



BUDGET BOOST FOR BUSH HEALTH WORKFORCE WELCOMED

The 2018 Budget announcement of a new rural education and training facility for multidisciplinary health students at Victoria's La Trobe University was today welcomed by peak body, the Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN).

Rural Health Minister Senator Bridget McKenzie announced that La Trobe's School of Rural Health will become a University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), allowing more nursing and allied health students from rural backgrounds to train for careers in bush health.

The La Trobe UDRH will take the number of UDRHs around Australia to 16. It means Victoria will have 4 UDRHs, adding to Deakin Rural Health (based in Warrnambool), the University of Melbourne UDRH (based in Shepparton) and Monash University School of Rural Health (based in Clayton). All 15 current UDRHs are part of ARHEN.

"The addition of a UDRH at La Trobe will give more local students the opportunity to undertake clinical placements in rural Victoria so they get the right skills to keep working in the bush after graduation," ARHEN Chair Assoc Prof Martin Jones said.

"We know that high quality UDRH placements in disciplines such as nursing, podiatry, social work, psychology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, expose students to many rural health career opportunities - and lifestyles – they might otherwise not experience.

"These placements have been shown to encourage undergraduates to return to work in the bush after completing their courses, helping to address the health workforce maldistribution that affects some 7 million Australians who live outside capital cities.

"I look forward to La Trobe joining the other 15 UDRHs working in and for rural communities to address critical workforce shortages."

ARHEN is a non-government organisation that provides a strong, united, voice and integrative functions for UDRHs focus on rural health workforce issues. Other Budget measures announced last night will also add to the effectiveness of UDRHs including:

- new mental health services for rural Australians via a Mental Health Outreach Clinic program accessed through the Royal Flying Doctor Service
- a new workforce incentive program to assist rural general practices employ nurses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and other allied health professionals, some for the first time
- a review of nursing education and preparation to explore system improvements and strengthen nurses' role in delivering primary health care, especially in rural and remote settings.

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