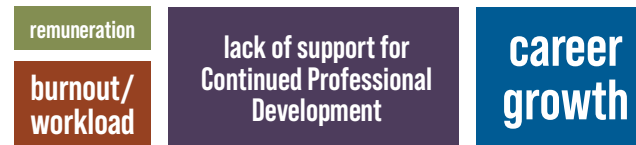
- Women's Health & OB/GYN**: 17.5% of professionals have seen at least >30% increase in patient load.
- Paediatrics**: 33.7% of professionals have seen at least a 10%-30% increase in patient load.
- Dermatology**
- Mental Health**
- Emergency Medicine**

Figure 11: Length of time health professionals plan to work in rural/regional Victoria.



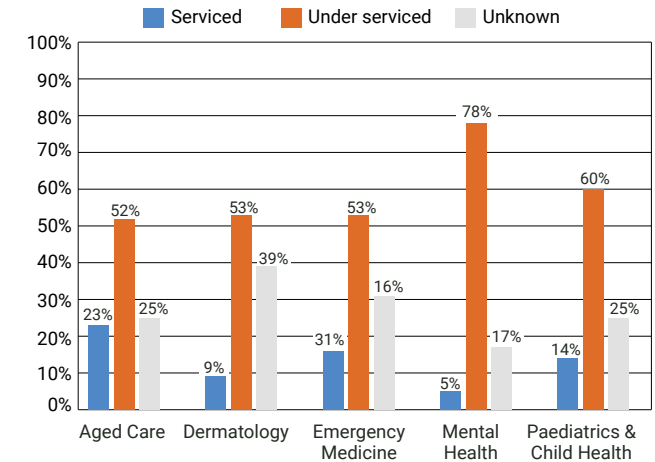
The majority of the workforce intends to remain in rural and regional Victoria, but one-quarter of the overall workforce intends to leave rural or regional Victoria in the next 5 years (Figure 11).

Primary reasons for considering leaving rural areas are:



Over 78% of mental health services were underserved or unavailable, followed by paediatrics & child health (60%), emergency medicine (53%), dermatology (53%), and aged care (52%) (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Service level for the community by Health Category.



Five-minute snap survey: Internet access

In April 2024, RWAV launched a 'pulse survey' to assess internet access challenges in regional, rural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This survey focused on service access, reliability and workforce challenges, with 80 respondents from various PHN regions. Findings revealed that 10% of rural Victorians often or always experience connectivity issues during work hours, 16.25% lack reliable internet at home, and 17.5% face unreliable internet at work. (RWAV, 2024)

These findings give us a better understanding of how services should be delivered in the future, both to health professionals and also to the wider patient population. It also provides some insight into access to telehealth services.

Reference: RWAV. (2024). Rural Vic Snap Survey on Internet Access. Victoria: RWAV.

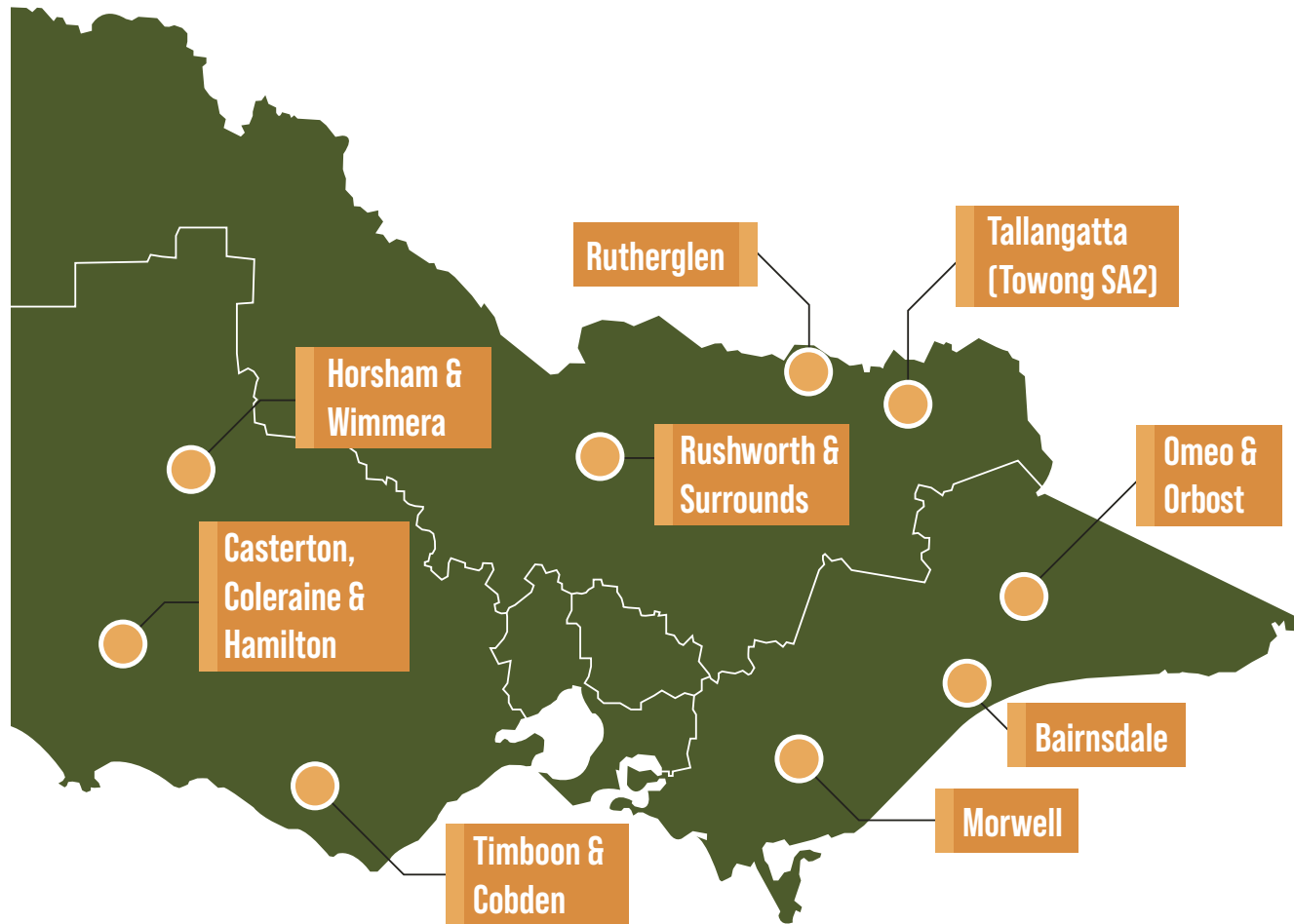
>56% health professionals attended cultural safety training in the past 3 years

Hotspots where we urgently need more health professionals 2023–24

Reference: RWAV. (2023). Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census. Victoria: RWAV.

Through collaboration between the rural Victorian PHNs and the RWAV workforce stakeholder groups, RWAV has identified specific hotspot areas experiencing significant workforce challenges. In numerous regional and rural communities, healthcare services are shared across multiple regions. The areas that are listed together in Figure 13 can be viewed as a single hotspot area.

Figure 13: RWAV-identified hotspot areas experiencing significant workforce challenges.

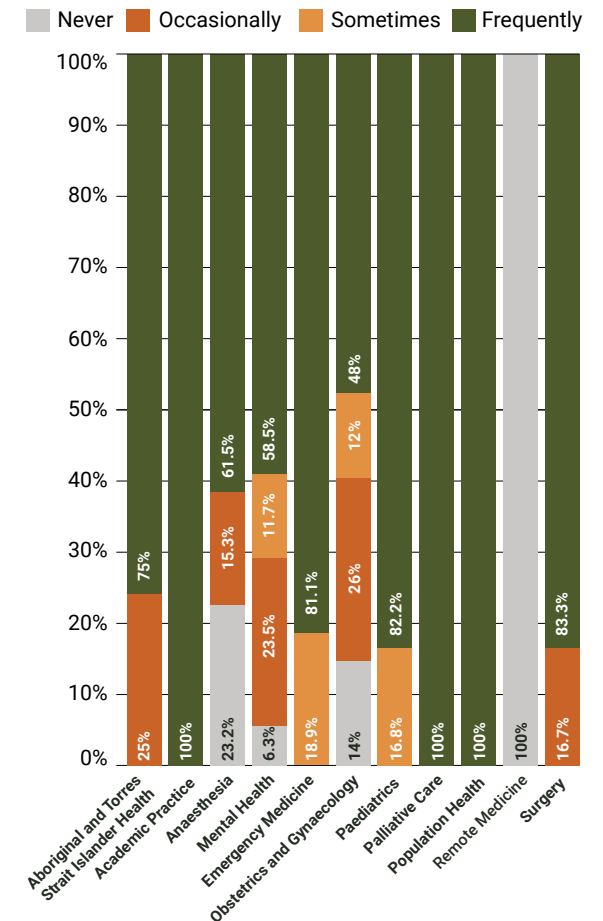


13–18% of health professionals across rural and regional Victoria did not have access to reliable internet at work.

16.8% of health professional planning on retiring over the next 5 years

All skills (except for Remote Medicine) are used by GPs at least 60% of the time. Academic practice, palliative care and population health were used 100% of the time, with mental health and paediatrics closely following with a very high usage (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Percentage of qualified GPs who have used their advanced skills.



Solving the rural healthcare challenge

Rural, regional, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria face significant challenges in accessing quality healthcare. The healthcare workforce in rural Victoria is strained by rapidly worsening shortages of general practitioners, specialists, allied health and nursing roles. Current health policies aimed at equitable workforce distribution are falling short in attracting and retaining professionals in these areas, further widening the gap in support for these communities.

The lack of essential public services like schools, childcare and housing in rural regions is a significant barrier to attracting health professionals, compounded by continued understaffing which leads to further workforce losses. Substantial change is needed to improve workforce retention, distribution and support, ensuring that rural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have access to timely, quality healthcare close to home.

RWAV advocates for tailored, place-based strategies designed in consultation with local communities to strengthen the rural health workforce. We also emphasise that technology, while valuable, should supplement rather than replace face-to-face care in rural settings. Promoting the unique benefits of working in rural health such as deeper community connections and broader professional growth, can help attract and retain talent. To secure the future of rural healthcare, it is vital to provide clear pathways and rural placements for high school students to pursue rural health careers.

RWAV's extensive experience and insights, gained from working closely with communities and health professionals across Victoria, guide our advocacy efforts. We remain committed to improving healthcare access and outcomes for rural and First Nations communities throughout the state.

We encourage all those within our rural health network, to reach out, collaborate and call for much-needed change with us.



Advocacy and partnerships

This year, RWAV actively engaged in national reviews on primary healthcare and workforce regulation policies, strengthening connections with key decision-makers and peak bodies. These efforts align with RWAV's strategic goal of advocating for rural health reforms. Moving forward, RWAV will continue to champion rural voices in vital healthcare reform discussions.

RWAV policy submissions and statements

Working Better for Medicare Review

RWAV submitted a response to the Australian Government's Working Better for Medicare Review in March 2024, sharing insights on key policies. RWAV emphasises that workforce distribution policies must be considered alongside broader recruitment and retention strategies, including social, professional and community factors.

Scope of Practice Review

RWAV submitted a response to the Australian Government's Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of Practice Review, Issues Papers 1 and 2. The review focuses on exploring the available evidence of the benefits, risks, barriers and enablers associated with health professionals who currently provide or have the potential to provide primary care working to their full scope of practice.

The review has the potential to inform the Australian Government's priorities to reform current models of primary healthcare.

RWAV would welcome reform that encourages more multidisciplinary healthcare models in rural Victoria. Place-based interdisciplinary work, team-based supervision, mentoring and learning would increase support in the retention of the rural health workforce and encourage rural health professionals to upskill to the top of their scope. Fee for service is not a financially viable model in many rural locations, particularly in locations more remote than MMM 4.

RWAV advocacy webpage

An advocacy webpage on RWAV's website was developed this year, enabling RWAV to better communicate perspectives on rural healthcare issues and solutions, with the Resources section providing a space for future contributions such as position statements, policy submissions and data snapshots.

RWAV Statement: Independent Review of Australia's Regulatory Settings Related to Overseas Health Practitioners, by Robyn Kruk AO

RWAV welcomes the final report, which makes recommendations that will improve the recruitment and registration experience for applicants and streamline pathways for priority medical specialists, nursing and allied health professionals to work in areas of workforce shortage.

RWAV Statement: Rural Urgent and Emergency Care in Victoria

RWAV calls on decision-makers to consider new approaches to achieve better urgent and emergency healthcare for Victoria's rural communities. Immediate action is needed to ensure equitable, safe and quality urgent and emergency care for small rural communities in Victoria

RWAV Statement – Inquiry into Economic Self-determination and Opportunities for First Nations Australians

RWAV's submission highlights how socio-economic factors and social determinants affect the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Economic disadvantage, limited access to education and jobs, and a lack of culturally safe care contribute to poorer health outcomes and low service uptake. RWAV's statement offers key recommendations to address these issues amplified with greater recognition across the sector.

RWAV Statement: The Value of Allied Health

RWAV recognises the critical value of allied health care and allied health practitioners to rural communities. RWAV advocates for a future where:

- effective and appropriate rural allied health workforce supports are readily available for rural allied health professionals
- opportunities for allied health professionals to go and remain working in rural communities are increased and supported
- the visibility and value of rural allied health professionals are amplified with greater recognition across the sector.

RWAV's Advocacy Priorities for 2023–25

PRIORITY 1

Healthcare delivered to rural, regional and First Nations communities should be safe, high quality, affordable and comprehensive.

PRIORITY 2

All health professionals should be supported to work together to provide holistic and multidisciplinary healthcare in rural and First Nations communities.

PRIORITY 3

Healthcare provided to First Nations communities acknowledges the importance of a holistic view of health which is empowered by self-determination and is supported by high cultural safety principles of health practitioners. The expertise and cultural knowledge of First Nations Peoples and health professionals should be embedded into healthcare models.

PRIORITY 4

Appropriate quality and safety standards should underpin the use of technology innovations to deliver healthcare such as telehealth in communities.

PRIORITY 5

Health services and small practices in country Victoria should be supported to have the capacity and resources to educate the next generation of health professionals.



For more information on the RWAV Advocacy, scan here.

www.rwav.com.au/advocacy-at-rwav

Advocacy and partnerships

Federal MP engagement

On 5 June 2024, RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, and General Manager of Service Delivery, Jo Willatts, met with 4 federal MPs representing Victorian rural electorates in Canberra:

- Hon Darren Chester MP, (Nationals) Member for Gippsland
- Dr Anne Webster MP, (Nationals) Member for Mallee
- Dr Helen Haines MP, (Independent) Member for Indi
- Hon Dan Tehan MP, (Liberal) Member for Wannon

RWAV appreciated the opportunity to discuss critical health access needs and shared priorities, focusing on building a sustainable health workforce within these electorates. The meetings were highly productive, emphasising RWAV's commitment to advocating for rural health workforce solutions and collaborating with key decision-makers and community representatives.

We look forward to continuing these vital conversations to enhance rural health outcomes



Hon Dan Tehan MP, Member for Wannon, RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, and General Manager of Service Delivery, Jo Willatts.



Dr Anne Webster MP, Member for Mallee, General Manager of Service Delivery, Jo Willatts and RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell.



Scan to view the Rural Health Workforce Snapshot 2023–24 data.

www.rwav.com.au/advocacy-at-rwav/rwav-resources



RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, Dr Helen Haines, Member for Indi and team, with General Manager of Service Delivery, Jo Willatts.



RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, and General Manager of Service Delivery, Jo Willatts, and Hon Darren Chester MP, Member for Gippsland.



Rural Health Workforce Snapshot flyers.

Advocacy and partnerships



Attendees at the VACCHO statewide GP Gathering in Warrnambool.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Engagement

The RWAV CEO Lauren Cordwell was privileged and grateful to VACCHO to be invited to attend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Partnership meeting in Bendigo and to be the keynote speaker at the GP Gathering event in Warrnambool.

RWAV proudly supported the third VACCHO statewide GP Gathering in May 2024, providing financial assistance through Health Workforce Scholarship Program grant funding 43 doctors from ACCOs across the state, including travel and accommodation costs. Lauren Cordwell thanked the VACCHO team, led by CEO, Jill Gallagher AO, for their exceptional efforts in hosting the Gathering which provided valuable opportunities for clinical upskilling, connection and collaboration, reinforcing RWAV's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.



Attendees at the VACCHO Statewide Gathering in Marysville.

The Gathering: Marysville

RWAV was pleased to partner with VACCHO once more to support 34 Aboriginal Health Workers and Practitioners attending the annual statewide Gathering in Marysville. The event focused on clinical upskilling in the National Immunisation Program, preventive health and cancer screening. RWAV provided Health Workforce Scholarship Program grants, including travel and accommodation costs, offering a great opportunity for learning, connection and collaboration.

Engagement with the Victorian Department of Health

RWAV has been pleased to continue discussions with the Director of Health Workforce in the Victorian Department of Health and Chief Allied Health Officer (Vic) at Safer Care Victoria, Briana Baass, and the GP Advisory Group this year. We look forward to future collaborations on rural health workforce strategies in Victoria.



RWAV and RDAV Board Director meeting.

RWAV and RDAV Meeting

In February, RWAV and RDAV Board Directors met to reaffirm their commitment to rural healthcare, discussing workforce supervision and innovative models for Victoria.

Bush nursing engagement

RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, was invited to speak at the Victorian statewide Bush Nursing Centre's Network Meeting, reconnecting with Bush Nursing Services following the RWAV Conference, where Sally Kendall, President of Ensay Bush Nursing Centre Committee of Management, was a panellist.

Bush Nursing Centres are crucial in providing essential healthcare to rural and remote communities where access to healthcare is limited. This year, RWAV supported 66 contracted visits to bush nursing centres through RWAV's outreach programs.

Advocacy and partnerships

Increased engagement with hospitals, health services and community health services

In 2023–24, RWAV CEO Lauren Cordwell met with women’s health service CEOs to explore future collaboration on upskilling primary care teams in women’s healthcare, while also sharing RWAV’s vision and services.

In April, Lauren Cordwell and RWAV General Manager of Strategy & Partnerships Kate Temby held a productive meeting on the RWAV Conference and presented to the Alliance of Rural and Regional Community Health.



RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, and General Manager of Strategy and Partnerships, Kate Temby, meeting with the Alliance of Rural and Regional Community Health in April 2024.



Standing (L–R): Lauren Cordwell, CEO RWAV; Kelli Porter, Deputy CEO Rural Health West; Peter Barns, CEO HR Plus Tasmania; Chris Mitchell, CEO Health Workforce Queensland; Tim Shackleton, CEO Rural Health West; and Kathy Hetherington, Acting Director Service Delivery & Manager, Service Delivery & Operations RDN.
Seated (L–R): Edward Swan, Executive Officer – Representation and Engagement, National Coordination Unit (NCU); Calinda Adams, NCU Administration and Contract Management Support; Jo Willatts, General Manager of Service Delivery RWAV; Zena Martin, Deputy CEO Health Workforce Queensland.

Reconciliation

In 2023–24, RWAV advanced reconciliation and supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes through our Reflect RAP. Key initiatives included developing an Acknowledgement of Country Guide, and advocating for First Nations' economic self-determination. As we plan our Innovate RAP, we remain committed to closing the gap in healthcare, with a focus on flexibility and responsiveness.

Our commitment to self-determination and cultural safety is demonstrated through strong partnerships with ACCHOs and the VACCHO. These collaborations are essential in improving access to primary and specialist healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Victoria.

Following last year's referendum outcome, RWAV reaffirms our dedication to supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We continue to listen, learn and work closely with First Nations communities to ensure that their voices guide our actions. Our resolve to support self-determination and culturally safe healthcare remains, and we are committed to fostering meaningful change in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



Nurses, doctors and Aboriginal leaders joined forces at the First Nations Voice to Parliament – Health Leaders Press Conference supporting the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to participate in decisions impacting their health and wellbeing.



On 24 September, RWAV's CEO, Lauren Cordwell (right), and VACCHO CEO, Jill Gallagher AO (left), demonstrate their support for the Voice to Parliament at the First Nations Voice to Parliament – Health Leaders Press Conference.



For more on the RWAV Board Statement on the First Nations Voice to Parliament, scan here.

www.rwav.com.au/rwav-board-statement-first-nations-voice-to-parliament

Conferences and presentations

Victorian Rural Health Conference in Mildura

RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, attended the Victorian Rural Health Conference in Mildura by the RDAV, joining a panel with Dr Louise Manning, Acting RDAV President, Matt Jones, CEO of Murray PHN, and Dr Helen Finneran. RWAV rural ambassadors Rachel Young and Prerana Ghosh also participated, representing RWAV at the trade table.



Two RWAV rural ambassadors, Tarsha Hawley (right) and Mitchell Roberts (centre) at the RWAV trade table with RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell (left).



RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, joined a panel on rural healthcare alongside Dr Louise Manning, Acting RDAV President, Matt Jones, CEO of Murray PHN, and Dr Helen Finneran.

National Rural Maternity Forum

Organised by the National Rural Health Commissioner (NRHC), Rural Doctors Association of Australia and Australian College of Midwives, the National Rural Maternity Forum was held at Parliament House, Canberra. It was attended by RWAV's Alicia Siew, Strategy & Policy Coordinator and Dr Louise Manning, Board Director.

It aimed to develop effective, culturally appropriate care models, drive meaningful policy changes and address the closure of over 150 rural maternity units over the past 2 decades. The NRHC is expected to take forward priority solutions encompassing a wide range of initiatives.



Quality and Safety Leader's Forum

In September 2023, RWAV's Gabriela Gauthier (left), Allied Health Program Coordinator, and Nicolle Davies, Quality Improvement Advisor, were thrilled to be part of the Quality and Safety Leader's Forum in Shepparton. It was invaluable to hear healthcare leaders' insights into innovative approaches to workforce challenges and their effects on patient safety.



Dr Kathy Kirkpatrick, Medical Advisor, RWAV (center) alongside health industry leaders, including Jane Anderson, Latrobe Health Advocate (left).

Rural Training Pathways Congress 2023

RWAV was honoured to have sponsored the Rural Training Pathways Congress in Traralgon. Hosted by Monash Rural Health's Gippsland Regional Training Hub, the event featured an insightful opening address by Kellie O'Callaghan, Chair of Mental Health and Wellbeing at the Interim Regional Body and former RWAV Victorian Rural Health Awards Winner. RWAV CEO, Lauren Cordwell, actively participated and Dr Kathy Kirkpatrick, RWAV's Medical Advisor Strategy, represented RWAV at a discussion panel.

Gippsland Allied Health Symposium

RWAV was honoured to have Gabriela Gauthier, Allied Health Program Coordinator at RWAV, deliver a keynote address at the Gippsland Allied Health Symposium in November in Traralgon. The presentation highlighted local data, priority challenges and innovative workforce support strategies. Our presentation opened new avenues for sharing research and addressing the podiatry workforce pipeline's current and future challenges across Victoria.

Speech Pathology Australia Conference

RWAV and our partner, Rural Workforce Agencies, joined forces at Perth's 2024 Speech Pathology Australia Conference, engaging with over 70 speech pathologists.



RWAV's Outreach Program Coordinator, Jasmine Mannix (right) attends the 2024 Speech Pathology Australia Conference with Rural Health West Representative, Laura Pental (left).

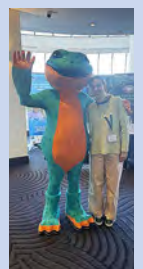


WONCA World Conference

RWAV was thrilled to be a part of the WONCA World Conference hosted by the RACGP. Kate Temby, RWAV's General Manager of Strategy and Partnerships, was honoured to present a poster, 'Support for International Medical Graduates working in primary care in Victoria'.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference

RWAV's Outreach Program Coordinator, Jasmine Mannix, participated in the 2024 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference in Nipaluna (Hobart). The event was a valuable platform for learning, exploring care models and building partnerships to enhance eye health services across Victoria.



RWAV's Outreach Program Coordinator, Jasmine Mannix attends the 2024 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference.

Conferences and presentations



RMA23 Conference Hobart

RWAV's Kate Temby, General Manager of Strategy and Partnerships, and Kerina Princi, Manager of Strategy and Partnerships, proudly presented at the RMA23 Conference in Hobart on 'Enhancing rural registrar training for improved sustainability'. We were thrilled to connect with National Rural Health Commissioner, Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart, rural workforce agencies, and fellow health professionals.

(L-R) Kerina Princi, Manager of Strategy and Partnerships, RWAV, Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart and Kate Temby General Manager of Strategy and Partnerships, RWAV, attended the RMA23 Conference.

Rural Allied Health Primary Care Solutions Forum

In September 2023, RWAV hosted the second virtual Rural Allied Health Primary Care Solutions Forum, featuring National Rural Health Commissioner, Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart, and Victorian Chief Allied Health Officer, Briana Baass. The forum highlighted rural allied health voices, multidisciplinary care and practitioner wellbeing, emphasising the need for a national strategy, mutual respect and effective supervision in improving rural healthcare.



(Top L-R) Gabriela Gauthier, Allied Health Program Coordinator, RWAV, Kate Temby, General Manager, Strategy and Partnerships, RWAV, Peter Steggall, Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist, (Centre L-R) Lauren Cordwell, CEO, RWAV, Catherine Maloney, CEO, Services for Australian Rural & Remote Allied Health, Fiona Quigley, Senior Manager Workforce Development, Western Victoria PHN (Below L-R) Sarah Zivkovic, Program Coordinator, Health Professional Recruitment, RWAV, Dr Emma McLaughlin, Speech Pathology, La Trobe Rural Health School, Ben Trewarn, Team Manager, Health Professional Recruitment, RWAV, (top right) Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart, National Rural Health Commissioner, (below right) Briana Baass, Chief Allied Health Officer.



VACCHO forum

RWAV's General Manager of Service Delivery, Jo Willatts, and Senior Program Coordinator Outreach and Regional Services, Candace Marsden, were honoured to join the VACCHO Movement by Improvement – Continuous Quality Improvement Forum. We thank VACCHO for the opportunity to contribute to this valuable event.



Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association Conference

RWAV was part of the Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association Conference in Nipaluna/Hobart, Tasmania. RWAV's Ben Trewarn, Team Manager of Health Professional Recruitment, and Candace Marsden, Senior Program Coordinator, from the Health Workforce Access Team, were proud to support and showcase RWAV's services.

University of Melbourne's MD Student Conference

In June 2023, RWAV attended the University of Melbourne's MD Student Conference, where over 1,400 medical students explored innovation and collaboration in medicine beyond their curriculum.

Hume Region Allied Health Conference

In October 2023, RWAV presented virtually at the Hume Region Allied Health Conference. We discussed tackling rural allied health service shortages through capacity building, showcasing our innovative funding model to address rural allied health shortages. We highlighted how expanding services by leveraging the existing workforce can increase access to care and overcome initiation barriers. Our presentation covered the model's outcomes, evaluation and insights into improving allied health practices in rural communities.



National Allied Health Conference

RWAV's Allied Health Program Coordinator, Gabriela Gauthier, presented on 'Raising visibility and cultivating value: a holistic approach to allied health workforce support in rural communities' at the 15th National Allied Health Conference in Perth. Our 18-month program, focused on evidence-based workforce and service development, and built on engagement, advocacy, data and funding support, showcased the value of rural allied health professionals. Ben Trewarn, Team Manager from our Health Professional Recruitment team, also connected with visitors at RWAV's booth.



General Practice Conference and Exhibition

RWAV's dedicated team, Jo Willatts (left), General Manager of Service Delivery and Kas Rajarajan, GP Locum Program Coordinator, connected with visitors interested in exploring new horizons or seeking support on their current career journey at the General Practice Conference and Exhibition in Melbourne.



O=MEGA23/WCO4 Conference

We were thrilled to join the O=MEGA23/WCO4 Conference in September. Our dedicated Outreach Team met passionate health professionals, answering their questions and sparking meaningful conversations.



The RWAV Conference, Pathways to Progress: Healthcare Access in Rural Victoria, was held on 15–16 February 2024 at The Mercure, Ballarat. The conference centred around the themes:

- Sustainability: Building a Thriving Rural Health Future
- Future Workforce: Building the Pipeline
- Multidisciplinary Teams: Uniting for Better Care
- Data Capability: From Data to Action

The RWAV Conference brought together over 220 health professionals, leaders and policymakers for 2 days of collaboration, with over 120 attendees at the Networking and Celebration Dinner honouring the 2023 Victorian Rural Health Award winners. The event focused on transitioning from post-pandemic recovery to building a thriving rural healthcare workforce, exploring sustainable workforce solutions and encouraging students to embrace rural living. Emphasising multidisciplinary collaboration and innovative, evidence-based solutions, the conference highlighted the critical role of synergy among government, universities, healthcare institutions and the community.



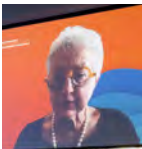
The RWAV Conference Opening Address presented by The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP.

Keynote Speakers:



Karen Heap OAM (left)
CEO, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative

Lauren Cordwell (right)
CEO, RWAV



Adj Prof Ruth Stewart (left)
National Rural Health Commissioner
(presented virtually)

A/Prof Rex Prabhu (right)
Executive Director,
Swan Hill District Health



Kate Temby (left)
General Manager Strategy and Partnerships, RWAV

Chez Lim (right)
Team Leader Analytics and Reporting, RWAV.

Neurodiversity Affirming Practice Training

This training introduced best practices in healthcare, guiding attendees through the shift towards neurodiversity-affirming care. The sessions provided actionable steps and reflection points, empowering rural healthcare workers to deliver more inclusive and affirming care.

Delegates attending the event were also able to self-log the CPD activity undertaken over the 2 days of the RWAV Conference.



Training presented by Sandhya Menon, Educational and Developmental Psychologist, Onwards and Upwards Psychology.

Abstract presentations

An impressive 14 abstracts were chosen to be presented on the 4 sub-themes.

A/Prof Hieu Pham presenting an abstract on Delivery of a Multidisciplinary Psychiatry Education Program for an MMM 5 Health Service.



Scan the QR code to read the RWAV Conference 2024 abstracts submissions now

www.rwav.com.au/rwav-conference-2024-overview



Panel 1

Sustainability: Building a Thriving Rural Health Future

This panel was hosted by Affiliate Professor Grant Phelps, RWAV Deputy Board Chair and included:

- **Dr Hung The Nguyen**, Medical Educator, RWAV
- **Sally Kendall**, Social Worker (retired), Monash Rural Health Advisory Committee, President of Ensay Bush Nursing Centre Committee of Management.
- **Bronwyn Morris-Donovan**, CEO, Allied Health Professions Australia
- **Jemma Abraham**, MD Student, Melbourne University, Ballarat
- **Dr Pat Giddings**, CEO, Remote Vocational Training Scheme



The RWAV Conference roundtable

Hosted by Affiliate Professor Grant Phelps, RWAV Deputy Board Chair, the RWAV Conference explored barriers, opportunities and enablers in rural healthcare. Despite challenges, delegates expressed optimism about challenging norms, empowering future generations, leveraging technology and fostering collaboration.

The 2024 RWAV Conference was hailed as a success, with bold solutions aligning with RWAV's mission to support the recruitment and retention of rural health professionals.



Affiliate Professor Grant Phelps, RWAV, Hosting the The RWAV Conference roundtable discussions.

Panel 2

Future Workforce: Building the Pipeline

This panel was hosted by Ellen Jackson MC and included:

- **Dale Fraser**, CEO, Grampians Health
- **Tayla Cameron**, RWAV student ambassador, Deakin University
- **Durga (Bhakta Bahadur Bhattarai)**, 2024 Victorian Young Australian of the Year
- **Carla Taylor**, CEO, GP Supervision Australia
- **Prof Louisa Remedios**, Professor, Federation University
- **Dr Kathy Kirkpatrick**, Medical Advisor, RWAV



Event sponsors and partners



Panel 3

Multidisciplinary Teams: Uniting for Better Care

This panel was hosted by Ellen Jackson MC and included:

- **Briana Baass**, Chief Allied Health Officer, Safer Care Victoria
- **Cath Maloney**, CEO, Services for Australian Rural & Remote Allied Health
- **Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM**, Board Chair, RWAV
- **Michelle Whitelaw**, Care Coordinator, Nurse Practitioner Rural Outreach Model, Northern District Community Health
- **Emma Gunn**, medical student, The University of Melbourne & Registered Nurse





RWAV Conference Outreach Breakfast Gathering

The RWAV Conference Outreach Breakfast Gathering brought together 40 outreach stakeholders and healthcare professionals, celebrating the contributions of outreach providers while raising awareness of available outreach services. This event fostered connections and inspired stakeholders by highlighting the impact and aspirations of our outreach efforts.

Attendees at the RWAV Conference Outreach Breakfast Gathering.

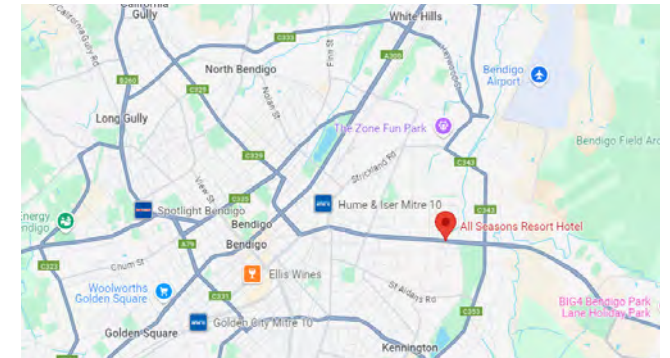


Top row, RWAV Conference Attendees, Ellen Jackson, MC, Outreach Breakfast gathering. Bottom row, RWAV Team, Susan Trevillian presenting abstract: Reconnecting the Workforce Pipeline – 8 Years of Growing Career Rural Hospital Pharmacists. Photos (pg.36-39): RWAV Conference Photography by Melissa Hobbs.

Your invitation to the



Dreaming Big and Driving Change in Rural Healthcare



The 2025 RWAV Conference, Dreaming Big and Driving Change in Rural Healthcare, is scheduled for 19–21 February at the All Seasons Resort Hotel in Bendigo.

The conference will explore sub-themes including policy perspectives and opportunities, embracing data and technology, and sustainable workforce collaboration, co-design and innovation.

We look forward to seeing you there!
Go to www.rwavconference.com.au to register.

Environment, Social Responsibility and Governance

RWAV is committed to sustainable practices that prioritise environmental responsibility, social equity and ethical governance. These initiatives focus on reducing our environmental footprint, promoting equitable healthcare and upholding high standards of governance to support a sustainable future for rural health in Victoria.



Photo: Masons Falls Kinglake National Park, Dr Kathy Kirkpatrick.

Environment

Environmental impacts:

RWAV is committed to minimising its environmental footprint through targeted waste management practices. To ensure effective recycling and waste reduction, we have reduced waste bins and introduced new recycling bins, separated by waste type including a separate toner cartridge recycling facility. The smart lighting systems at RWAV's onsite premises significantly reduce energy consumption by ensuring lights are only on when areas are occupied.

These measures, by promoting a more sustainable approach to waste management, contribute to lowering our overall carbon emissions and energy usage.

This financial year, RWAV set ambitious sustainability goals aimed at reducing our environmental impact. Key achievements include:

- encouraging staff to download and access materials online rather than printing, significantly reducing paper consumption
- implementing QR codes at events to link attendees to electronic information, thereby minimising printed materials
- successfully utilising an app at the RWAV Conference to provide the program and real-time updates, further reducing our reliance on printed resources
- using public transport to travel where possible to offsite meetings, contributing to reducing carbon emissions.

These initiatives are part of our ongoing commitment to sustainability and showcase our progress towards a greener, more environmentally responsible organisation.

In addition, RWAV ensures compliance with all relevant environmental regulations and continually seeks opportunities to enhance our sustainability practices. Our commitment to environmental stewardship is reflected in our policies and daily operations, aimed at supporting long-term ecological balance and reducing our overall environmental impact.

Social

Workforce diversity and inclusion

A core component of RWAV's responsibilities is the commitment to fostering practices that uphold our approach to:

- embedding an organisational culture that values and upholds transparency, responsibility, accountability, quality and safety
- ensuring adherence to applicable regulations, legislation, standards and best practices
- governance that applies to RWAV's constitution
- upholding diligent, skilled and diverse stewardship across RWAV's Board and workforce.

Organisational culture

Established in 2023, the Culture and Quality Working Group plays a pivotal role in nurturing a collaborative and innovative environment at RWAV. This group provides a platform for staff across the organisation to:

- share innovative ideas and suggest improvements for organisational culture and quality
- offer valuable input into culture and quality enhancement initiatives
- foster collaboration across teams and add value to various activities
- enhance workforce culture by optimising team collaboration and creating fulfilling quality improvement experiences.

Meetings focus on advancing ongoing culture and quality improvement projects, introducing new ideas to enhance processes and practices, and celebrating successful initiatives. By embedding these principles, RWAV remains committed to continuously improving its organisational culture and ensuring a positive, innovative and collaborative environment for all staff.

Diversity and inclusion

RWAV is dedicated to promoting cultural safety and ensuring that all employees feel secure, respected and empowered. Cultural safety extends beyond the workplace, encouraging community and individual empowerment in managing health, wellbeing and social issues. In partnership with Diversity Australia, RWAV facilitated comprehensive diversity and inclusive language training for its workforce, covering:

- understanding why inclusion matters
- the principles of inclusive language, culture and stereotyping
- exclusionary language and practices to avoid
- deliberate actions to drive change.

Environment, Social Responsibility and Governance

Photo: Lakes Entrance, Candace Marsden.

RWAV also partnered with VACCHO to deliver Cultural Safety Training workshops for primary healthcare providers and support staff in rural Victoria as well as for RWAV staff. These workshops provide foundational knowledge and foster awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, identities and cultures, exploring practical steps towards cultural safety.

Recognising the value of these training opportunities, RWAV remains committed to challenging perspectives through the lens of diversity, fostering a more inclusive workplace.

Victorian Child Safe Standards

RWAV recognises its responsibility in funding programs and services for children, ensuring their safety, respect and empowerment through adherence to the Child Safe Standards. As part of our collective commitment to child safety, RWAV acknowledges the potential risks and takes proactive measures to safeguard children.

Our child safety commitment is publicly available on our website, and to align with the Victorian Child Safe Standards RWAV has undertaken the following actions:

- Service Mapping: Assessing the relevance of our programs to the Child Safe Standards.
- Self-Assessment Audit: Evaluating our compliance.
- Child Safe Standards Audit Report and Implementation Plan.

Regulated by the Commission for Children and Young People, RWAV collaborates with stakeholders, staff and the Board to prioritise child safety across all operations.

Health and safety

RWAV is committed to the holistic integration of work health and safety across its operations, promoting a culture of accountability through consistent and streamlined systems and processes. In the past year, RWAV increased its investment in safety, with a particular focus on training, compliance and psychological safety. This investment has also led to enhanced data quality and reporting.

RWAV initiated the reporting of psychological hazards to deepen our understanding of workplace risks. These insights will improve employee wellbeing and advance our health and safety practices.

Governance

RWAV is dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of governance, fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, responsibility, and a commitment to quality and safety.

Policy Framework

RWAV has developed a comprehensive Policy Framework that supports a best-practice approach to the development, revision and maintenance of policies, procedures and supporting documents. This framework promotes consistency, establishes clear approval delegations and ensures accountability throughout all stages of policy management.

Clinical Governance Framework

This framework has been developed to ensure the delivery of high-quality, safe and responsive healthcare services. The associated Clinical Governance Framework Implementation Plan provides operational guidance for its effective deployment. The framework is structured around 5 domains:

1. Leadership and Culture
2. Consumer Partnerships
3. Workforce
4. Risk Management
5. Clinical Practice.

These interconnected domains are supported by continuous monitoring and improvement efforts. Each department at RWAV integrates some or all of these domains into their activities, ensuring the framework remains relevant, actionable, measurable and meaningful for staff and stakeholders.

Stakeholder and Advocacy Framework

In response to stakeholder feedback for RWAV's increased involvement in rural health advocacy, RWAV developed its Stakeholder and Advocacy Framework. This framework was designed to guide strategic decision-making and foster positive partnerships that influence healthcare reform.

Endorsed in 2024 by the Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee and the Board, the framework outlines high-level principles that shape RWAV's approach to stakeholder engagement and advocacy. It serves as an internal guide for identifying current and potential stakeholders with shared goals of improving rural, primary and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare. Additionally, it provides flexibility to address urgent priorities and advocacy topics.

During the financial year 2023–24, RWAV achieved several key milestones under this framework, as detailed earlier in this report in the Advocacy and Partnerships section. New strategic advocacy initiatives were also developed, with further objectives set for the upcoming year, guiding RWAV's ongoing work in rural healthcare advocacy.

Corporate governance

RWAV is a public company limited by guarantee and operates within a legislative framework comprising:

- Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)
- Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth).

Our commitment to corporate governance standards

The RWAV Board is committed to good corporate governance that is appropriate having regard to RWAV's size and the complexity of our business.

The Board has established a governance framework for managing the company, which comprises appropriate internal controls, risk management processes, and governance policies and procedures.

We have adopted the Australian Institute of Company Directors Not-for-Profit Governance Principles third edition released in April 2024 (the AICD Principles) and the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Governance Standards (the ACNC Standards) as appropriate guides to good governance.

Purpose and strategy

RWAV's purpose is to provide effective and customised health workforce solutions for rural, regional and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria.

The company's 3-year strategic plan in support of this purpose was approved by the Board in 2023. Progress against the strategic plan is subject to regular review by the Board at scheduled Board meetings and designated strategy sessions with the leadership team at which the Board evaluates company performance against the strategy.

Board and management

Roles and responsibilities

The Board's role and responsibilities are set out in a formal Board Charter. The Charter also details matters reserved to the Board and the powers delegated to committees.

A key responsibility of the Board is to review and approve the strategic plan, annual budgets and annual business plans. The Board also monitors company performance and the implementation of its business strategy.

While the Board retains responsibility for the company's overall governance, strategy and performance, the CEO and the Executive Team are delegated the day-to-day management of RWAV.

Environment, Social Responsibility and Governance

Board committees

The Board has 5 standing committees:

- Audit and Risk Committee
- People and Culture Committee
- Governance Committee
- Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee
- Nominations and Remuneration Committee.

Each committee acts under terms of reference reviewed annually by the Board, which set out the committee's role, responsibilities, membership and operations.

Board composition and skills

The Board comprises eight non-executive directors. To effectively discharge its responsibilities, the Board must collectively possess the required skills, experience and personal attributes regarding the company's business and strategy.

During the year, the Board reviewed and agreed on the necessary skills and experience. Following confirmation of the relevant skills, directors each assessed their competency in relation to each skill. These assessments were used to create a skills matrix setting out skills held collectively by the Board.

The Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NRC) used a skills matrix to inform the director nomination process and for succession planning, addressing current and future skill needs.

Director nomination and appointment

Under the company Constitution, directors are elected by RWAV members for a 3-year term. Directors who have served a 3-year term are required to stand for re-election if they wish to continue on the Board. To ensure renewal of Board membership, directors are not eligible to stand for re-election after 9 years (3 consecutive terms).

Each year the RWAV Board conducts a search for suitably skilled persons for nomination for election to the Board at the annual general meeting (AGM).

The Board is assisted in its search for suitable director candidates by the NRC, which comprises:

- one RWAV Board member
- two persons representative of the RWAV members
- one independent member who serves as Chair of the NRC.
- After assessing the applications received and interviewing candidates, the NRC recommends one candidate for each director vacancy for approval by members at the AGM.

Board diversity

The Board recognises the benefits of having a diverse Board and this is considered in determining the optimum composition of the Board.

Independence of the Board

The Board Charter requires that a majority of directors be independent, that is, free from any business or any other relationship that could materially interfere with their independent exercise of judgement.

The Board considers that in financial year 2023–24 all directors were able to fulfil the role of an independent director within the meaning of the Charter.

A register of interests is maintained for all directors by the Company Secretary. Conflicts of interest are managed in accordance with the company's Conflict of Interest Procedure.

Organisational culture

The Board recognises that organisational culture is vital to RWAV's success and instils and models the desired culture through individual and collective director behaviour.

Organisational culture is monitored through management reporting to the Board and the People and Culture Committee and through formal staff engagement surveys.

Whistleblower policy

As part of our ongoing commitment to fostering a culture of integrity, honesty and ethical conduct, employees are encouraged to report unlawful or unethical conduct under the company's Whistleblower Protection Policy to the Company Secretary or the company's independent reporting hotline.

Code of Conduct

The Board is committed to a high standard of ethical business behaviour and integrity at all times.

Accordingly, the Board has adopted a formal Board Code of Conduct, which sets out its expectations of conduct for the company's directors.

Risk management

The company's Risk Management Policy, Framework and Risk Appetite Statement are approved by the Board and reviewed annually to ensure they align with the company's purpose and strategy.

Under the Risk Management Framework, enterprise-wide risks are reviewed periodically by management and Board committees and reported to the Audit and Risk Committee. Identified risks are managed and treated under the company's Risk Management Procedure. Under the procedure, appropriate executive team members and senior managers are designated as risk owners and are responsible for managing and treating relevant risks.

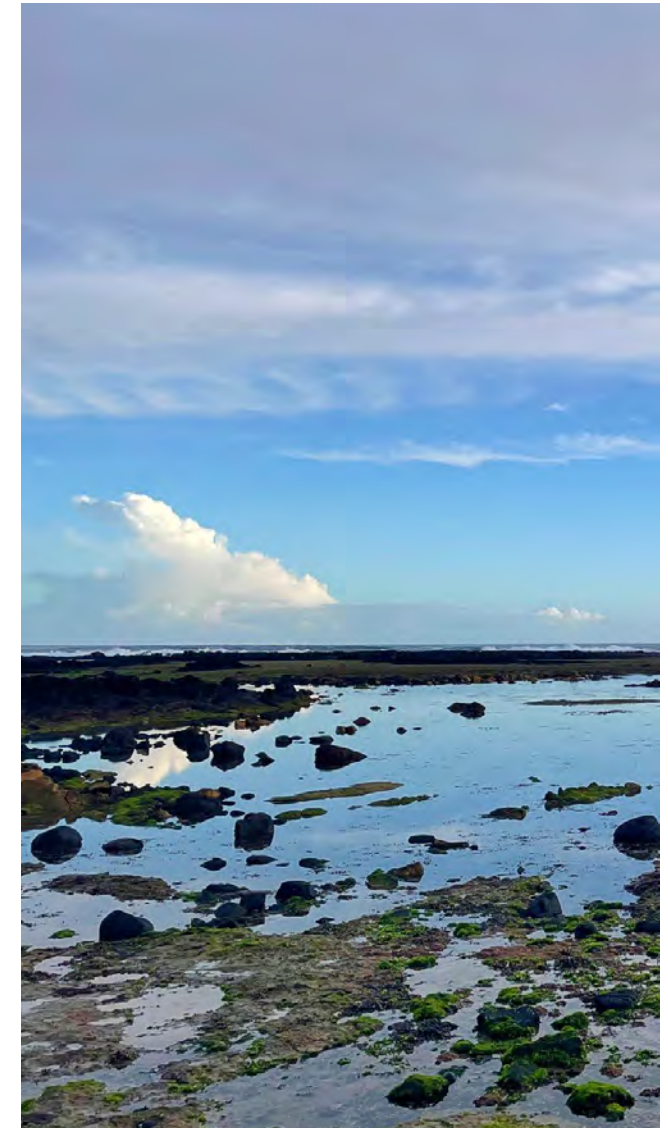


Photo: Cowes beach, Kate Temby.

RWAV Board of Directors



Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM, Chair

BMed, MMedSci, FRACGP, FARGP, FACRRM, DipPractDerm, DipMedHyp, DipFP, DipBusAdmin, GAICD

Director since 2016

Morton is an experienced GP and medical educator. He is currently in clinical general practice in suburban Melbourne and previously practised in rural Victoria for 10 years. Morton is Chair of the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaborative and a past Chair of the Mental Health Professionals Association and is a board member of the Mental Health Professionals Network. He is also the Medical Director of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Victoria. He is a member of the RACGP Victoria Council.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Board Chair
- Governance Committee Member
- Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee Member



Affiliate Professor Grant Phelps, Deputy Chair

BMBS, MBA, FRACP, FRACMA, FAICD

Director since 2019

Grant is a retired physician and gastroenterologist whose specialist clinical practice was in regional and rural Victoria. In the latter part of his career, Grant moved into management and leadership roles at organisational and system level, with a focus on clinical quality and clinical engagement.

Having worked for government in several jurisdictions, through this, Grant has held leadership roles in the national safety and quality agenda, and has also held major professional level roles including a 2-year period as President of the Adult Division of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians from 2016–18.

Grant teaches clinical governance with a focus on helping healthcare boards and executive teams understand this critical aspect of their work, and consults to organisations on their clinical governance and clinical leadership.

Grant is an experienced and qualified board director, having attained Fellowship of the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 2018, and currently chairs a major sporting organisation.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Deputy Board Chair
- Chair of the Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee
- Nominations and Remuneration Committee Member

RWAV Board of Directors



Jane Poletti

LLB, BSc, MMgt (Strategic Foresight), GAICD

Director since 2017

As a lawyer and business consultant, Jane has worked for many years with company boards and executives across a range of areas including IP commercialisation, SaaS businesses, healthcare products/services, privacy compliance and data/IT security. Jane is General Counsel for ID Consulting. She has served as a Director of BreastScreen Victoria, Ballarat Health Services and chairs RWAV's Governance Committee.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Chair of the Governance Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee Member



Roger Chao

BA (Hons), BEc, Grad Dip Bus, MBA, FGIA, FAICD

Director since 2020

Roger is an experienced CEO, Chair, non-executive director, board consultant and course/workshop facilitator, with experience in the health, human services, law enforcement, regional economics, disaster relief, education, transport and environmental industries. He has sat on and chaired numerous private company, public sector and not-for-profit boards and audit and risk committees. Roger has also consulted with numerous boards, published numerous articles and conducted webinars on corporate governance, risk and strategy. He brings strong governance experience, commercial acumen, risk management and strategy skills combined with a passion for innovation and business development.

Currently, Roger chairs the Victorian Emergency Relief and Recovery Foundation, is a director and chair of the Audit and Risk Committee for Melba Support Services, and is an independent member of the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Roger is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has completed their Boardroom Mastery program, and is also a Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia. Roger is currently a facilitator, assessor and writer for the Australian Institute of Company Directors and teaches their Company Directors Course, as well as numerous other short courses.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

RWAV Board of Directors



Dr Louise Manning

BSci(Hons), DipLang, MD, FRACGP, FACRRM, DRANZCOG(Adv), GAICD

Director since 2021

Louise is a rural GP obstetrician practising in a number of locations across Central Victoria where she delivers general practice, obstetric and sexual health services. After growing up in a small town, she has lived experience of the difficulties of accessing healthcare in rural and regional areas, and is dedicated to advocating for equitable health outcomes, regardless of geography. In addition to her clinical duties, she undertakes consulting, medical education and advocacy work. She is also a non-executive director and the current President Elect of the RDAV. Louise recently returned to study in 2024 and is undertaking a Masters of Public Health through The University of Melbourne.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee Member
- Audit and Risk Committee Member



Dr Rosemary Kelly

BCom, MPP, EdD, DipEd, Claritas/CFA Investment Certificate, MAICD

Director since 2021

Rosemary has had a varied career as an academic teaching economics, public policy and industrial relations, and as a consultant, advocate, health union official and as a director. She brings strong governance and strategic skills to the Board, as well as knowledge and depth of experience in health policy, economics and investment.

Rosemary is currently a member of the Investment Committee of Cbus, a major Australian superannuation fund.

She was the Secretary of the Victorian Psychologists Association Inc for 20 years and was Assistant Secretary and Secretary of the Medical Scientists' Association of Victoria, which counts dietitians and audiologists among its members.

Rosemary knows first-hand the difficulties in attracting and retaining health professionals in rural and regional Victoria.

Rosemary is a member of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, and a committee member of Quit Nukes.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Chair of the People and Culture Committee
- Governance Committee Member

RWAV Board of Directors



Mathew Muldoon

CA, BEc (Acc), RITP, MAICD

Director since 2021

Mat is a Chartered Accountant of 30 years standing with experience as an Auditor, Banker and Registered Liquidator. Joint founding Partner of a Chartered Accounting firm specialising in Corporate Advisory, Business Recovery and Turnaround, Valuations and Forensics, Mat brings his considerable financial experience combined with the commercial learnings gathered running numerous businesses to the Board. Mat is a longstanding Board member of Ballarat Community Health Limited and has been a member of the Audit and Risk Committee whilst he has been on the Board and is well aware of the issues facing the health workforce in regional areas.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Audit and Risk Committee Member
- People and Culture Committee Member



John Biviano

BAppSci, GradDipBus, MBus, GAICD, FIML

Director since 2023

John is an experienced CEO and senior executive who has held many roles in various hospitals, in government (Health Department), and in professional associations related to healthcare. Until recently, John was the CEO of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), where he had major involvement in various sustainability in healthcare initiatives, Indigenous health and 'Building Respect' cultural improvement strategies.

John's expertise encompasses leadership, strategic policy development, professional standards and government relations. At RACS, he led the college through the COVID-19 pandemic and oversaw the digitisation of a range of member offerings, including aspects of training. He remains a key advocate for good corporate governance and the need for leaner and competent skills-based boards.

RWAV special responsibilities:

- Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee Member
- People and Culture Committee Member

Executive Team



Lauren Cordwell

Chief Executive Officer

BHlthSci(Hons), MPH, PostGradDipMgt, GAICD, AFCHSM

Lauren has been an integral part of the RWAV team since 2018, demonstrating a remarkable strategic vision to improve access to healthcare in rural Victoria. As an experienced senior executive and health policy analyst, she is committed to finding practical solutions to address the challenges preventing communities in rural Australia from accessing affordable and safe healthcare. For over 20 years, Lauren has designed and implemented innovative programs with communities, health professionals and government agencies that continue to have a lasting benefit. Many of these programs relate to primary healthcare, general practice, workforce, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples health and community engagement.



Kate Temby

General Manager – Strategy and Partnerships

RN, GradDip(Health Promotion), PRINCE2, Mini MBA

Kate is a registered nurse highly experienced in health promotion and project management. Her people and program management skills enable her to be agile and adaptable while maintaining an outcomes focus on improving quality access to primary healthcare. Kate's extensive experience working with all levels of government, the community and stakeholders across the sector have provided her with insights into the challenges rural communities and health professionals face. Kate has led the design and delivery of many innovative and strategic health promotion and grants programs, supporting better access to health services, health information and activities across communities.

At RWAV, Kate has led the transformation of the RWAV grants program, enhanced the administration of a number of programs and developed the RWAV allied health portfolio. She has also led the development of the RWAV research program of activities. Having worked at RWAV since 2021, Kate continues to positively influence the rural healthcare workforce and access to services.

Executive Team



Jo Williatts

General Manager – Service Delivery

Social Work (BA Hons), DipSW

With a background in social work and a proven record in recruitment, project management and business development, Jo brings strategic leadership and a wealth of experience in driving positive outcomes within the health, human services and state government sectors. Jo specialises in managing health professional recruitment and outreach programs, including the More Doctors for Rural Australia and 3GA programs. Her focus is on implementing innovative workforce strategies and clinical governance to bolster RWAV's mission of enhancing healthcare accessibility in rural and regional Victoria.

Jo spearheaded successful internal change initiatives while fostering strong relationships with external stakeholders. Her efforts consistently align with RWAV's strategic direction, ensuring a cohesive approach to driving impactful change. Beyond her professional expertise, Jo's passion lies in uniting communities and championing positive transformations in rural healthcare in Victoria.



Shay Madzikanda

General Manager – Finance and Risk

Msc (Fin), FCCA, FGIA, CA

Shay brings over 20 years of financial management experience in commercial and not-for-profit organisations. He has a rich and varied experience in multiple finance and leadership roles in the United Kingdom and Australia, including as chief financial officer, general manager – finance & IT, commercial manager – operations, finance manager and accountant. His extensive leadership experience is augmented by fellowship to the Governance Institute of Australia, fellowship to the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, membership to the Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, a Masters in Finance and an undergraduate degree in accounting and finance.

Shay has lived and worked in rural Victoria and understands the workforce opportunities and challenges for businesses in rural towns.

Executive Team



Martin Bede

Company Secretary

LLB, BCom, FGIA

Martin is a governance professional and lawyer with experience in private practice and inhouse legal roles. He has been a company secretary for public and private sector organisations across a range of industries including VicTrack, Regis Healthcare Limited and Dairy Australia Limited. He holds Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Commerce degrees from the University of Melbourne, a Graduate Diploma in Applied Corporate Governance from the Governance Institute of Australia (GIA) and is a fellow of the GIA.

Acronyms and initialisms

ACCO.....	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
ACCHO.....	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
ACRRM	Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
BRHS.....	Bairnsdale Regional Health Services
FPSST	Focused Psychological Strategies Skills Training
GP	general practitioner
IMG	International Medical Graduate
MDRAP	More Doctors for Rural Australia Program
MMM.....	Modified Monash Model
MP	member of parliament
non-VR.....	non-vocationally recognised
NRC	Nomination and Remuneration Committee
PHN.....	Primary Health Network
RACGP	Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
RAP.....	Reconciliation Action Plan
RDV	Rural Doctors Association of Victoria
RFDS	Royal Flying Doctor Services
RWAV	Rural Workforce Agency Victoria
RWGP.....	Rural Women's GP
VACCHO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
VMO.....	visiting medical officer
VRHA.....	Victorian Rural Health Awards

RWAV financials

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

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For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

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Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Directors' Report 30 June 2024

The directors present their report, together with the financial statements, on Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited ('the Company') for the financial year ended 30 June 2024.

Directors

The names of the directors in office at any time during, or since the end of, the year are:

Names	Appointed/Resigned
Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM	
Jane Poletti	
Prof. Grant Phelps	
Suni Campbell	Resigned on 23 November 2023
Roger Chao	
Dr Louise Manning	
Mathew Muldoon	
Dr Rosemary Kelly	
John Biviano	Appointed on 23 November 2023

Directors have been in office since the start of the financial year to the date of this report unless otherwise stated.

Principal activities and significant changes in nature of activities

The principal activity of Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited during the financial year was to improve access to health services for people living in regional and rural Victoria.

The Australian Government and State Government funding remained consistent with the previous year per the program agreements. The Company successfully secured funding of the Rural Health Workforce Support Activity (RHWSA) program for one year extension from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. It was announced that the More Doctors for Rural Australia (MDRAP) Program was to be discontinued with the effective wind up of the program to be on 31 December 2023, however an extension was granted to 30 September 2024.

Short term objectives

The Company's short term objectives are to:

- Contribute to addressing health workforce shortages and maldistribution in regional, rural and Aboriginal communities in Victoria;
- Build health workforce capability;
- Grow the sustainability of the health workforce; and
- Coordinate the provision of and access to specialist outreach services to communities in rural Victoria.

Long term objectives

The Company's long term objective is health equity for rural, regional and Aboriginal Victorians. It seeks to achieve this by applying contemporary workforce development strategies that advance rural, regional and Aboriginal Victorians' access to high-quality health care.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Directors' Report 30 June 2024

Performance measures

The following measures are used within the Company to monitor performance:

- Regular reporting against strategic and business plans, budgets and financial and contractual performance indicators.

Members' guarantee

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of, and for the purpose of winding up of the Company, the amount capable of being called up from each member and any person or association who ceased to be a member in the year prior to the winding up, is limited to \$10 for members that are corporations and \$10 for all other members, subject to the provisions of the Company's constitution.

At 30 June 2024 the collective liability of members was \$ 120 (2023: \$ 120).

Review of operations

The net profit of the Company during the financial year amounted to \$217,252 (2023:\$301,847)

Significant changes in state of affairs

There have been no significant changes in the state of affairs of the Company during the year.

Events after the reporting date

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affected or could significantly affect the operations of the Company, the results of those operations or the state of affairs of the Company in future financial years.

Future developments and results

The Company will continue to pursue in its principal activity of improving access to health services for people living in regional and rural Victoria with a similar level of funding expected from the Australian Government Department of Health.

Environmental matters

The Company's operations are not regulated by any significant environmental regulations under a law of the Commonwealth or of a state or territory.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Directors' Report

30 June 2024

Information on directors

Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM Chair

Qualifications BMed, MMedSci, FRACGP, FARGP, FACRRM, DipPractDerm, DipFP, DipBusAdmin, GAICD

Experience Director since 2016
Morton is an experienced GP and medical educator. He is currently in clinical general practice in suburban Melbourne and previously practised in rural Victoria for 10 years. Morton is Chair of the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaborative and a past Chair of the Mental Health Professionals Association and is a board member of the Mental Health Professionals Network. He is also the Medical Director of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Victoria. He is a member of the RACGP Victoria Council.

Special Responsibilities Board Chair; Governance Committee Member; Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee Member

Jane Poletti

Qualifications Board Director
LLB, BSc, MMSF, GAICD

Experience Director since 2017
As a lawyer and business consultant, Jane has worked for many years with company boards and executives across a range of areas including IP commercialisation, SaaS businesses, healthcare products/services, privacy compliance and data/IT security. Jane is General Counsel for ID Consulting. She has served as a Director of BreastScreen Victoria, Ballarat Health Services and chairs RWAV's Governance Committee.

Special Responsibilities Chair of the Governance Committee; Audit and Risk Committee Member

Prof. Grant Phelps

Qualifications Deputy Chair
BMBS MBA FRACP FRACMCA FAICD

Experience Director since 2019
Grant is a retired physician and gastroenterologist whose specialist clinical practice was in regional and rural Victoria. In the latter part of his career, Grant moved into management and leadership roles at organisational and system level, with a focus on clinical quality and clinical engagement.

Having worked for government in several jurisdictions, through this, Grant has held leadership roles in the national safety and quality agenda, and has also held major professional level roles including a 2-year period as President of the Adult Division of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians from 2016–18.

Grant teaches clinical governance with a focus on helping healthcare boards and executive teams understand this critical aspect of their work, and consults to organisations on their clinical governance and clinical leadership.

Grant is an experienced and qualified board director, having attained Fellowship of the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 2018, and currently chairs a major sporting organisation

Special Responsibilities Deputy Board Chair; Chair of the Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee; NRC Member

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Directors' Report

30 June 2024

Information on directors

Suni Campbell

Qualifications Board Director
Bachelor Business (Human Resource Management), GAICD

Experience Extensive human resources and industrial relations experience coupled with transformational change experience, focused on fit for purpose frameworks and culture change.

Special Responsibilities Chair, People and Culture Committee
Member, Strategy, Policy & Stakeholder Engagement Committee

Roger Chao

Qualifications Board Director
BA (Hons), BEc, Grad Dip Bus, MBA, FGIA, FAICD

Experience Director since 2020
Roger is an experienced CEO, Chair, non-executive director, board consultant and course/workshop facilitator, with experience in the health, human services, law enforcement, regional economics, disaster relief, education, transport and environmental industries. He has sat on and chaired numerous private company, public sector and not-for-profit boards and audit and risk committees. Roger has also consulted with numerous boards, published numerous articles and conducted webinars on corporate governance, risk and strategy. He brings strong governance experience, commercial acumen, risk management and strategy skills combined with a passion for innovation and business development.

Currently, Roger chairs the Victorian Emergency Relief and Recovery Foundation, is a director and chair of the Audit and Risk Committee for Melba Support Services, and is an independent member of the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Roger is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has completed their Boardroom Mastery program, and is also a Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia. Roger is currently a facilitator, assessor and writer for the Australian Institute of Company Directors and teaches their Company Directors Course, as well as numerous other short courses.

Special Responsibilities Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Dr. Louise Manning

Qualifications Board Director
BSci(Hons), DipLang [RM1] MD, FRACGP, FACRRM, DRANZCOG(Adv), GAICD

Experience Director since 2021
Louise is a rural GP obstetrician practising in a number of locations across Central Victoria where she delivers general practice, obstetric and sexual health services. After growing up in a small town, she has lived experience of the difficulties of accessing healthcare in rural and regional areas, and is dedicated to advocating for equitable health outcomes, regardless of geography. In addition to her clinical duties, she undertakes consulting, medical education and advocacy work. She is also a non-executive director and the current President Elect of the RDAV. Louise recently returned to study in 2024 and is undertaking a Masters of Public Health through The University of Melbourne.

Special Responsibilities Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee Member; Audit and Risk Committee Member

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Directors' Report 30 June 2024

Information on directors

Mathew Muldoon	Board Director
Qualifications	CA, BEc (Acc), RITP, MAICD
Experience	Director since 2021 Mat is a Chartered Accountant of 30 years standing with experience as an Auditor, Banker and Registered Liquidator. Joint founding Partner of a Chartered Accounting firm specialising in Corporate Advisory, Business Recovery and Turnaround, Valuations and Forensics. Mat brings his considerable financial experience combined with the commercial learnings gathered running numerous businesses to the Board. Mat is a longstanding Board member of Ballarat Community Health Limited and has been a member of the Audit and Risk Committee whilst he has been on the Board and is well aware of the issues facing the health workforce in regional areas.
Special Responsibilities	Audit and Risk Committee Member; People and Culture Committee Member
Dr Rosemary Kelly	Board Director
Qualifications	BCom, MPP, EdD, DipEd, Claritas/CFA Investment Certificate, MAICD
Experience	Director since 2021 Rosemary has had a varied career as an academic teaching economics, public policy and industrial relations, and as a consultant, advocate, health union official and as a director. She brings strong governance and strategic skills to the Board, as well as knowledge and depth of experience in health policy, economics and investment. Rosemary is currently a member of the Investment Committee of Cbus, a major Australian superannuation fund. She was the Secretary of the Victorian Psychologists Association Inc for 20 years and was Assistant Secretary and Secretary of the Medical Scientists' Association of Victoria, which counts dietitians and audiologists among its members. Rosemary knows first-hand the difficulties in attracting and retaining health professionals in rural and regional Victoria. Rosemary is a member of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, and a committee member of Quit Nukes.
Special Responsibilities	Chair of the People and Culture Committee; Governance Committee Member

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Directors' Report 30 June 2024

Information on directors

John Biviano	Board Director
Qualifications	BAppSci, GradDipBus, MBus, GAICD, FIML
Experience	Director since 2023 John is an experienced CEO and senior executive who has held many roles in various hospitals, in government (Health Department), and in professional associations related to healthcare. Until recently, John was the CEO of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), where he had major involvement in various sustainability in healthcare initiatives, Indigenous health and 'Building Respect' cultural improvement strategies. John's expertise encompasses leadership, strategic policy development, professional standards and government relations. At RACS, he led the college through the COVID-19 pandemic and oversaw the digitisation of a range of member offerings, including aspects of training. He remains a key advocate for good corporate governance and the need for leaner and competent skills-based boards.
Special Responsibilities	Strategy, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Committee Member; People and Culture Committee Member

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

**Directors' Report
30 June 2024**

Meetings of directors

The numbers of meetings of the Company's board of directors and of each board committee held during the year ended 30 June 2024, and the number of meetings attended by each director were:

	Directors' Meetings		Audit & Risk Committee		Governance Committee		Strategy, Policy, Stakeholder Engagement Committee		People and Culture Committee		Nominations & Remunerations Committee	
	Number eligible to attend	Number attended	Number eligible to attend	Number attended	Number eligible to attend	Number attended	Number eligible to attend	Number attended	Number eligible to attend	Number attended	Number eligible to attend	Number attended
Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM	5	5	4	3	4	3	4	3	2	2	-	-
Jane Poletti	5	5	2	2	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Assoc. Prof. Grant Phelps	5	5	-	-	-	-	4	4	-	-	1	1
Suni Campbell	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	-	-
Mr Roger Chao	5	5	6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dr Louise Manning	5	5	6	5	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	-
Mathew Muldoon	5	4	6	6	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
John Biviano	3	3	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	-	-
Dr Rosemary Kelly	5	5	-	-	4	4	-	-	4	4	-	-

Indemnification and insurance of officers and auditors

During the financial year, Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited did not pay any premiums to insure the directors or secretaries of the Company. Insurance coverage for directors and secretaries was pursuant to the VMIA Community Services Organisation Insurance Program at no cost to the Company.

The Company has not, during or since the end of the financial year, indemnified or agreed to indemnify the auditor of the Company or any related entity against a liability incurred by the auditor.

Auditor's independence declaration

The auditor's independence declaration in accordance with section 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* for the year ended 30 June 2024 has been received and can be found on page 8 of the financial report.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors:

Director:  Director: 
 Roger Chao Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM

Dated 13/09/2024 13/09/2024



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**AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION
 UNDER SUBDIVISION 60-40 OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHARITIES
 AND NOT-FOR-PROFITS COMMISSION ACT 2012
 TO THE DIRECTORS OF RURAL WORKFORCE AGENCY, VICTORIA LIMITED**

As lead engagement partner for the audit of Rural Workforce Agency Victoria Limited for the year ended 30 June 2024, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- i. no contraventions of the independence requirements in relation to the audit; and
- ii. no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.


 Aoife Bodkin
 Partner – Audit and Assurance
 Moore Australia Audit (VIC)
 Melbourne, Victoria


 Moore Australia Audit (VIC)
 ABN 16 847 721 257
 Chartered Accountants

13 September 2024

Moore Australia Audit (VIC) ABN 16 847 721 257. An independent member of Moore Global Network Limited. Members in principal places throughout the world. Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

		2024	2023
Note	\$	\$	\$
Revenue	4	17,845,468	16,782,543
Projects and grants expense		(9,781,075)	(8,218,710)
Employee benefits expense		(5,779,010)	(6,546,789)
Depreciation and amortisation expense		(224,422)	(244,598)
Other expenses		(1,827,144)	(1,419,928)
Finance costs		(16,565)	(50,671)
Surplus for the year		217,252	301,847
Other comprehensive income			
Revaluation of financial instruments at FVOCI		72,719	18,099
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax		72,719	18,099
Total comprehensive income for the year		289,971	319,946

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Statement of Financial Position
As At 30 June 2024

		2024	2023
Note	\$	\$	\$
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	4,808,477	367,650
Trade and other receivables	6	228,119	46,786
Other assets	9	34,999	30,812
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		5,071,595	445,248
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Other non financial assets	6	-	194,532
Other financial assets	7	12,892,983	14,361,628
Plant and equipment	8	49,130	1,821
Right-of-use assets	10	197,217	1,122,854
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		13,139,330	15,680,835
TOTAL ASSETS		18,210,925	16,126,083
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	11	1,190,623	971,066
Lease liabilities	10	227,061	201,908
Employee benefits	12	376,581	421,953
Short-term provisions	13	139,977	502,351
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,934,242	2,097,278
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Lease liabilities	10	-	963,146
Employee benefits	12	114,347	73,047
Contract liabilities	14	10,851,488	7,971,735
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		10,965,835	9,007,928
TOTAL LIABILITIES		12,900,077	11,105,206
NET ASSETS		5,310,848	5,020,877
EQUITY			
Retained Surplus		5,265,244	5,047,992
Reserves		45,604	(27,115)
TOTAL EQUITY		5,310,848	5,020,877

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Statement of Changes in Equity
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

2024

	Retained Surplus	Financial Asset Reserve	Total
Note	\$	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2023	5,047,992	(27,115)	5,020,877
Surplus for the year	217,252	-	217,252
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	72,719	72,719
Balance at 30 June 2024	5,265,244	45,604	5,310,848

2023

	Retained Earnings	Financial Asset Reserve	Total
Note	\$	\$	\$
Balance at 1 July 2022	4,746,145	(45,214)	4,700,931
Surplus for the year	301,847	-	301,847
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	18,099	18,099
Balance at 30 June 2023	5,047,992	(27,115)	5,020,877

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
Note	\$	\$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		
Receipt of grants and other income	20,002,335	17,671,263
Payments to suppliers and employees	(17,534,121)	(20,367,009)
Interest received	23,265	65,045
Interest paid	-	(50,671)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	2,491,479	(2,681,372)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		
Cash inflows from investments	2,250,000	4,456,844
Cash outflows for investments	-	(9,957,665)
Payments for plant & equipment	(55,800)	-
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities	2,194,200	(5,500,821)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES:		
Payment of lease liabilities	(244,852)	(185,901)
Net cash used in financing activities	(244,852)	(185,901)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held	4,440,827	(8,368,094)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	367,650	8,735,744
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	5 4,808,477	367,650

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

The financial report covers Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited as an individual entity. Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited is a not-for-profit company, registered and domiciled in Australia.

The principal activity of the Company for the year ended 30 June 2024 was to improve access to health services for people living in regional and rural Victoria.

The functional and presentation currency of Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited is Australian dollars.

Comparatives are consistent with prior years, unless otherwise stated.

1 Basis of Preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historical costs modified, where applicable, by the measurement at fair value of selected non-current assets, financial assets and financial liabilities. Significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are presented below and are consistent with prior reporting periods unless otherwise stated.

2 Summary of Material Accounting Policies

(a) Revenue and other income

The revenue recognition policies for the principal revenue streams of the Company are:

Grant income

Revenue grants intended to cover operation expenses or specific projects are recognised as income in the income statement when the related expenses are incurred, provided that all conditions for the grants receipt have been met.

Fee for services

The Company receives fees for providing various services to the Departments. Fees for services are recognised over time in the period in which the services are rendered. Performance obligations and allocation of transaction price to each performance obligation is determined based on the terms of the underlying contractual arrangement. In most cases, consideration is due when the Company has rendered the service/incurred the cost per the input method.

Contract liability

Cash received in respect of performance obligation that have not been fulfilled in accordance with terms of the contract, is recognised as a contract liability.

Other income

Other income is recognised on an accruals basis when the Company is entitled to it.

(b) Plant and equipment

Each class of plant and equipment is carried at cost or fair value less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation and impairment.

Plant and equipment are measured using the cost model.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

2 Summary of Material Accounting Policies

(b) Plant and equipment

Depreciation

Plant and equipment, excluding freehold land, is depreciated on a straight-line basis over the asset's useful life to the Company, commencing when the asset is ready for use.

Leased assets and leasehold improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or their estimated useful life.

The depreciation rates used for each class of depreciable asset are shown below:

Fixed asset class	Depreciation rate
Furniture, Fixtures and Fittings	5% - 33.33%
Office Equipment	10% - 25%
Opening balance - Leased	Over lease term

At the end of each annual reporting period, the depreciation method, useful life and residual value of each asset is reviewed. Any revisions are accounted for prospectively as a change in estimate.

(c) Financial instruments

Financial assets

Amortised cost

The Company's financial assets measured at amortised cost comprise trade and other receivables and cash and cash equivalents in the statement of financial position.

Subsequent to initial recognition, these assets are carried at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method less provision for impairment.

Interest income, foreign exchange gains or losses and impairment are recognised in profit or loss. Gain or loss on derecognition is recognised in profit or loss.

Fair value through other comprehensive income

Equity instruments

The Company has a number of strategic investments in listed and unlisted entities over which they do not have significant influence nor control. The Company has made an irrevocable election to classify these equity investments as fair value through other comprehensive income as they are not held for trading purposes.

These investments are carried at fair value with changes in fair value recognised in other comprehensive income (financial asset reserve). On disposal any balance in the financial asset reserve is transferred to retained earnings and is not reclassified to profit or loss.

Dividends are recognised as income in profit or loss unless the dividend clearly represents a recovery of part of the cost of the investment. Other net gains and losses are recognised in OCI.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

2 Summary of Material Accounting Policies

(c) Financial instruments

Financial assets

Financial assets through profit or loss

All financial assets not classified as measured at amortised cost or fair value through other comprehensive income as described above are measured at FVTPL.

Net gains or losses, including any interest or dividend income are recognised in profit or loss.

Financial liabilities

The Company measures all financial liabilities initially at fair value less transaction costs, subsequently financial liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method.

The financial liabilities of the Company comprise trade and other payables, contract liabilities and lease liabilities.

(d) Leases

Lessee accounting

A right of use asset and associated lease liability is recognised at the commence date of a lease.

The non-lease components included in the lease agreement have been separated and are recognised as an expense as incurred.

Exceptions to lease accounting

The Company has elected to apply the exceptions to lease accounting for both short-term leases (i.e. leases with a term of less than or equal to 12 months) and leases of low-value assets. The Company recognises the payments associated with these leases as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term.

(e) Economic dependence

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited is dependent on the Australian Government Department of Health and the Victorian Government Department of Health for the majority of its revenue used to operate the business. At the date of this report the directors have no reason to believe the Departments will not continue to support Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited. This is particularly relevant given the Company successfully secured funding of the Rural Health Workforce Support Activity (RHWSA) program for a one year extension from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

3 Critical Accounting Estimates and Judgments

The directors make estimates and judgements during the preparation of these financial statements regarding assumptions about current and future events affecting transactions and balances.

These estimates and judgements are based on the best information available at the time of preparing the financial statements, however as additional information is known then the actual results may differ from the estimates.

The following involves a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimates are significant to the financial statements.

Revenue and expenditure associated balances

Contract liabilities (note 13) - Contract liabilities represent amounts received whereby the Company is yet to fulfil specific performance obligations per the funding contract obligations.

Provisions for return of funding (note 12) - Provision for return of funding represents underspend of specific funding contributions towards programs subject to repayment or authorisation of rollover.

Accruals (note 10) - Accruals are a means of recording an expense that was incurred in one reporting period but not paid until a future reporting period.

4 Revenue and Other Income

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Revenue from contract with customers	16,597,052	15,425,908
Fee for services	286,711	583,536
	<u>16,883,763</u>	<u>16,009,444</u>
Other Income		
Interest income from investments	23,265	65,045
Interest from debt instruments held at FVPL	247,113	383,289
Dividends from equity instruments held at FVPL	284,705	31,511
Fair value gain on investment held at FVPL	231,734	262,890
Other income	174,888	30,364
	<u>961,705</u>	<u>773,099</u>
Total Revenue and Other Income	<u>17,845,468</u>	<u>16,782,543</u>

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

4 Revenue and Other Income

Disaggregation of revenue from contracts with customers

Revenue from contracts with customers has been disaggregated into geographical regional and timing, and the following table shows this breakdown:

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Geographical regions		
- Australia	<u>16,877,861</u>	16,009,444
Timing of revenue recognition		
- Services transferred over time	<u>16,877,861</u>	16,009,444

5 Cash and Cash Equivalents

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Cash at bank and in hand	4,756,891	317,736
Restricted cash	<u>51,586</u>	49,914
	<u>4,808,477</u>	367,650

Restricted cash relates to security deposit for the Company's credit card account.

6 Trade and other receivables

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
CURRENT		
Trade receivables	36,086	49,285
Allowance for expected credit losses	<u>(2,499)</u>	(2,499)
	33,587	46,786
Term deposits	(a) <u>194,532</u>	-
	<u>228,119</u>	46,786
NON-CURRENT		
Term deposits	(a) <u>-</u>	194,532

(a) Deposits held as security

\$180,043 of term deposits are held as security against the Company's lease.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

7 Financial Assets

(a) Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
NON-CURRENT		
Money Market Fund	<u>10,579,830</u>	12,115,874

(b) Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
NON-CURRENT		
Equity Investments - Listed	<u>2,313,153</u>	2,245,754

Upon disposal of these equity investments, any balance within the OCI reserve for these investments is reclassified to retained earnings and not recycled through profit and loss.

8 Plant and equipment

PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Furniture, fixtures and fittings		
At cost	49,050	50,023
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(48,556)</u>	(49,070)
Total furniture, fixtures and fittings	<u>494</u>	953
Office equipment		
At cost	338,407	359,118
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(294,563)</u>	(358,250)
Total office equipment	<u>43,844</u>	868
Leasehold Improvements		
At cost	383,133	372,448
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(378,341)</u>	(372,448)
Total leasehold improvements	<u>4,792</u>	-
	<u>49,130</u>	1,821

Movements in Carrying Amounts

Movement in the carrying amounts for each class of plant and equipment between the beginning and the end of the current financial year:

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

8 Plant and equipment

Movements in Carrying Amounts

	Furniture, Fixtures and Fittings	Office Equipment	Leasehold Improvements	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Year ended 30 June 2024				
Balance at the beginning of year	953	868	-	1,821
Additions	-	45,114	10,686	55,800
Depreciation expense	(459)	(2,138)	(5,894)	(8,491)
Balance at the end of the year	494	43,844	4,792	49,130
Year ended 30 June 2023				
Balance at the beginning of year	1,413	4,117	16,317	21,847
Depreciation expense	(460)	(3,249)	(16,317)	(20,026)
Balance at the end of the year	953	868	-	1,821

9 Other Assets

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
CURRENT		
Prepayments	34,999	30,812

10 Leases

Company as a lessee

The Company has a lease over its office premise with a term of three years and a further three year option period.

During the financial year, the Company reassessed its lease obligations under AASB 16. Previously, the Company considered it likely that it would exercise an additional lease option of 3 years, so this further term was included in the lease calculations for reporting purposes. However, this year, as management is exploring a potential new office location, the likelihood of exercising this additional lease option is no longer considered probable. As a result, the Company has reassessed the lease liability and the corresponding right-of-use asset and the reassessment led to a reduction in lease liabilities and right-of-use assets of \$709,706.

The Company also leases office requirement and car park spaces which are either short-term or low-value, so have been expensed as incurred and not capitalised as right-of-use assets.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

10 Leases

Right-of-use assets

	Office premise	Total
	\$	\$
Year ended 30 June 2023		
Balance at beginning of year	1,122,854	1,122,854
Depreciation charge	(215,931)	(215,931)
Reductions in right-of-use assets due to changes in lease liability	(709,706)	(709,706)
Balance at end of year	197,217	197,217

Lease liabilities

The maturity analysis of lease liabilities based on contractual undiscounted cash flows is shown in the table below:

	< 1 year	1 - 5 years	> 5 years	Total undiscounted lease liabilities	Lease liabilities included in this Statement Of Financial Position
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2024					
Lease liabilities	231,628	-	-	231,628	227,061
2023					
Lease liabilities	244,852	1,043,995	-	1,288,847	1,165,054

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

The amounts recognised in the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income relating to interest expense on lease liabilities and short-term leases or leases of low value assets are shown below:

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Interest expense on lease liability	(16,565)	(50,671)
Amortisation of right-of-use assets	(215,931)	(224,572)
Expenses relating to leases of low-value assets that are not short term leases (included in other expenses)	(7,798)	(5,518)
Expense relating to short term leases (included in other expenses)	(23,677)	(40,866)
	(263,971)	(321,627)

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

11 Trade and Other Payables

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
CURRENT		
Trade payables	438,704	372,100
Sundry payables and accrued expenses	751,919	598,966
	<u>1,190,623</u>	<u>971,066</u>

Refer to note 3 for detail in relation to classification of balance sheet accounts including accruals in the current year.

12 Employee Benefits

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
CURRENT		
Employee benefits	376,581	421,953
NON-CURRENT		
Employee benefits	114,347	73,047

13 Provisions

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
CURRENT		
Make good provision	50,000	50,000
Provision for return of funding	89,977	452,351
	<u>139,977</u>	<u>502,351</u>

Provision for return of funding

Refer to note 3 for detail in relation to classification of balance sheet accounts including accruals in the current year.

14 Contract Liabilities

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
CURRENT		
Grant funding contracts	10,851,488	7,971,735

Grant funding contracts

Refer to note 3 for detail in relation to classification of balance sheet accounts including accruals in the current year

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024

15 Reserves

Financial asset reserve

The financial assets reserve records revaluation increments and decrements (that do not represent impairment writedowns) that relate to financial assets that are classified as equity instruments designated as at fair value through other comprehensive income.

16 Members' Guarantee

The Company is incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* and is a company limited by guarantee. Income and property of the Company must be applied towards the promotion of the objects of the entity, as set forth in the Company's Constitution. No portion thereof shall be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of profit to the persons who, at any time, are or have been members of the Company, or to any other person claiming through them.

If the Company is wound up, the constitution states that each member is required to contribute a maximum of \$ 10 each towards meeting any outstandings and obligations of the Company. At 30 June 2024 the number of members was 12 (2023: 12).

17 Key Management Personnel Disclosures

The aggregate remuneration paid to key management personnel of the Company is \$ 963,254 (2023: \$ 899,619).

18 Auditors' Remuneration

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Remuneration of the auditor Moore Australia for:		
- auditing or reviewing the financial statements	53,500	48,750
- audit and review of externally funded projects	5,000	4,500
Total	<u>58,500</u>	<u>53,250</u>

19 Contingencies

The Company did not have any contingencies or commitments at 30 June 2024 (30 June 2023: \$nil).

20 Related Parties

(a) The Company's main related parties are as follows:

Key management personnel - refer to Note 17.

Other related parties include close family members of key management personnel and entities that are controlled or significantly influenced by those key management personnel or their close family members.

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited - 30 June 2024

ABN 31 081 163 519

**Notes to the Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2024**

20 Related Parties

(b) Transactions with related parties

Transactions between related parties are on normal commercial terms and conditions no more favourable than those available to other parties unless otherwise stated.

There were no transactions with any related parties in the current year.

21 Events after the end of the Reporting Period

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the Company, the results of those operations or the state of affairs of the Company in future financial years.

22 Statutory Information

The registered office and principal place of business of the Company is:
Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited
Level 6, Tower 4, World Trade Centre
18 – 38 Siddeley Street
Docklands Victoria 3008

Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited

ABN 31 081 163 519

Directors' Declaration

The directors of the Company declare that in the directors' opinion:

1. The financial statements and notes for the year ended 30 June 2024 are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012* and:
 - a. comply with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures; and
 - b. give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Company as at 30 June 2024 and of its performance for the year ended on that date;
2. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the Company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2013*.



Director
Roger Chao



Director
Adjunct Associate Professor Morton Rawlin AM

Dated 13/09/2024

13/09/2024



Moore Australia

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INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF RURAL WORKFORCE AGENCY, VICTORIA LIMITED

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited (the Company), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion the financial report of Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (The ACNC Act), including:

- i. giving a true and fair view of the Company's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its financial performance for the year ended; and
- ii. complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022*.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (ACNC Act) and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other Information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information obtained at the date of this auditor's report is included in Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria Limited's annual report for the year (but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon).

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

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In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed on the other information obtained prior to the date of this auditor's report, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of Directors for the Financial Report

The directors of the Company are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures and the ACNC Act, and for such internal control as the responsible entities determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

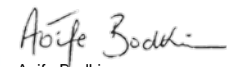
In preparing the financial report, the directors are responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the responsible entities either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The directors are responsible for overseeing the Company's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: https://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf. This description forms part of our auditor's report.


Aoife Bodkin
Partner – Audit and Assurance
Moore Australia Audit (VIC)
Melbourne, Victoria
13 September 2024


Moore Australia Audit (VIC)
ABN 16 847 721 257
Chartered Accountants



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