

## **Inquiry into the delivery of vocational education and training in regional, rural, and remote Queensland**

**Submission No:** 31  
**Submitted by:** Rural Medical Education Australia  
**Publication:** Making the submission and your name public  
**See attached:**

## Inquiry into the delivery of vocational education and training in regional, rural, and remote Queensland

### Submitter Comments

Young people in regional Australia continue to be less likely to aspire to a higher education therefore limiting their employment prospects. An estimated 4.2 million students were enrolled in VET with an Australian training provider, representing almost a quarter of the Australian population aged 15–64 years; 66.8% came from major cities, 30.5% from regional areas and 2.7% from remote areas (Parliament of Australia VET sector 2021).

Evidence shows that rural people, who are trained rurally are more likely to work rurally. Students who study in regional areas tend to remain in regional areas after graduation and provide a ready supply of professionals to fill critical regional roles. Five years after completing their course, 66% of graduates from regional institutions, remain in regional areas. Students who leave regional areas to study in an urban institution are unlikely to return with 74% of regional students remaining in urban cities after graduation. (Grattan Institute 2019).

VET courses have a 47% completion rate and online courses are even more challenging for the young and novice trainees with limited academic confidence. (NCVER 2021)

#### **The impediments to rural training:**

- Physical distance to educational facilities to upskill for relevant job opportunities
- Difficulty accessing affordable high quality training providers and positions in rural communities
- External on-line study is the only higher education option for students
- A student cohort with low academic confidence with limited or no prior learning success
- Numeracy and literacy challenges that require intensive personalised training and guided interventions
- Fracturing of small rural communities when youth leave to pursue study and employment opportunities and do not return home.

#### **The positives of rural health training**

- Engagement of local trainers to deliver training
- Joint appointments of trainers employed in health services to ensure a seamless transition for students from study to work
- Creating a culture of learning, student mentoring and training in local health services
- Local schools will have a greater number of opportunities to engage students in health careers

- Addressing aged care health sector workforce and NDIS service staff shortages
- Improve physical and mental health outcomes for NDIS clients on extensive wait lists due to staff shortages.

Residential aged care facilities (RACFs) in rural communities are under significant financial and workforce distress. Industry experts have warned 166 regional RACFs across Australia are at risk of closure, some imminently, due to dire financial circumstances. (ABC News April 2021).

One of the contributing factors cited is the inability to recruit a sustainable local health workforce. RACFs are not funded to support a locum workforce.

Training students locally and face to face will provide a pipeline of health workers for the RACFs, NDIS and primary care services.

**Please briefly describe your experience with, or interest in, vocational education and training:**

Rural Medical Education Australia (RuralMedEd) is a nfp values-based company with a mission to train health students in rural communities for rural communities.

RuralMedEd has a 22-year history of successfully educating and training health students in rural communities throughout rural Queensland. During the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program 350 general practice doctors and registrars completed AGPT with RMEA and achieved General Practice specialisation.

Since 2014, RuralMedEd has partnered with Griffith University to deliver the rural clinical program for the School of Medicine and Dentistry under the RHMT program. Our success is shown in our graduate data tracking which shows that 72% of students who spend 2 years studying and training in rural communities remain to join the health workforce following graduation.

We train 60 medical students annually; 24 dental students and 12 midwifery students are all supported to ensure academic success while placed in rural communities throughout western Queensland.

In 2019 RuralMedEd commenced VET training in Cert IV Allied Health Assistance, 10 rural students will graduate this year and join the local rural workforce in Toowoomba, Chinchilla, Dalby and Gatton. We also offer Certificate III in Health Service Assistance and Cert IV in Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner.

We have a partnership with University of Southern Queensland for a pathway to university health studies for our VET student cohort. RuralMedEd Certificate IV students

will be offered entry to associate degree in health studies from 2024. This is an innovative response to the decreasing levels of rural health workforce.

RuralMedEd has existing partnerships and MOUs with NDIS service providers, primary health care services, hospitals, General Practices and RACFs throughout rural Queensland. Certificate IV and Certificate III students are supported and placed in existing workplaces where training and supervision is known to be successful.

Our company has significant assets throughout rural Queensland with Clinical Training Centres at Dalby, Kingaroy, Warwick, Toowoomba Chinchilla and Stanthorpe and student accommodation buildings in Warwick, Stanthorpe, Toowoomba, Gympie, Goondiwindi, Dalby, Beaudesert, Jandowae and Miles – a total of 95 students accommodated.

In July 2022 we completed the construction of a Clinical Training Centre in Chinchilla (situated on the grounds of Chinchilla Hospital) with a \$750,000 grant from the Resources Community Infrastructure Program.

We employ 22 clinical academics and trainers who have Joint appointments with local health services. We train workplace supervisors in giving feedback to students, recognising workplace learning opportunities, assessment and performance development to ensure student success.

## **What do you think would help to improve vocational education and training in regional, rural and remote Queensland?**

The Skills Assure supplier applications have been closed for 2 years with the Department of Employment Small Business and Training stating the two public providers – TAFE Queensland and CQUniversity are ideally placed to deliver training to students in regional Queensland with campuses located across the state and providing quality training to skill the workforce of the future and are capable of meeting current student demand . There is no evidence to support this misguided belief. The access to training offered in rural communities is via online VET courses with a 43% completion rate and are not suitable for young and novice trainee with limited academic confidence.

RuralMedEd has an 82% graduation rate in our Cert IV in Allied Health Assistance.

SAS status must be reopened for small RTOs because without government support for rural health students full fee training is an expense that the students and their parents can't meet.

With SAS status, we can ensure that rural students have the same opportunities as metropolitan students.

We have staff and infrastructure in small rural communities but are unable to access government support for training while watching RTOs with SAS status come into our rural towns with only their efp machines - sign up students and expect local high school teachers to teach VET courses (in addition to school curriculum) or students to complete online studies. It is a recipe for academic failure with adverse impacts on the students' academic confidence and a barrier to these students accessing further VET subsidies.

### Submitter Recommendations:

Skills Assure Supplier status applications must be resumed, all SA suppliers should reapply and meet rigorous KPIs.

- Qualified local health trainers (not employed at the local school),
- Graduation, course completion success rates
- Student and industry satisfaction with the training received.
- RTO investment and engagement in the rural community.

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1. [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp2021/Quick\\_Guides/VocationalTraining](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp2021/Quick_Guides/VocationalTraining)

2. <https://grattan.edu.au/news/more-regional-australians-are-moving-to-the-city-to-study-few-return-when-theyve-finished/>

3. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/vet-qualification-completion-rates-improve>

4. [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-13/australia-regional-aged-care-homes-risk-of-closure-finance/100059142?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=link&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-13/australia-regional-aged-care-homes-risk-of-closure-finance/100059142?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)